



Mindfulness

every connection matters™



It's a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your whole day, while listening to the radio and commuting to work, while also planning weekend. But in the rush to accomplish necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment, missing out on what you are doing, and how you are feeling. Did you notice whether you felt well rested this morning or that the jasmine is in flower when you left home in the morning?

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment and accepting it without judgement. Practicing mindfulness supports many attitudes that contribute to a satisfied life.

By focusing on the here and now, many people find they are:

- Less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets about the past
- Less preoccupied about success and self-esteem
- Better able to form deep connections with others.

Mindfulness is also positively correlated with:

- Decreased stress
- Improved sleep habits
- Alleviation of gastrointestinal problems
- Improvements in physical problems, such as heart disease and blood pressure.

Mindfulness Techniques

There is more than one way to practice mindfulness; however, the goal of any technique is to achieve a state of alert, focused relaxation, by deliberately paying attention to thoughts and sensations without judgement. This allows the mind to refocus on the present moment. All mindfulness techniques are forms of meditation. Some techniques are described as follows.

Basic Mindfulness Meditation

Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing, or on a word or mantra you repeat silently. Allow thoughts to come and go without judgement.

Body Sensations

Notice subtle body sensations, such as an itch or tingling without judgement, and let them pass. Notice each part of your body in succession from head to toe.

Sights and Sounds

Notice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. Name them 'sight', etc. without judgement and let them go.

Emotions

Allow emotions to be present without judging them. Practice a steady and relaxed naming of emotions.

Urge Surfing

When you feel a craving or an urge, acknowledge the urge and understand that it will pass. Notice how your body feels as the craving enters. Replace the wish for the craving to go away with the certain knowledge that it will subside.

Meditation Exercise

1. Sit on a straight-backed chair or cross-legged
2. Focus on an aspect of your breathing, such as the sensations of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth, or your stomach rising and falling
3. Once you have narrowed your concentration in this way, begin to widen your focus. Become aware of sounds, sensations, and ideas
4. Embrace and consider each thought or sensation without judging it good or bad. If your mind starts to race, return your focus to your breathing. Then expand your awareness again.

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