

Mindfulness: CTA

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness refers to a state of staying present in the current moment. It involves being aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations without any judgement. Those include even the distressing ones which we may try to avoid.

It helps us foster openness and curiosity about how we are feeling. We neither suppress those feelings nor try to dwell on them unnecessarily.

Mindfulness can be experienced by learning and practicing techniques such as Yoga, Meditation, and breathing.

Why is Mindfulness important?

Mindfulness has gained immense popularity in current times because it has proven to be beneficial for our mental health.

It is a powerful activity that even brings positive change in our brain structure and circuitry, specifically in those parts that are involved in attention, processing sensation, and internal focus.

Mindfulness can help us tackle negative feelings because we come to view them as passing mental events rather than as facts. It exposes us to our distressing feelings as we are no longer avoiding them. This helps us feel comfortable with those feelings, and then the intensity of the distress or the emotional pain goes down.

An important aspect of mindfulness is controlling our attention, focusing on the present moment, and letting our distracting thoughts and feelings pass away. This has proven to help people become better at controlling or regulating their attention, and experience improved concentration/focus.

Mindfulness has also been linked with self-acceptance, self-compassion, gratitude, and spirituality. These values can help us lead a fulfilling life with greater satisfaction and positive experience.

Finally, mindfulness has also been incorporated into psychological therapies or mental health treatments. These are:

- Mindfulness based Stress reduction: People are taught mindfulness exercises that they can do every day. They are also encouraged to attend classes and a weekly retreat where they get to learn and practice mindfulness. This can help them manage stress in life which could be affecting their physical and mental health.
- Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT): This psychological therapy has been primarily used in the treatment of depression that keeps on occurring repeatedly. It helps people re-look at their relationship with their negative thoughts and feelings. They eventually come to see those feelings as passing events which no longer induce distress.

- Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT): DBT has been used for the treatment of suicidal and self-injurious behavior. It involves teaching people mindfulness, which they can use to cope with difficult events in their life without resorting to intense emotional reactions.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT): ACT helps people understand that avoiding their negative thoughts and feelings will lead them to experience more distress. It teaches people mindfulness so they no longer avoid those negative thoughts and accept them as they come. It also helps people realize what their values are, commit to those values, and bring change in their life.

These therapies have helped people with depression, anxiety, stress, worry, and substance use.

How to lead a more mindful life?

There are a few ways to lead a more mindful life.

Learn more about Mindfulness

- Reach out to people around you who practice yoga, meditation, or breathing exercises.
- Ask them about their experience.
- Use the internet to find out more about easy-to-do mindfulness activities.
- You can also look for books, videos, or courses that teach mindfulness.

Evaluate your beliefs around mindfulness

- How do you feel about practicing Mindfulness?
- Do you still feel it is not for you?
- You are allowed to have these doubts.
- Give mindfulness a try for at least 2 weeks, and then make a decision.

Take your first step

- Start with easy-to-do mindfulness activities such as body scan, mindful eating, mindful walking, and so on.
- Learn meditation or Yoga by joining an offline meditation center.

Consider seeing a talk therapist

- If you are experiencing distress or emotional pain in your life, you can benefit by talking about that to a professional.
- Some talk therapists may teach you mindfulness as part of a mental health treatment.
- You can look for therapists who practice therapies that have mindfulness as a component. These can be MBCT, DBT, ACT, and so on.

Point to Remember

If you are new to mindfulness, check in with your feelings actively. Mindfulness may make some people vulnerable to experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, or psychosis. It may not help people who are survivors of trauma because their triggers and memories can be too overwhelming for them. If you are a trauma survivor and wish to benefit from mindfulness, consider seeing a trauma-informed mindfulness teacher.

If you believe that mindfulness has negatively impacted you, reach out to a mental health

professional such as a Psychiatrist or a Psychotherapist at the earliest.

References

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