



MINDFUL MEDIATION

Meditation means different things to different people, and there are many ways to do it. This topic focuses on a kind of meditation called **mindful meditation**. This practice may help you relax and relieve stress.

Key points

- The goal of mindful meditation is to focus your attention on the things that are happening right now in the present moment. The idea is to note what you experience without trying to change it.
- Meditation can help you relax, because you are not worrying about what happened before or what may occur in the future.
- You don't need any special tools or equipment to practice this meditation. You just sit in a comfortable position in a chair or on the floor. Or you can lie down, if that is more comfortable for you.
- If your mind wanders, don't worry or judge yourself. When you become aware that your thoughts are wandering, simply focus again on the present moment. One way to do this is by paying attention to your body. For example, is your breathing fast or slow, deep or shallow?
- Meditation may bring up certain feelings or emotions. If this happens, don't try to rid your mind of these feelings. Just focus on what you feel at the present moment. Don't get lost in the thoughts that those feelings might trigger.

What is mindful meditation?

Mindful meditation is when you sit without "doing" anything, and you focus on the present moment. As you do this, you let go of thoughts about the past and the future.

After you practice this meditation, you may find it easier to be mindful even when you are not meditating. Being mindful means to focus your attention on things that are happening right now in the present moment.

People's lives are busy. A person often does many things at one time. For example, you may be walking to the grocery store, making a shopping list, and talking on the phone all at the same time. But when you are mindful, you do just one of those things, such as walking, and you pay close attention to that one thing.

For example, as you are walking, how does the air feel against your skin? Is it warm, cool, dry, or moist? How do your feet feel as they hit the sidewalk? Do your shoes create pressure on your feet, or do your feet feel comfortable and supported? This is what it means to walk mindfully.

Why meditate?

People have used meditation to help treat a number of problems, including:

- Anxiety, stress, and depression.
- Pain.
- Addictive behaviors, such as using drugs, nicotine, and alcohol.

Meditation may help with these problems, but it doesn't take the place of treatment you receive from a doctor.

One of the great things about meditation is that you can do it on your own whenever you want, and it may help you relax and feel better. Also, you don't need any special tools or equipment to practice meditation.

Learning how to be aware of the present moment in meditation may keep your mind sharp and help you focus better in other areas of life as well. For example, you may be able to react faster to road conditions when you drive if you focus solely on driving, rather than being distracted by talking, thinking about other things, or listening to the radio.

How do you practice meditation?

Getting ready

- Choose a time and place where you can meditate without being interrupted. Try to find a quiet place, but don't worry if there are some noises, such as traffic. That kind of noise is just part of the present moment.
- When you start, try to meditate for only 10 minutes at a time. Then you can increase the time bit by bit. You can also try meditating for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening.
- Before you sit down, remind yourself that you are there to focus on the present moment. This may help keep your mind from wandering. Your daily routine and other distractions will all be waiting for your attention after your meditation session.

The practice

- Sit in a comfortable position, either in a chair or on the floor. Or lie down, if that is more comfortable. You can close your eyes, or you can look down, keeping your gaze a few inches in front of you on the floor.
- As you sit, start to pay attention to your breathing. This is a good way to focus your attention on what is happening right now. Don't try to change your breathing. Just notice how it feels in your lungs and chest.

- If your mind wanders, don't worry or feel bad about yourself. Try to notice your thoughts, such as "I wonder what I will need to do at my 10 a.m. work meeting." Then let the thought go, and bring your focus back to the present moment and your breathing. You may do this over and over again during a meditation session. That's okay.
- During your meditation, you may feel certain emotions, such as anger, impatience, sadness, or happiness. Don't try to hold on to or let go of these feelings. They are part of your experience of the present moment. Keeping your attention on your breathing will help you stay focused and not get lost in the thoughts that your feelings may trigger. For example, if you feel impatient to finish the meditation so you can start the laundry, see if you can focus on the feeling of the impatience rather than thoughts of the laundry. Where do you feel the impatience in your body? Does it feel tight? Does it affect your breathing?

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