



Breathe Well

Mindful Breathing tips



Student Wellness Centre

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What is Mindfulness?

Practicing “mindfulness” means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and your surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that you should pay attention to your thoughts and feelings without immediately judging them. When you practice mindfulness, you tune into what you are sensing in the present moment, rather than spending time rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Mindfulness and Your Grades

Research shows that practicing mindfulness reduces wandering thoughts, increases working memory capacity, and improves exam scores—all of which should help you achieve your academic goals!

Benefits of Mindfulness

- **Mental Health** Studies have found that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing negative

emotions. Practicing mindfulness may also improve emotional regulation and empathy.

- **Focus** Mindfulness helps tune out distractions and improve your memory and attentiveness making it easier to focus.
- **Stress** Mindfulness can help you to identify and deal with the causes of stress in your life.
- **Physical Health** Research suggests that practicing mindfulness can boost the immune system's ability to fight off illness. Mindfulness can also lead to decreased blood pressure.
- **Relationships** Mindfulness training can make couples more satisfied in their relationships, and make partners feel more optimistic, relaxed, and accepting of each other.
- **Emotions** Aggression, anger, and hostility are decreased when one practices mindfulness.

How to be Mindful

1. Pay attention. It's hard to slow down and notice things in a busy world. ...

2. Live in the moment. Try to intentionally bring an open, accepting, and discerning attention to everything you do. ...
3. Accept yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a good friend.
4. Focus on your breathing. Inhale through your nose; exhale through your mouth.

Be Mindful of Food and Substances

Being mindful of what you consume can decrease negative self talk.

Practice mindfulness as you make choices about food and drink and to avoid becoming dependent on substances.

Be Mindful in Relationships

Become more satisfied in your relationships to prevent dwelling on the past, worrying about the future, and becoming disconnected. Focus on listening, staying open-minded, being empathetic, and thinking before you speak. Notice what relationships support you.

Be a Mindful Student

Being a mindful student can help you relax, focus, and accomplish your goals. Practice mindfulness at school by turning off your phone while studying, concentrating on one task at

a time, visualizing yourself writing an exam before starting, and taking short study breaks when you start to lose focus.

Yoga

Research has found there are many health benefits associated with practicing yoga. You don't need to have a specific spiritual background to participate. Try different types of yoga to find a style that suits you best!

- Vinyasa Flow,
- Yin,
- Hatha,
- Iyengar,
- Sivananda,
- Kundalini, and
- Hot.

Mindful Breathing

When stressed, people tend to breathe in a more rapid and shallow way, producing a variety of physical symptoms that prompt or worsen distress.

Abdominal breathing can help reverse the uncomfortable physical symptoms of anxiety. It also lowers susceptibility to stress and tension by decreasing overall levels of physiological arousal.

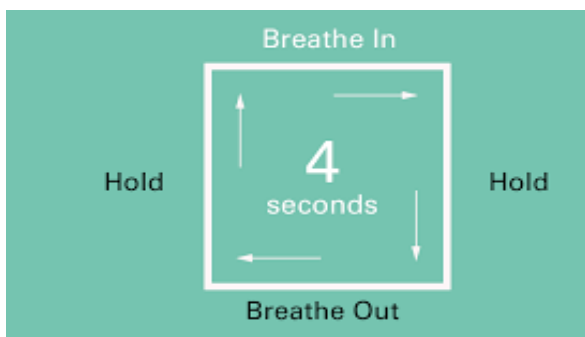
Here are several breathing methods to try.

Abdominal Breathing

1. Lean back in a sitting position.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your abdomen.
3. Imagine that you want to fill your stomach with air.
4. Take a long slow breath through your nose as if to fully inflate your stomach. Take four full seconds to inhale. The hand on your abdomen, not your chest, should rise. Hold for one second.
5. Exhale slowly and gently through your mouth. Take four full seconds to exhale. The hand on your abdomen, not your chest, should fall. Continue this process for at least four minutes to achieve a benefit. Practice twice daily.

Mindful Breathing Box:

Repeat the box instructions for 1 – 2 minutes.



Try as much as possible to inhale through the nose. This filters your breath, improves breathing efficiency and has many health

Breathing to Relax

- Find a quiet time and place away from friends, the phone and the T.V. Play music you find relaxing.
- Close your eyes or focus on an object in the room. Before you begin, notice how you feel.
- Begin to use abdominal breathing. Remember to take four full seconds to inhale and four full seconds to exhale. Continue this until you find your respiration rate has slowed and you are comfortably breathing in a slow and relaxed way.
- If negative or anxious thoughts (e.g. “I blew the exam”, “I should be studying”) come to your mind, acknowledge them and let them go. Try to refocus on your breathing. i When you are done, notice how you feel.

With practice, becoming more relaxed will happen more easily. Take time to relax even when you're not especially tense; this helps lower overall susceptibility to stress

Meditation

Meditation can lead to improved concentration, decreased distraction, lowered stress levels, and better coping skills.

Clearing the Mind Meditation

1. Sit with your hands on your knees facing up.
2. Inhale and raise your hands to the back of your head bringing fingertips together. Visualize all your thoughts being gathered in your hands.
3. Exhale and push the thoughts up and away in front of your head. Allow your hands to drop back to your knees facing down.
4. Visualize your thoughts becoming clouds and floating away.
5. Enjoy for a moment your clear mind. Watch your thoughts float away like clouds. Repeat after a few moments or as the mind wanders.

Resources

There are some great resources available at the university for students interested in mindfulness.

Yoga Classes

The PAC offers both pre-registered and drop-in classes every day. Sign up by calling or visiting the PAC, or check out the class schedule online through Campus Rec

Mindfulness

Meditation Sessions

The university offers on-line and in person guided breathing sessions. Find them in the PAWS Student Calendar



Breathing Aps to try

1. **Calm:** Sleep, Meditate, Relax
2. **Headspace:** Meditation & Sleep
3. **Insight Timer:** Meditation App

Counseling for Students

If things in your life are becoming too much to handle and you are struggling to find balance, free help is available for students at Student Wellness Centre.

Use all these techniques to help you reach your academic goals!

- Breathe Well
- Connect Well
- Eat Well
- Move More
- Sleep Well
- Study Well
- Think Well



Additional Resources

wellness.usask.ca

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