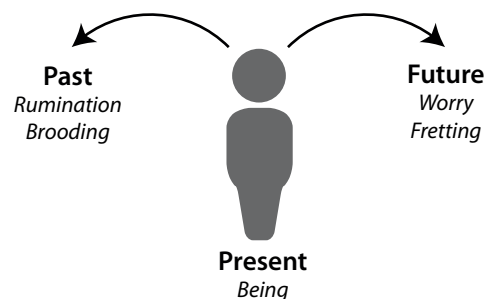


What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the short term for *mindfulness meditation practice*. This is a form of self-awareness training adapted from Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present, moment-by-moment, without making judgements about what we notice. Mindfulness meditation practice is a key ingredient in a variety of evidence-based psychotherapies, including dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).

Why should I practice mindfulness?

Our minds can be focused on things in the past, present or future. We often find ourselves ruminating about things that have already happened, or worrying about things that could happen. This can often be distressing.



Mindfulness is a practice which encourages us to attend to the present moment. There is good evidence that mindfulness practice can help people cope with a wide variety of feeling-states such as depression and anxiety, but also physical health conditions including pain and chronic illness.

Why do I need to practice? Can't I pay attention to the present moment already?

We can all pay attention to the present moment, at least for a short while. If you haven't tried meditation before, though, you might notice that your attention wanders and is not easily controlled. Mindfulness strengthens our ability to pay attention in the present moment, but also increases our awareness of how our minds fluctuate, often in unhelpful ways. People who practice mindfulness regularly find that it helps their ability to stay in the present moment without being deflected.

What does it mean to 'cultivate a non-judgemental attitude'?

Shakespeare said *"there is nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"*, and this is a core idea in therapies like cognitive behavioral therapy. Making judgements about our own experiences can often lead to us becoming quite distressed. For example, thoughts like *"this is horrible"* and *"I can't take any more"* are both judgements associated with distress. Practising mindfulness teaches us to accept more of our experience without judging it. This has been shown to help people live more fulfilling lives.

What expert practitioners have said about mindfulness

"If you let cloudy water settle, it will become clear. If you let your upset mind settle, your course will also become clear"

- Jack Kornfield, Buddha's Little Instruction Book (1994)

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally"

- John Kabat-Zinn, Wherever You Go, There You Are (1994)

"The non-judgemental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise"

- Ruth Baer, Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice (2003)

"Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality"

- Thich Nath Hanh, The Miracle of Mindfulness (1975)

"Mindfulness is simply the knack of noticing without comment whatever is happening in your present experience"

- Guy Claxton, The Heart of Buddhism (1990)