



Mindfulness Meditation

When most people hear the word meditation, they picture trying to completely clear their mind, sitting perfectly still, or chanting "ohm."

That is not what we are doing.

Mindfulness meditation is simply the practice of intentionally bringing your attention into the present moment. It can help reduce stress, improve attention and emotional regulation, and create more space between an impulse and the decision to act on it.

This can be especially useful in recovery because so much of our distress happens when our mind leaves the present. We replay the past, anticipate the future, imagine outcomes, react to fears, or get pulled into urges and emotions.

Mindfulness trains us to come back to what is actually happening right now.

Research has linked mindfulness practice with improvements in attention and emotional regulation and reductions in stress. Mindfulness-based approaches have also shown benefit for attention and impulsivity, including in people with ADHD. Slow, controlled breathing can help reduce physiological arousal and support a calmer nervous-system state.

You can use this exercise during an acute moment of anxiety, craving, anger, or emotional overwhelm. It can also become a daily practice. Even five minutes in the morning and five minutes at night can help train the brain to become better at returning to the present.

There Are Three Parts

Part 1: The Breath

- 1 Start by paying attention to your breathing.

1

**Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds.
Hold for 4 seconds.
Breathe out slowly through pursed lips for 6
seconds.**

Imagine gently blowing out a candle or slowly blowing up a balloon.

The exact numbers are less important than the pattern. Try to keep your breathing slow and consistent, and make your exhale longer than your inhale.

A longer, slower exhale can help shift the nervous system away from fight-or-flight activation and toward a calmer parasympathetic state.

This does not mean becoming sleepy or checked out. The goal is a state in which the body is more relaxed while the mind remains awake, alert, and clear.

**In for 4. Hold for 4. Out for 6.
Then repeat.**



Mindfulness Meditation

Part 2: Belly First, Chest Second

2 Now pay attention to where the breath is going.

As you inhale: Fill your belly first. Then allow your chest to fill.

As you exhale: Empty your chest first. Then allow your belly to empty last.

Think of the breath moving upward as you inhale and downward as you exhale.

This may take some concentration at first. That is okay.

You are already practicing mindfulness simply by paying enough attention to your breathing to notice how your body is moving.

With practice, this pattern becomes much more natural.

Part 3: Observe Without Judgment

3 Your job during the exercise is to pay attention to your breathing.

But your mind is going to wander.

That is supposed to happen.

You may start thinking about something that happened earlier, what you have to do later, a conversation, a problem, a craving, something you are worried about, or something completely random.

The goal is not to prevent your mind from wandering. The practice happens when you notice that it wandered.

Notice it.

Do not judge it.

Do not criticize yourself.

Do not decide you are bad
at meditation.

Simply bring your attention back to your breathing.

Then keep breathing. Your mind will eventually wander again. Notice it. No judgment. Bring it back. And repeat.

**A wandering mind does not mean the exercise is not
working. Bringing it back is the exercise.**



Mindfulness Meditation

Every Time You Come Back, You Are Practicing

Every time you notice that your attention has wandered and intentionally return it to your breathing, you are practicing the ability to redirect your attention.

You are teaching yourself: I can notice where my mind went without automatically following it. That skill matters far beyond meditation.

A craving can appear without needing to become an action.
An angry thought can appear without needing to become an argument.
Fear can appear without requiring you to immediately escape.
A memory can appear without requiring you to live inside it.
An impulse can appear without getting to make the decision.

The Practice

For a regular mindfulness practice:

5 minutes in the morning

5 minutes at night

During difficult moments, you can also use several rounds of the breathing pattern to help yourself slow down and return to the present before deciding what to do next.

You are not trying to empty your mind. You are not trying to stop thoughts. You are practicing noticing where your attention goes and intentionally bringing it back to here and now.

Remember

- 1 Inhale through your nose. Belly first, then chest.
- 2 Hold.
Stay relaxed and keep your attention on the breath.
- 3 Exhale slowly through pursed lips.
Chest first, then belly. Let the exhale be longer than the inhale.
- 4 When your mind wanders, observe without judgment. Bring it back to the breath.

**The goal is not to never lose the present.
The practice is learning how to come
back to it.**