Mindfulness Coach App Content

Note:*Text in italics is notes to developers, including some structure/scope/flow direction.*

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# Splash Screen

*Display app name and logos*

# First Launch: Orientation Screen

Be here now.

Welcome to Mindfulness Coach. Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose to what is going on in the current moment. Many Veterans and Service Members can benefit from mindfulness practice. Healthy people may practice mindfulness to increase their resilience and build positive skills for managing their lives. Individuals who are struggling with problems following a deployment can use consistent mindfulness practice to decrease stress, depression, physical pain, and other problems. This app was developed to help Veterans and Service Members learn how to practice mindfulness. It offers exercises, information, and a tracking log so that you can optimize your practice.

Please note: This app is not intended to replace therapy. If you are in treatment, let your healthcare provider know that you will be using the app for independent mindfulness practice.

# Home Screen

Major Buttons:

* Learn
* Practice
* Track
* Set Reminders

Minor buttons:

* Set Up
* About

## Home Help

* Learn: View definitions and information about mindfulness.
* Practice:Access a variety of audio-guided and self-guided mindfulness exercises.
* Track: Monitor your mindfulness practice over time.
* Set Reminders: Set up alerts to encourage regular practice.
* Set Up: Select music and pictures to use in your practice.
* About: Offers information and useful tips about this app and its development.

# Learn

**What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness means paying attention, on purpose, to whatever is going on in the present moment without passing judgment on it. This practice involves noticing something and holding it in your attention lightly, with gentle acceptance, like a butterfly resting on your hand, until it moves away on its own. In mindfulness, you attend to a feeling, thought, or sensation without clinging to it, resisting it, or trying to change it.

**Why Practice Mindfulness?**

Here are some of the benefits of mindfulness:

* Increase sense of inner calm
* Experience both pleasant and unpleasant thoughts and feelings safely
* Learn through experience that everything changes; that thoughts and feelings come and go like the weather
* Have more balance, less emotional reactivity
* Develop self-acceptance and self-compassion
* Increase self-awareness
* Feel more connected to yourself, to others and to the world around you
* Have more direct contact with the world, rather than living through your thoughts
* Become less judgmental of yourself and others
* Reduce the struggle with anxiety and depression over time
* Cope more effectively with chronic pain

**Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation for Veterans and Service Members:**

Unfortunately, depression and anxiety are more common among Veterans and Service Members than among civilians. Mindfulness practice can have unique advantages for these groups since it has been shown to be effective for:

* Stress reduction
* Decreasing the struggle with anxiety and depression
* Protecting against relapse to depression (getting depression again and again)

**Benefits of Mindfulness for PTSD**

If you have PTSD, you may find yourself overwhelmed at times by intense feelings and thoughts related to your trauma. This may lead you to try to avoid those experiences, or act impulsively with reckless behavior, using alcohol or drugs, or other reactions that are problematic in the short-term or long-term. Although mindfulness can’t necessarily make your painful thoughts and feelings go away, over time it can shift how you experience them, how disruptive they feel, and the degree to which they “get to” you.

For example, say you encounter a trauma trigger, such as hearing a sudden, loud sound that reminds you of a gunshot. You might feel your chest tighten and your heart begin to pound; you might feel sudden fear and dread. Mindfulness allows you to take a step back and notice that. You observe it rather than getting caught up it. Your stress level may even out or sometimes even decrease instead of feeding on itself and getting worse.

**Practice Challenges with PTSD**

Mindfully paying attention in the moment can feel complicated with PTSD. Some Veterans and Service Members can feel like they’re barely holding on in the midst of an internal storm, and the idea of “letting go” or “relaxing” can be terrifying. Even experienced mindfulness meditators may need to pace their mindfulness practice when intense or traumatic memories and feelings come up.

It’s important to find a way to practice mindfulness that works for you. Mindfulness instructions suggest that you stay relaxed, notice your thoughts, and let them pass, without getting ‘attached’ to discomfort. While this is ideal, it is not helpful to try to tolerate intense, overwhelming pain. Instead, practice sitting with discomfort that is tolerable but challenging, in order to build your skill and expand your capacity, but don’t force yourself to stay with pain that feels beyond your limits. Many people also report that it’s better to start slowly with a meditation practice, beginning with mindfulness of the five senses or walking mindfulness, rather than beginning with mindfulness of especially difficult thoughts and feelings.

Go slowly and listen to yourself: start with a practice of 1 minute, or 5 minutes— whatever is comfortable—then gradually add more time.

**Managing PTSD Symptoms During Mindfulness Practice**

If you find you are triggered or overwhelmed with PTSD symptoms during mindfulness practice:

* Recognize that there is no need to “muscle through.” Practice at a level that may feel challenging, but that isn’t overwhelming.
* Shift your attention away from internal states like feelings, thoughts or sensations.
* Focus on sounds, sights, or people around you.
* Take some deep breaths and focus on the sensation of your feet on the floor to “ground” yourself.

# Practice

*For each exercise, clarify: uses audio/does not so that for those that do not, the user may select: how long to practice (30 seconds to 10 minutes)PLEASE NOTE: the duration of time for an activity is different in the 2 instances in this document & 1 instance in the Scope document. Please let me know which one I should use throughout for consistency and whether to have a chime indicate the end of the exercise (otherwise a message must tell the user when the allotted time has passed).*

Practice Exercises:

* Mindful Breathing
* Mindful Walking
* Mindful Eating
* Mindfulness on Ice
* Mindful Listening
* Mindful Looking
* Observe Thoughts: Leaves on a Stream
* Observe Thoughts: Clouds in the Sky
* Observe Sensations: Body Scan
* Observe Emotional Discomfort
* Visualize: The Mountain

*See exercise scripts at the end of this document.*

## Practice Help

Mindfulness activities are opportunities to experience things just as they are, and to practice basic awareness of your experience without evaluating, judging, or needing to fix, prolong, or stop that experience.

Use these exercises to help you practice mindfulness in a variety of ways, some of which may be more or less challenging for you. Start with the easier activities and gradually move to the harder ones.

## Favorites Error Message

You have not yet selected any Favorites. To learn how to select a Favorite, please click on the Help button at top right hand corner of screen.

## Favorites Help

Would you like quick and easy access to the exercises and tools that you use the most? Select your Favorites by tapping on the star button on the top right hand corner of the screen.

You will find your Favorites listed here the next time you click on the Favorites tab below.

# Track

Log information collected:

* Mindfulness exercise (drop-down list of activities in app plus Other option with text box)
* Date (scrolling date components)
* Time of practice (start time of practice)
* Duration of practice (in minutes and seconds)
* Comments (text box)

Button: Email log.

## Track Help

The mindfulness log can help you track when and how often you are practicing mindfulness tools. It is also a place to keep notes on what you notice when you practice. Using the log may help you remember to practice, and it will show you if you are keeping up on your commitment to mindfulness in your daily life.

Each time you use mindfulness activities on this app you can choose to log them. Feel free to enter the log and add comments after you complete the exercise. Even if you do mindfulness activities that are not on the app, you can record them here by typing in all of the information.

# Set Reminders

Text onscreen: Schedule times to practice mindfulness and fill in your log or choose to be reminded to be mindful at random times.

Buttons:

* Schedule a Mindfulness Activity
* Set Random Reminders
* Remind Me to Log
* View/Edit existing reminders

**Schedule a Mindfulness Activity:**

Select an activity *(viewable list of all of the exercises on the app or Basic Reminder)*

*Bring up an event dialog to add this exercise to calendar with an alarm (if possible to allow for recurrence please ask for that information and include it in the event listing)*

*When user is reminded, bring to appropriate activity in app.*

**Set Random Reminder**

Frequency *(1 time per week, 1 time per day, 2 times per day, 3 times per day)*

Times not to alert*(allow user to select multiple time increments during which no alerts will be sent)*

Length (durations: 10 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 5 minutes)

With a chime?*(yes/no)*

*When user is reminded, bring to a screen that says,* “Pay attention to the current moment. Engage all of your senses.”

**Remind Me To Log**

Frequency *(daily, every other day, weekly)*

Time of day: *(select hour)*

When alert is clicked, bring user directly to log screen.

# Set Up

In order to get the most out of this app, you should select some items that you already have on your device that you would like to use for mindfulness practice. These items will be integrated with some of the mindfulness activities in this app.

You may select any pictures and songs on your device that you would like to focus your attention on.

You can change your selections at any time by visiting Set Up from the home screen.

# About

Mindfulness Coach is a mobile phone application for Veterans and Service Members to learn and practice mindfulness skills. It is intended to help build this important skill for those who would like to build their resilience and manage their lives and emotions better.

This application provides:

* Education about mindfulness
* Various mindfulness activities
* A log for tracking mindfulness practice

It can be used on its own by those who would like mindfulness tools, or to augment face-to-face care with a healthcare professional. It is not intended to replace therapy for those who need it.

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Mindfulness Coachwas a collaborative effort between the VA’s National Center for PTSD and the DoD’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology.

<NCPTSD LOGO>

The National Center for PTSD, within the Department of Veterans Affairs, aims to help U.S. veterans and others through research, education, and training on trauma and PTSD.

“Advancing Science and Promoting Understanding of Traumatic Stress”

<T2 LOGO>

The National Center for Telehealth and Technology |T2| researches, develops, evaluates, and deploys new and existing technologies for Psychological Health (PH) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) across the Department of Defense (DoD). T2 is a component center of the [Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)](http://www.dcoe.health.mil/), which leads a collaborative global network to promote the resilience, recovery and reintegration of Warriors and their families who face psychological health and traumatic brain injury issues.

“Technology to Make People Healthy”

For more information about mindfulness and other topics for Veterans, see <http://ptsd.va.gov>.