



INFO SHEET: What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a tool for managing your mind and changing your *MindSpace*.



Pay attention



To what is actually happening



Without judging



And with acceptance

Mindfulness is both a practice and a perspective and involves installing *awareness* as your CEO. This vantage-point opens choices regarding your behaviour and thoughts.

Awareness is installed by deliberately observing and accepting your body. The practice of Mindfulness is based on this skill.

There are two core practices (with many variations) that strengthen these skills:

1. Observing (breath)
2. Accepting (body sensations)

These two skills are then applied towards everything in your life. You investigate what is happening, accept it as it is, and then chose how to respond.

Characteristics of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an innate quality of human consciousness and is characterised by the process of *bringing your attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment* (our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and surrounding environment). Being mindful allows for a clearer understanding of how thoughts, emotions, and body sensations impact our health and quality of life. This perspective enables one to consciously *respond* to situations with clarity and focus, rather than *react* out of habitual patterns.

Mindfulness has several key characteristics¹:

- It is an inherent human capacity that varies in strength, but can be experienced and developed in anyone;²

¹ Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18, 211–237

² Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 822–848. Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Perils and promise in defining and measuring mindfulness: Observations from experience. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 242–248.



Developing Human Potential

- It involves an awareness of inner experiences (body sensations, emotions, thoughts, intentions) and external events;
- It involves observing and accepting what is happening without initially evaluating, analysing, or reflecting upon it; and
- Individuals focus on moment-to-moment experiences rather than thinking about the past or fantasizing about the future.

It can be developed through the practice of meditation and other exercises and has its origins in Eastern spirituality, especially Buddhist traditions.

The recent popularity of mindfulness in the West is based on a large and growing body of scientific research where Mindfulness is described as:

“Awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, with acceptance and without judgment” (Kabat-Zinn).

Other Definitions of Mindfulness

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

“The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis.”

Dictionary.com

“The state or quality of being mindful or aware of something.”

Cambridge Dictionary

“The practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, thought to create a feeling of calm.”

Wikipedia

“Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training.”



Developing Human Potential

Mindful.org

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.”

Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World

“Mindfulness is about observation without criticism; being compassionate with yourself.”

White Wind Zen Community

“Mindfulness is wordless. Mindfulness is meeting the moment as it is, moment after moment after moment, wordlessly attending to our experiencing as it actually is. It is opening to not just the fragments of our lives that we like or dislike or view as important, but the whole of our experiencing.”

Greater Good Science Center at the University of California at Berkeley

“Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.”

Mindful Awareness Research Center at the University of California at Los Angeles

“Mindful Awareness is the moment-by-moment process of actively and openly observing one’s physical, mental and emotional experiences.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

“Mindfulness shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others.”

Daniel J. Siegel

“Mindfulness in its most general sense is about waking up from a life on automatic, and being sensitive to novelty in our everyday experiences. With mindful awareness the flow of energy and information that is our mind enters our conscious attention and we can both appreciate its contents and come to regulate its flow in a new way. Mindful awareness, as we will see, actually involves more than just simply being aware: It involves being aware of aspects of the mind itself. Instead of being on automatic and mindless, mindfulness helps us awaken, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus change becomes possible.”



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Sharon Salzberg

“Mindfulness isn’t just about knowing that you’re hearing something, seeing something, or even observing that you’re having a particular feeling. It’s about doing so in a certain way – with balance and equanimity, and without judgment. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention in a way that creates space for insight.”

Sylvia Boorstein

“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn’t more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.”

Psychology Today

“Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present.”

Mayo Clinic

“Mindfulness is the act of being intensely aware of what you’re sensing and feeling at every moment – without interpretation or judgment.”

Reach Out

“Mindfulness is about training yourself to pay attention in a specific way. When a person is mindful, they:

- *Focus on the present moment*
- *Try not to think about anything that went on in the past or that might be coming up in future*
- *Purposefully concentrate on what’s happening around them*
- *Try not to be judgemental about anything they notice, or label things as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.*”

Sideways Thoughts

“Mindfulness is a matter of being fully present in the moment.”