



MINDFUL MOMENTS

Learning to focus the mind can be a powerful antidote to the stresses and strains of our on-the-go lives. The ability to pay attention to what you're experiencing from moment to moment, without drifting into thoughts of the past or concerns about the future, or getting caught up in opinions about what is going on, is called mindfulness.

This basic mindfulness meditation exercise is easy to learn and practice.

- Sit on a straight-backed chair, or cross-legged on the floor.
- Focus on an aspect of your breathing, such as the sensations of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth, or your belly rising and falling as you inhale and exhale.
- Once you've narrowed your concentration in this way, begin to widen your focus. Become aware of sounds, sensations, and ideas.

Embrace and consider each thought or sensation without judging it as good or bad. If your mind starts to race, return your focus to your breathing. Then expand your awareness again.

The effects of mindfulness meditation tend to be dose-related; the more you practice it, the more benefits you usually experience.

A less formal approach can also help you stay in the present and fully engage in your life. You can practice mindfulness moments at any time or during any task, whether you are eating, showering, walking, touching a partner, or playing with a child. Here's how:

- Start by bringing your attention to the sensations in your body.
- Breathe in through your nose, allowing the air to move downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully. Then breathe out through your mouth. Notice the sensations of each inhalation and exhalation.
- Proceed with the task at hand slowly and with full deliberation.
- Engage your senses fully. Notice each sight, touch, and sound so that you savour every sensation.
- When you notice that your mind has wandered from the task at hand, gently bring your attention back to the sensations of the moment.

Source: Harvard Medical School