

DISCOVER THE
POWER OF

Mindfulness

MEDITATION



**DISCOVER THE POWER OF
MINDFULNESS MEDITATION**



JEFF PARKE

CREATING SUCCESS THROUGH FORESIGHT AND IMAGINATION

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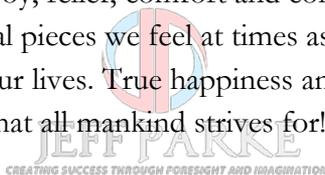


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Discover the Power of Mindfulness Meditation

Our busy, complicated lives sometimes bring a wave of negative emotions: *sadness, jealousy, depression, grief, anger, confusion, anxiety, and stress*. Unfortunately, it's all too easy sometimes to succumb to the naturally powerful nature of these emotions and allow ourselves to be troubled for hours, days, or weeks on end.

On the other end of the spectrum, happiness, gratefulness, joy, relief, comfort and contentment are also emotional pieces we feel at times as we go throughout our lives. True happiness and emotional freedom is what all mankind strives for!



Although self-care is an important concept, many of us fall short in taking care of ourselves. Just as we take care of other aspects of our lives, our physical and emotional health must also take a front-seat priority. Consequences of failing to care for ourselves include a diminished immune system and other health issues.

Mindfulness and meditation in general can help you handle your emotions, achieve lower stress levels,

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feel happier, and enjoy peace and satisfaction with your life.

Psychologists, counselors, and therapists the world over have recognized the power that mindfulness can bring to our lives if we choose it. Luckily, anyone can harness the benefits of mindfulness with regular practice.

"You have considerable power to construct self-helping thoughts, feelings and actions as well as to construct self-defeating behaviors. You have the ability, if you use it, to choose healthy instead of unhealthy thinking, feeling and acting."

- Albert Ellis


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What is Mindfulness Meditation?

It may surprise you to learn that the origins of mindfulness reach back thousands of years. Meditation was developed by Buddhist monks who turned meditation into a spiritual element of their "enlightenment."

What do you think of when someone mentions meditation? Do images of religious monks sitting in circles and chanting "ohhmm" form in your head? Perhaps you're a little skeptical of meditation and feel that it would take you hours each day in trying to get the technique right. Well, think again!



Mindfulness is *not*:

- Spending time thinking about the world and all the wonders in it
- Contemplating the great, deep mysteries of life
- Some magical practice thought to bring good luck to your life

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- A spiritual practice reserved only for those in highest connection to their Creator
- Daydreaming or fantasizing about what your perfect life looks like

Yes, meditation and mindfulness in the modern world may have some of these mythical connotations, but mindfulness is actually much simpler. In simple terms, mindfulness and meditation are ways to achieve a calmer state of mind. Mindfulness is essentially a sub form of meditation.

Although mindfulness originated with non-western practitioners ages ago, it's cultivated and studied by scientists, psychologists and doctors all over the world today.

How Do We Define Mindfulness?

In order to achieve the inner peace that mindfulness can bring us, it's important to consider what the practice of mindfulness actually is.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is largely credited with bringing the popularity of mindfulness to the United States and refining it through his renowned

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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, defines mindfulness like this:

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

The Chinese calligraphy for mindfulness is made up of two different characters. The top character means "presence" and the bottom one means "heart." Therefore, mindfulness literally means "presence of heart."



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Mindfulness is experiencing and focusing on the present moment.

Whether we're conscious of it or not, we're always focused on things and events of the future.

For example, we're constantly looking forward to the last day of the work week while we're at work, and what our weekend plans will bring. We look forward to our summer vacations. We look forward to the holidays. We look forward to our birthdays. We look

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forward to the end of the day when we get to crawl into bed.

In this sense, we're never truly focused on the present moment, which is the purpose that mindfulness teaches us. Mindfulness is a way to focus on the present moment, to create an awareness, an acute, keen and specific consciousness of ourselves and to center ourselves right now in the present, not sometime in the future.

“The best way to capture moments is to pay attention. This is how we cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness means being awake. It means knowing what you are doing.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Case for Mindfulness

Doctors and other experts are always coming out and telling us the next best thing since sliced bread that is supposed to benefit us in some way. Examples include dark chocolate being good for overall heart health, small amounts of wine reducing risks for heart disease and diabetes, and coconut oil boosting the immune system.

The same is true for the practice of mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness has been studied and shown to have huge benefits for your overall health. The difference is that you're not putting anything into your body with meditation. Coconut oil, dark chocolate, and wine are substances that you ingest to strengthen your physical health.

On the other hand, mindfulness meditation is a behavior shift that uses nothing more than the sole power of your focus and attention.

Empirical, measurable data has come forth showing that mindfulness helps more to lower stress and physically help the body than many other things put together. For example, Carnegie Mellon University researchers worked with two groups of

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individuals. The researchers subjected the first group to just three 25-minute mindfulness training sessions, while the second group was a control and were trained in critical thinking skills.

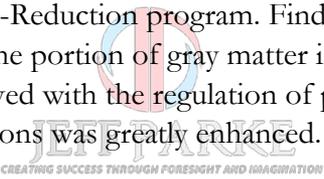
During this study at Carnegie Mellon, both groups were then subjected to a public speaking test and a math test. Stress levels were measured in each group. The group which was trained in mindfulness experienced lower perceived levels of stress than did the other group.

Consider, too, these other research-backed benefits of practicing mindfulness:



1. Lowers depression. Several research studies, including one published in the Archives of General Psychiatry in 2010, show that mindfulness meditation is just as effective as someone taking antidepressant medication.
2. Helps our focus. Research has shown that the regular practice of mindfulness, or even receiving training in mindfulness, can help strengthen our attention, memory, and can also help us tune out distractions.

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3. Increases compassion and empathy for others. Researchers at Northeastern University conducted a study where participants who had been exposed to mindfulness training and meditation sessions were significantly more likely to help someone in need over those who received no such exposure to meditation.
4. Creates positive changes in brain structure. Researchers imaged the brains of 16 different people before and after they received training in Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress-Reduction program. Findings revealed that the portion of gray matter in the brain involved with the regulation of positive emotions was greatly enhanced.

5. More benefits. Numerous other studies have been performed that show that mindfulness meditation also enhances our physical health, lowers stress levels, eases anxiety, enhances relationships, and provides a powerful boost to our overall mood.

As you see, research shows that mindfulness packs a powerhouse of physical, mental, and emotional benefits. And they're all available to you,

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for free! Let's see how you can harness these benefits for yourself...

*“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life,
live in the moment, live in the breath.”*
- Amit Ray



Step-by-Step Guide to Mindfulness Meditation

Practicing mindfulness meditation does take time, effort, and patience. However, the advantages that you receive from this practice are certainly worth it.

You don't need to practice mindfulness on an Olympic-level.

You can achieve results with as little as 20 to 30 minutes per day.

Follow these easy steps to practice mindfulness meditation:



1. Start out with a quiet place. For mindfulness or any form of meditation, you can practice anywhere at anytime. However, the easiest place is a quiet one, free from any distractions.
 - Some places that you may be able to practice include in your car, at home, or even at work if you have a private office atmosphere.

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2. Get comfortable. Many people sit in a lotus-style type of position, in which you sit cross-legged with the feet resting on the opposing thighs. This is not necessary, however.
 - You can sit cross-legged with your feet resting underneath your knees. Feel free to sit in a desk chair, on the floor, or any seat where you can get comfortable for a few minutes.

3. Breathe. Close your eyes and take several slow breaths, focusing on inhaling and exhaling deeply. Do this several times.
 - You'll become more relaxed as your muscles and cells receive more oxygen and your mind slows down.
 - Continue paying attention to the air that's coming in and going out.

4. Notice physical sensations. As you focus on the air you take in and let out, also notice the sensations throughout your body.
 - Pay attention to the weight of your body in your seat, noticing whether you're perhaps leaning further to the right or to

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the left. Pay attention to your body's temperature -- do you feel warm, cool, or in the middle?

5. Pay attention to the noises around you. Just let the noises be and notice their presence.
 - Whether it's the whistling of the fan, the hum of the air conditioner or heater, or the chatter of people's voices outside, just notice that these sounds are also present during your meditation.

6. Notice when your mind wanders. It's perfectly normal – especially for beginners – to wander off in thought, thinking about this, that, or another thing that pops into your mind.
 - When your mind wanders, just quietly bring your attention and awareness back to your breath, noticing the air slowly going in and going out.

7. End your mindfulness session when you're ready. Slowly open your eyes. Stretch. What do you feel at this moment in time? Are you more relaxed, calmer, or more focused?

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When you first start mindfulness meditation, you'll most likely find it difficult, if not impossible, to keep your mind from wandering. However, as you get more practice, it becomes easier to clear your mind and focus on your breath.

The key is to practice it consistently.

“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn't more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.”

- Sylvia Boorstein

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Making Mindfulness a Habit

As a science, researchers study mindfulness in order to discover answers to the questions they have about the benefits of mindfulness.

As a way of living, mindfulness is just that: being mindful and living in the present.

As a practice, cultivating mindfulness requires training. Any type of training requires dedication and practice. Practicing requires that you devote your time and attention to the matter.



If one is to make mindfulness a habit, therefore, it requires time, attention, and training.

Avoid making excuses for your failure to cultivate mindfulness; it is easy to fall into this trap.

There are many who give meditation or mindfulness a one-off try and then decide that the amount of time they attempted to practice mindfulness was simply not worth it because they didn't see any immediate benefits to it.

There are others who sincerely want to make a change in their life and decide to practice mindfulness, only to give up a few days later because "it's too hard" or they "don't have enough time." That is, they make excuses for why mindfulness doesn't work for them.

There are still others who want to change the story they have in their heads about who they are, what they can accomplish, and how they're going to achieve the goals they have laid out in front of them.

These people realize that mindfulness can completely change their lives in exchange for only a few minutes each day. They can become healthier, less stressed, happier, more at peace with themselves and their situations and much less distracted as they accomplish what they set out to do.

Prioritize & Take Action

A great psychologist and researcher, Albert Ellis, constructed a theory of cognitive thinking that said that individuals have power over their lives to choose healthy behaviors instead of negative, unhealthy ways of living.

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To make mindfulness meditation a habit, consciously choose when you're going to practice it and then do it:

- Mornings. You might want to use early mornings as a way to refresh. Wake up and immediately use this time to practice mindfulness to recharge and get ready for the new day.
- Evenings. Or perhaps you would prefer to set aside time before you go to sleep as a way to let go of all the negative thoughts and events throughout the day.
- Lunchtime. You could even use your lunch hour as a way to not only catch a short break from work, but also to calm your nerves should you find that anything in the first half of the day has caused you to feel stressed, distracted, or depressed.

Regardless of the time of day you choose to practice mindfulness, it's critical that you carve out time daily to devote your energy to creating a healthier you!

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*“Mindfulness isn’t difficult,
we just need to remember to do it.”*
- Sharon Salzberg



Other Meditation Styles

While mindfulness has been empirically studied as well as promoted throughout the United States and other countries, there are certainly other styles and forms of meditation that you can practice.

Regardless of which type of meditation you choose, the number one issue of importance is its priority in your life and whether you make time to practice it.

Other types of meditation include:



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1. **Mantra-based Meditation.** This is a form of meditation that uses a specific phrase or sound, otherwise known as a "mantra." While mindfulness focuses primarily on one's breathing and bodily sensations, mantra meditation focuses on a repeated sound, chant, or phrase.
2. **Visualization Meditation.** This type of meditation relies on specific imagery for a goal or accomplishment that you hope to achieve

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- Visualization meditation is often used in sports and has been shown to enhance an athlete's performance.
 - With visualization, your focus is on your desired outcome. You imagine a detailed picture of what the outcome looks like, feels like, and smells, sounds, or tastes like.
3. Moving Meditation. Some people prefer this type of meditation because it requires exercise, such as walking. Moving meditation is actually a yoga practice combined with mindfulness.
- Sometimes called “Breathwalk,” this technique encourages you to synchronize your breath with your footsteps, while still focusing on bodily awareness and sensations like breathing.
4. Body Scanning Meditation. This meditation involves bringing awareness first to one specific part of the body and then moving on to others.
- For example, you focus on the physical sensations, stress, or tension in your left

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arm and then intentionally release all tension in that area. Repeat with your right arm, and then with other areas of the body until fully relaxed.

5. Several other types of Mindfulness Meditation. There are also a few other different kinds of mindfulness which you can practice when you focus on your breathing. These include mindfulness listening, mindful immersion, mindful observation, and mindful awareness.
 - These other forms of mindfulness meditation involve setting your attention on a specific thing or task and paying attention to the details.
 - For example, mindful immersion is a form of mindfulness where you immerse yourself fully into the task at hand, thereby creating an entirely new, unique, and fresh experience.

As you set out to create a routine for practicing meditation, choosing to mix up the style of meditation can be beneficial if you feel monotonous or bored at times. For example, perhaps in your first week you can practice mindful listening while

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choosing to practice moving meditation in the second week.

“Meditation is to be aware of what is going on: in your body, in your feelings, in your mind, and in the world.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh



Take the Mindful 20/30 Challenge

As we go throughout our lives, there are literally thousands of decisions that we face each day. We're challenged with decisions from the moment our alarm clock startles us awake until the time our minds drift off to sleep at the end of the day.

It is estimated that the average adult makes about 35,000 decisions in a single 24-hour period:

- To hit snooze on the alarm clock or get up and start the morning
- What to eat for breakfast and how many servings
- What to wear: the green or the blue shirt? What shoes match the outfit?
- The decision to take the dog out for a short walk before leaving for work
- Should you go into work or call in sick?
- Whether we let a traffic or road rage incident dictate our mood for the day

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On and on the decision, wheel constantly spins. Yes, we're faced with problems, tasks, drama, stress, workloads, good news, bad news, indifferent news, world news, and mass amounts of information. We're bombarded with this data on a daily basis and we're expected to know what to do with it.

Our senses, physical bodies, emotional health, and spirit routinely experience an information overload!

Living in the present, being mindful, and deliberately practicing mindfulness is one way in which we can tell our bodies and our whole selves to slow down.



With a warring of our inner selves telling us that we're literally so busy that we don't have time to slow down, each one of us must make the decision to challenge ourselves to stay true to ourselves and live in the present.

Practicing mindfulness is a purposeful way in which we can literally be free of distractions. However, making the decision to practice mindfulness is only the first step.

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Making the commitment to mindfulness and resolving to incorporate mindfulness as a habit and daily routine takes effort. With a commitment and then a strong resolve to make it happen, you've almost won the battle to creating a healthier self! The last step is to take action.

Taking The Challenge

If you're up for the task, challenge yourself to put mindfulness into practice for 20 minutes each day for 30 consecutive days.

Follow these steps:



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1. Set aside at least 20 minutes.
2. Find a quiet space in which to meditate and experience the power of being mindful.
3. Choose to practice mindfulness at the same time each day for these 30 days or choose different times of the day, but ensure you take the time for mindfulness each day.
4. After the 30 days is over, reflect on how mindfulness has impacted, affected, or changed you.

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Did you complete the challenge? If not, it's okay
– just try it again!

“Now is the future that you promised yourself last year, last month, last week. Now is the only moment you’ll ever really have. Mindfulness is about waking up to this.”

- Mark Williams



Conclusion

Researchers and scientists who have studied the effects of practicing mindfulness often deliberately choose people who haven't had any exposure to mindfulness or meditation training.

This shows that, even with no prior training, a novice can reap the benefits of beginning mindfulness.

Some of these proven benefits include:

- 
- Lowering stress hormones in the body
 - Increase in energy
 - Increase in mental focus and stamina
 - Enhanced memory and attention
 - Boost to the immune system
 - Decrease in blood pressure and heart rate
 - Lower fatigue

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- Stronger brain functioning
- More effective processing of emotions and pain
- Increase in self-awareness
- Increase in compassion and empathy towards others
- Better sleep quality
- Lower rates of depression

Even though it may be difficult to understand how sitting in a quiet space for a few minutes each day can impact our lives, meditation can completely change our perspective, outlook, physical, emotional, and behavioral health.

Unfortunately, some people mistakenly think that mindfulness is something "new-agey" or something deeply spiritual that's out of reach for the typical person. Fortunately, neither of these things is true.

Indeed, mindfulness is a practice just like many other things that we do to attempt to regain control of ourselves and create a healthier life.

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With mounds of research at the helm, combined with a deliberate, purposeful action of making mindfulness a daily routine, you can transform the quality of your life.

You can practice mindful breathing, mindful listening, mindful observation or choose one of the many other forms of meditation. Channeling your focus and attention for just 10 to 30 minutes each day is enough to set you on the path to a healthier life.

