

A beginner's guide to mindfulness

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Mindfulness practices of stopping, slowing down and turning inward are catching on in the modern world at exponential rates – and for very good reason. A centuries-old phenomenon, mindfulness has been used across the globe to benefit and calm the mind, and treat emotional trauma and distress.

But mindfulness doesn't have to be exclusively used by the sages and yogis among us – or limited to clinical settings to formally treat anxiety, depression and other emotional issues. Turns out, you and your family can easily participate in the mindful movement and reap the many benefits.

Life can be chaotic

If you're like most Americans, you wish you had more hours in the day, or that the speed of information would curtail a notch or two. Without even leaving our homes, we are inundated with the latest media coverage, work and family needs, and the cultural pressures to achieve.

So how do we escape the incessant overload and data inputs?



We stop. Which feels quite revolutionary, to be totally honest. The act of taking in the moment and absorbing what is around us via our senses is not inherently difficult. But based on current research of human behavior, it is hard for us to do. In fact, data shows that most of us would rather do anything than be “left with our own thoughts.” As a collective human population, we are drawn to the shiny objects and constant influx of environmental stimuli, making stopping to *just be* a uniquely challenging task.

The good news: You have every single thing you need to be mindful. Right here, right now. No special tools, manual or equipment necessary – just yourself, your family (if you choose), a few minutes of your time and an intention to turn your focus to the present moment.

Mindfulness defined:

Mindfulness is a process that leads to a mental state characterized by non-judgmental awareness of the present moment experience, including your environment, thoughts, body and bodily states, and sensations.

Mindful practice

A beginner's cheat sheet

Be intentional:

To be still,
open-minded
and present.

Set a timer:

If you choose or need, so you have a beginning and end point. Two, three or five minutes are great starting points to get in the groove, and then build from there.

Close your eyes:

Notice your surroundings, the weight of your body supported by the floor, and gradually move that awareness inward to your mind.

Focus on the breath:

Mindfulness experts like Thich Nat Hanh teach beginners to meditation a practice of breath/word focus (i.e., inhaling "peace," exhaling "love").

Walk it out:

If you aren't up for sitting or lying still on a given day, try a meditative walk outside with a breath focus as you take steps.



Try an app

Headspace, Insight Timer and Sanvello are applications designed to take you through a mindfulness practice – whether that is a guided visualization/scene, meditation for sleep or wakefulness, or self-led time to just “be.”

CLICK THE LINK TO TAKE A SHORT QUIZ TO PROVE COMPLETION:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CY6W5SC>

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