

# MINDFULNESS: What is it and how it can help you?

**Definition of mindfulness**, there are many, but a simple one is:

- ❖ Paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, with open-hearted awareness and a non-judgmental attitude.

**How is this done?** We learn to pay attention to the breath or the body, using these as an anchor to the present moment. They are always with us. Whenever our mind wanders and we become lost in thought, we gently guide our attention back to our breath or body. We can do this in formal meditation and we can also do this while we're working, driving, walking, doing chores, being with others, practically anywhere, anytime.

## What does it do for us?

- ☑ Helps us to switch out of Autopilot, which is our default mode of thinking that hijacks our attention and leads us into the past and the future and sometimes into a fog of worry, rumination and projection.
- ☑ Moves us from the Doing mode into the Being mode.
  - Doing is important to get things done, but it's just as important to Be.
  - Being means to simply do nothing and be with ourselves.
  - Allows us a brief pause to check in and care for ourselves.
  - Even a very brief micro-pause helps though a few minutes longer is better.
- ☑ Improves focus and concentration. We're so easily distracted in today's world, we need this now more than ever.
- ☑ Improves how we deal with stress. To respond wisely instead of react automatically.
- ☑ It can be very relaxing and give us moments of peace and serenity.
- ☑ Increases our awareness of our needs and others' needs.
- ☑ The more we do this, we become more present with others, which can help us to be more caring and compassionate.
- ☑ There are many other benefits that help with overall health and wellbeing, such as sleeping and eating better, feeling more contented with life, improving our brain fitness and living life as if it really mattered.



**The trick is to practice regularly** so it becomes our default mode of being and becomes second nature. Learning the skills is easy but it's hard to put into regular practice, to integrate into our busy daily lives. That's why daily practice is important.

You wouldn't expect to learn to surf or play a musical instrument by reading a book. Our minds are the most complex creation in the universe so it takes time. We must learn by doing and practicing. Even just a few minutes a day will make a difference!

## Ways to continue and develop a practice:

1. Guided meditations on my website; [www.budwassell.com](http://www.budwassell.com)
2. Online and Apps: Insight Timer is an excellent free App. There are many others. Many websites have meditations and resources to help. YouTube has an abundance of mindfulness related videos.
3. Take a class. We offer a one-session "Taste of Mindfulness" and a six-session class called "Mindfulness Strategies for Stress Reduction".
4. Be creative – apply mindfulness to whatever works for you: music, coloring, exercise, aromas, cooking, enjoying nature, anything that uses the senses.
5. Use mindful awareness with everyday activities. Pick a routine activity and pay attention to just that one thing, use all your senses and when your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the activity.
6. Mindful movement, stretching and walking are excellent ways to be mindful and care for ourselves.
7. Use your imagination, for example, if you want to escape to the beach, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, "experience" this place with all your senses. Inhale...hear the waves...exhale...feel the warm rays...inhale...smell the beach air...exhale...see the palms sway, the crystal clear sky and sun setting.

## Key principles to keep in mind.

- ☯ This is not like some other relaxation technique. For example, when you have a massage the effect wears off, it's one and done. Once you learn mindful practices, the effect spreads into other areas of your life!
- ☯ Try to balance formal meditation with some of the everyday mindful activities listed above. Do what works for you and create your own daily practice.
- ☯ This is not just a set of techniques, but a way living life as if it really mattered. Learning to live more in the present transforms doing into being!

I wish you all the best on your mindfulness journey and hope my website is helpful. If you have any questions, contact me at [www.budwassell.com](http://www.budwassell.com).