

# Mindfulness: What, Why, and How

Practicing mindfulness can help to reduce anxiety, stress and overwhelm, anger, sadness, and other troubling emotional states.

## So, **What IS Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness involves **CHOOSING** to **PAY ATTENTION** to this moment **WITHOUT JUDGMENT**. Mindfulness isn't a "what" – It's **HOW** you do whatever you're doing and the process of doing it.



## **“WHAT” Skills**

(What you do when practicing mindfulness)

### **OBSERVE**

- Notice your body sensations (sights, sounds, smells, taste, texture)
- Pay attention on purpose to the present moment.
- Control your attention, but not what you see. Push away nothing. Cling to nothing.
- Practice wordless watching: Watch thoughts come into your mind and let them slip away like clouds in the sky. Notice each feeling, rising and falling, like waves in the ocean.
- Observe both inside and outside yourself.

### **DESCRIBE**



- Put words on the experience. When a feeling or thought arises, or you do something, acknowledge it. (“Sadness has just enveloped me;” “Stomach muscles tightening;” “A thought, ‘I can’t do this’ has entered my mind.”)
- Label what you observe. Put a name on your feelings. Label a thought as just a thought, a feeling as just a feeling, an action as just an action.
- Unglue your interpretations and opinions from the facts. you can’t describe it.
- Describe “who, what, when and where” you observe. Just the facts.
- Remember, if you can’t observe it through your senses, you can’t describe it.

### **PARTICIPATE**

- Throw yourself completely into activities of the current moment. Do not separate yourself from what is going on in the moment (dancing, cleaning, talking to a friend, feeling happy or feeling sad).



- Become one with whatever you are doing, completely forgetting yourself. Throw your attention to the moment.
- Act intuitively from Wise Mind. Do just what is needed in each situation – a skillful dancer on the dance floor, one with the music and your partner, neither willful nor sitting on your hands.
- Go with the flow. Respond with spontaneity.

### “HOW” Skills

(How you practice when practicing mindfulness)

### NONJUDGMENTALLY

- See, but don't evaluate as good or bad. Just the facts.
- Accept each moment like a blanket set out on the lawn, accepting both the rain and the sun and each leaf that falls upon it.
- Acknowledge the difference between the helpful and the harmful, the safe and the dangerous, but don't judge them.
- Acknowledge your values, your wishes, your emotional reactions, but don't judge them.
- When you find yourself judging, don't judge your judging.

### ONE-MINDEDLY

- Rivet yourself to “now”. Be completely present to this one moment.
- Do one thing at a time. Notice the desire to be half-present, to be somewhere else, to go somewhere else in your mind, to do something else, to multi-task –and then come back to one thing at a time.
  - o When you are eating, eat.
  - o When you are walking, walk.
  - o When you are planning, plan.
- Let go of distractions. If other actions, or other thoughts, or strong feelings distract you, go back to what you are doing – again and again.
- Concentrate your mind. If you find you are doing two things at once, stop – go back to one thing at a time.



### EFFECTIVELY

- Be mindful of your goals in the situation and do what is necessary to achieve them.
- Focus on what works. (Don't let emotion mind get in the way of being effective.)
- Play by the rules.
- Act as skillfully as you can. Do what is needed for the situation you are in – not the situation you wish you were in; not the one that is fair; not the one that is more comfortable
- Let go of willfulness and sitting on your hands.

