



Empty your mind to fill your soul

Using mindfulness to support good health and healing



‘Mindfulness’ is about quieting your mind and being in the moment. The present moment, or the ‘now’, lies between past and future. It is the moment when everything actually happens.

You can be mindful anywhere, anytime by becoming conscious of the mental chatter in your head and stepping back from it to fully appreciate, without judgment, the world around you and the feelings you are experiencing.

Commitment to this daily practice can deliver lifelong physical and mental benefits. This is because living mindfully stimulates the release of ‘happy chemicals’ in your brain and gut (serotonin).

When you anxiously replay memories or worry about the future, your body releases the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol. This relentless mental work can wear you out and, over time, the constant trickle of stress can damage your brain and body.



MEDITATION



Mindfulness is a form of meditation known as ‘clear mind’, which promotes grounding and clarity. ‘Open heart’ meditation is another technique that focuses on manifesting love, kindness, compassion and forgiveness.





Some techniques use the body to increase awareness, such as breathing, yoga, slow walking or Tai Chi; while others use chanting, drumming or music as a focus.



There is no right or wrong way to meditate, everyone does it differently. Eyes open and fully engaged with the world, or eyes closed and calmly focusing on each breath. Find a style that works for you!



HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Being mindful is not complicated, but it requires discipline to quiet your mind and

become totally present. Like any new skill, you need to practice regularly to master the art and enjoy the full benefits.

Think of your mind as a tool – the tool you use to write an email, plan a holiday or have a conversation. Living mindfully is about giving yourself permission to put down that tool when you are not using it. Be kind to yourself, step back from your thoughts and spend a little time in the ‘now’.

Landscape and flora photography by Keven Siegert



As a starting point, try completely tuning into your environment. Look around you. It may be familiar, but study it with fresh eyes.



Perhaps a flower has bloomed in the garden, or the rain has left a puddle on the street.

While you direct your senses outwards, acknowledge any thoughts you have, but do not judge or engage with them. Let them pass by and maintain your focus for as long as you can.

MONKEY MIND

Your thoughts will be very persistent. Sometimes they will completely sweep you away from your practice. This is normal. When you realise this has happened, gently disengage and move back to the present moment.



At first you may only keep your mind clear for a few moments, but this will increase with daily practice. Spending time in the present moment will leave you feeling mentally clear and emotionally calm; and better able to cope with life’s challenges.

The present moment is always there – waiting for you to plug back in when you need a break from your head.