

Mental Wellbeing Guide: **Mindfulness**



Explore the significance of mental well-being and its influence on mindfulness.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about being intentional about what we pay attention to and the attitude we use to perceive it. It's also about learning to not be overwhelmed or reactive to what's happening around us or inside us.

And while this may sound frivolous to some, or even a little weird, but the research suggests that developing this human capacity to observe ourselves and our surroundings non-judgmentally and with compassion has deep and nourishing effects on our well-being that ripple out into our daily lives and communities.



How does mindfulness work?

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and engaged in the moment, aware of our thoughts and feelings without judgment. It helps in managing stress, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improving cognitive function.

Mindfulness meditation asks us to suspend judgment of the workings of the mind and unleash our natural curiosity about what is happening in the moment, allowing ourselves to be with each moment with warmth and kindness, to ourselves and to others. This is intended to help you “see the way things are” (or, perhaps more accurately, “what’s actually happening”) most of our day.



Does it really work?

Although it can seem strange or frivolous, mindfulness has been the subject of extensive and serious research, which has revealed that it is a powerful tool to help us manage stress, anxiety, and depression.

Specifically, mindfulness causes actual changes in the brain with scans showing signature brain activity and structural differences in the brain altering over time.

These programs could offer new therapeutic avenues for treating persistent cycles of negative thoughts in patients with major depression or the chronic worrying that characterizes generalized anxiety disorder.

How to get started?

The best place to start for most people will be through “guided meditation” where you listen to a narrator providing instructions on the practice. You can find lots of these on Youtube.

A great place to start is with “Jon Kabat-Zinn”.

Preparation:

- Find a quiet, comfortable place.
- Sit or lie down comfortably.
- Close your eyes.

Breathing:

- Take deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Focus on your breath.

Body Scan:

- Relax each part of your body from head to toe.

Visualization:

- Imagine a peaceful place.
- Focus on the details: sights, sounds, and feelings.

Mantra:

- Repeat a positive phrase or word (e.g., "I am calm").

Mindfulness:

- Bring your attention back to your breath if your mind wanders.

Closing:

- Slowly become aware of your surroundings.
- Open your eyes and take a deep breath.
- Reflect on your experience.

Summary

- **Intentional Attention:** Focus on what you pay attention to and how you perceive it.
- **Non-Reactivity:** Learn to not be overwhelmed by internal or external events.
- **Non-Judgmental Observation:** Observe yourself and your surroundings with compassion.
- **Benefits:** Improves well-being, reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, and enhances cognitive function.
- **Research:** Mindfulness changes brain structure and activity, offering therapeutic benefits.
- **Practice:** Start with guided meditation to learn how to be fully present and engaged in the moment.
- **Quick Steps for Meditation:**
 - Find a quiet, comfortable place and close your eyes.
 - Breathe deeply and focus on your breath.
 - Relax your body from head to toe.
 - Visualize a peaceful place and focus on details.
 - Repeat a calming mantra.
 - If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.
 - Slowly become aware of your surroundings and reflect on your experience.

Additional resources



[mindful](#) is a great resource full of information on how to get started and how to take this practice further.



[UNB Wellness Hub](#)