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### What is Mindfulness?

#### An Introduction by Brain Power

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Mindfulness is a natural human quality, a way of paying attention to our lives with greater awareness and kindness. It's about being fully present with whatever is happening, as it's happening, without getting carried away by judgments or distractions.

A widely accepted definition comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn, a key figure in bringing secular mindfulness to the West:

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

Let's explore what this means:

- **On Purpose:** This means we are intentionally choosing where to direct our attention. It's a conscious decision, not an accident. We are actively engaging our awareness.
- **In the Present Moment:** This is about being here, now. Our minds often wander to the past (replaying events, regrets) or to the future (planning, worrying). Mindfulness helps us anchor ourselves in the current experience, as it unfolds.
- **Non-Judgmentally:** This involves observing our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations as they are, without automatically labeling them as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," or wishing they were different. It's about cultivating an attitude of curiosity and acceptance towards our inner experience. This doesn't mean we become passive; rather, we see clearly before we act.

### Mindfulness IS:

- **Awareness:** Simply being aware of what's happening inside us and around us.
- **Being Present:** Fully experiencing each moment of our lives.
- **Noticing:** Paying attention to our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and our environment.
- **A Way of Being:** More than just a technique, it's an approach to life.
- **A Trainable Skill:** Like any skill, mindfulness can be developed and strengthened through regular practice. Think of it like training a muscle (our "attention muscle").
- **Relating Differently:** It's about changing our *relationship* to our experiences, especially difficult ones, rather than always trying to change the experiences themselves.

### What Mindfulness is NOT & Core Attitudes

- **Making your mind blank or stopping thoughts:** This is a common misconception. Thoughts will always arise. Mindfulness is about *noticing* thoughts without getting carried away by them or believing every single one.
- **A religion:** While mindfulness practices have roots in ancient contemplative traditions, the way we teach it at Brain Power (inspired by programs like MiSP) is entirely secular and skills-based.
- **A quick fix for all problems:** Mindfulness is not a magic wand. It's a practice that cultivates resilience and well-being over time with consistent effort.
- **Only about relaxation:** Relaxation can be a very pleasant and common outcome of mindfulness practice, but it's not the primary goal. Mindfulness is about being aware of *all* experiences, including discomfort or stress, with greater calm and wisdom.
- **Always feeling calm or happy:** Life includes a full range of emotions. Mindfulness helps us to be with all of them, pleasant and unpleasant, with greater balance and less reactivity.

### **Core Attitudes (Principles) of Mindfulness:**

*These attitudes support and enrich our mindfulness practice:*

- **Beginner's Mind:** Approaching each moment as if for the first time, with fresh eyes, free from pre-conceived ideas or expectations.
- **Non-Judging:** Observing experiences without automatically labeling them. Simply noticing "what is."
- **Acceptance:** Acknowledging reality as it is in the present moment, even if it's unpleasant. This isn't passivity, but a clear seeing that allows for wise action.
- **Patience:** Understanding that things (including ourselves and our practice) unfold in their own time. Being patient with yourself and the process.
- **Trust:** Trusting in your own inner wisdom, your capacity for awareness, and the natural unfolding of your experience.
- **Non-Striving:** Releasing the tendency to always try to achieve a particular outcome or force a certain feeling. Letting things be as they are.
- **Letting Go:** Allowing thoughts, feelings, and sensations to come and go without clinging to them or pushing them away.
- **Curiosity:** Approaching experiences with a gentle, open, and interested inquiry, rather than with assumptions.
- **Kindness & Self-Compassion:** Bringing a warm, understanding, and supportive attitude towards yourself and others, especially during difficult times.

### **The Relevance of Mindfulness Today. Especially in Japan**

In our fast-paced, information-rich world, many of us experience high levels of stress, distraction, and a feeling of being constantly "on."

**In Japan, specifically for students and educators:**

- **Student Well-being:** Recent data (UNICEF, 2025, as reported by News Zero) indicates that while Japanese children rank highly in physical health, their mental well-being faces significant challenges. Academic pressures, societal expectations, and high stress levels contribute to this.
- **Teacher Well-being:** Educators in Japan also report high levels of stress, with increasing numbers taking leave due to mental health concerns. The demands of student guidance, administrative duties, and interpersonal relationships at work can be immense.
- **The Need for Skills:** Mindfulness offers practical, secular, and learnable skills that can help both students and adults:
  - Manage stress and anxiety more effectively.
  - Improve focus, concentration, and attention – vital for learning and teaching.
  - Develop greater emotional regulation and resilience.
  - Cultivate self-awareness and self-compassion.
  - Foster kinder and more understanding relationships.

Brain Power believes that by introducing foundational mindfulness skills, we can contribute positively to the well-being and flourishing of Japan's educational communities.

**Contact Brain Power for more information on our Mindfulness & Wellness initiatives.**