

# Mindfulness

## A short guide



# About this guide

This leaflet is a short version of our information on mindfulness. Mindfulness is a technique you can learn which involves making a special effort to notice what's happening in the present moment (in your mind, body and surroundings) – without judging anything. It has roots in Buddhism and meditation, but you don't have to be spiritual, or have any particular beliefs, to try it.

It aims to help you:

- become more self-aware
- feel calmer and less stressed
- feel more able to choose how to respond to your thoughts and feelings
- cope with difficult or unhelpful thoughts
- be kinder towards yourself.

This guide also includes two pages of notes, for you to reflect and track the effects of mindfulness exercises on your mood and wellbeing.

Many people find practising mindfulness helps them manage their day-to-day wellbeing, but it doesn't always work for everyone. For more detailed information on mindfulness and whether it's right for you, please see our website at [mind.org.uk/mindfulness](https://www.mind.org.uk/mindfulness)

# How does mindfulness work?

The way we think (and what we think about) can affect how we feel and act. For example, if you think or worry a lot about upsetting past or future events, you might often feel sad or anxious.

The theory behind mindfulness is that by using various techniques to bring your attention to the present (usually focusing on your body and your breathing), you can:

- **Notice how thoughts come and go in your mind.** You may learn that they don't have to define who you are, or your experience of the world, and you can let go of them.
- **Notice what your body is telling you.** For example, tension or anxiety can often be felt in your body (such as in a fast heartbeat, tense muscles or shallow breathing).
- **Create space between you and your thoughts,** so you can react more calmly.


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**Mindfulness is a skill. It requires work like any therapy and practice like any skill. It isn't a shortcut and courses only set the scene, but I find it enjoyable and rewarding. Most of all I find it brings some peace into my life.**

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# Tips and ideas to try

- ♦ **Mindful eating** – This involves paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. For example, when drinking a cup of tea or coffee you could focus on how hot and liquid it feels on your tongue, how sweet it tastes or watch the steam that it gives off.
  - ♦ **Mindful moving, walking or running** – Notice the feeling of your body moving. You might notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures on the ground or nearby surfaces, and the different smells that are around you.
  - ♦ **Body scan** – This is where you move your attention slowly through different parts of the body, starting from the top of your head moving all the way down to the end of your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth, tension, tingling or relaxation of different parts of your body.
  - ♦ **Mindful colouring and drawing** – Focus on the colours and the sensation of your pencil against the paper, rather than trying to draw something in particular. You could use a mindfulness colouring book or download mindfulness colouring images.
  - ♦ **Mindful meditation** – This involves sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing, your thoughts, sensations in your body and the things you can hear around you. Try to bring you focus back to the present if your mind starts to wander. Many people also find that yoga helps them to concentrate on their breathing and focus on the present moment.
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# Get the most from mindfulness

When you do any mindfulness exercise, the key steps are:

- ♦ **Pay attention** – for example, when you shower in the morning, make a special effort to really pay attention to the feel of the water on your skin.
- ♦ **Notice** – when your mind wanders, which is just what minds do, simply notice where your thoughts have drifted to.
- ♦ **Choose and return** – choose to bring your attention back to the present moment, usually by focusing on your breathing or another sensation in your body.
- ♦ **Be aware and accept** – notice and be aware of emotions you are feeling or sensations in your body. Try to observe and accept these feelings with friendly curiosity and without judgement.
- ♦ **Be kind to yourself** – remember that mindfulness is difficult to do and our minds will always wander. Try not to be critical of yourself. When you notice your mind wandering, you can just gently bring yourself back to the exercise.

It can also help to:

- ♦ **Set aside regular time to practise.** Regular short periods of mindful meditation can work better than occasional long ones. If you struggle to find the time, you might want to decide on one or two routine activities which you will try to do mindfully each day.
- ♦ **Make yourself comfortable.** It can help to do mindfulness in a space where you feel safe and comfortable and won't be easily distracted.
- ♦ **Go slowly.** Try to build your practice slowly. Remember, you're learning a new skill so it'll take time to develop. Most people find it hard to sit and meditate for long periods of time at first, so try to do a few minutes and gradually build up to more.
- ♦ **Be patient.** There's no need to set ambitious goals or put pressure on yourself. Many people find it takes a while to feel comfortable doing mindfulness exercises.

# Mindfulness exercise notes

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exercise length: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood before exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

Mood after exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exercise length: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

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Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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We're Mind, the mental health charity for England and Wales. We believe no one should have to face a mental health problem alone.

We're here for you. Today. Now. We're on your doorstep, on the end of a phone or online. Whether you're stressed, depressed or in crisis. We'll listen, give you advice, support and fight your corner. And we'll push for a better deal and respect for everyone experiencing a mental health problem.

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