

# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about being in control of your mind rather than your mind be in control of you.

Mindfulness is a skill we build over time, through *practice, practice, practice*.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the originator of mindfulness-based stress reduction (one of the first applications of mindfulness to mental health treatment) defined mindfulness as the awareness that arises when we:



**Pay attention**

**On purpose**

**In the present moment**

**Non-judgmentally**

## Mindfulness Activities

*(adapted from DBT Skills Training, Handouts and Worksheets, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, by Marsha M. Linehan)*

### Meditation & Breathing Activities

When practicing these activities, especially if you are new to mindfulness, practice in easier situations when you are calm. Try practicing both with your eyes open and your eyes closed, depending on the activity and your comfort level.

#### **Stone on a Lake**

Imagine that you are by a clear blue lake on a beautiful sunny day. Then imagine that you are a small flake of stone, flat and light. Imagine that you have been tossed out onto the lake and are now gently, slowly, floating through the calm, clear blue water to the lake's smooth, sandy bottom.

- Notice what you see, what you feel as you float down, perhaps in slow circles, floating toward the bottom. As you reach the bottom of the lake, settle your attention there within yourself.
- Notice the serenity of the lake; become aware of the calmness and quiet deep within.
- As you reach the center of yourself, settle your attention there.

#### **Spiral Stairs**

Imagine that within you is a spiral staircase, winding down to your very center. Starting at the top walk very slowly down the staircase, going deeper and deeper within yourself.

- Notice the sensations. Rest by sitting on a step, or turn on lights on the way down if you wish. Do not force yourself further than you want to go.
- Notice the quiet.
- As you reach the center of yourself, settle your attention there—perhaps in your gut or your abdomen.

### **Conveyor Belt**

Imagine your mind is a conveyor belt, and your thoughts and feelings are coming down the belt.

- Observe thoughts and feelings as they come down the belt.
- Label the types of thoughts or feelings coming by (e.g., worry thoughts, thoughts about my past, thoughts about my mother, planning-what-to-do thoughts, angry feeling, sad feelings).
- Put them in boxes nearby for another time.

### **Attending to your breath coming in and out, let your attention settle into your center.**

- Breathing in completely, notice and follow the sensations of your breath coming in.
- Let your attention settle into your center, at the bottom of your breath, at your solar plexus—or
- Let your attention settle in the center of your forehead, your “third eye,” at the top of your breath.
- Keeping your attention at your center, exhale, breathing normally, maintaining attention.

### **Dropping into the pauses between inhaling and exhaling.**

- Breathing in, notice the pause after inhaling (top of breath).
- Breathing out, notice the pause after exhaling (bottom of breath).
- At each pause, let yourself “fall into” the center space within the pause.

## [Sensory Activities](#)

### **Lie on the grass**

- Look up at the sky and watch the clouds roll by.
- Feel the grass with your fingers and the air on your skin.
- Notice the firm ground supporting your whole body.
- Smell the air, the grass, the earth, and anything else you notice.

### **Take a mindful walk**

- Walk without any purpose or intention other than the walk itself.
- Practice noticing each step and each breath.
- You can walk in nature or an urban area, in a beautiful park or a supermarket parking lot.
- Keep your steps slow, relaxed, and calm.

### **Mindful eating of a small item**

- Select a small food item like a Hershey Kiss, a raisin, a cherry tomato, etc.
- Hold the food in your hand and observe the way it looks and feels.
- Hold the food to your nose and notice the way it smells.
- Place the item in your mouth and notice the taste and texture.
- Chew and notice when you have the urge to swallow.

### **Awareness of your body**

- When sitting, notice your thighs on the chair. Notice the curve of your knees and your back.
- Pay attention to anything touching you. Try to feel your feet in your shoes, your body touching your clothes. Feel your arms touching a chair.
- Notice the sensations of your hands. Touch something—the wall, a fabric, a table top, a pet, a piece of fruit, a person. Notice the texture of what you feel, notice the sensations on your skin. Try it again with another part of your body.
- Focus your attention on the sensations in your chest, your stomach, or your shoulders.
- Focus your attention on the place in your body where you feel tight or tense.

### Activities to Focus on the Present Moment

- Sing in the shower
- Take an improv class (in person, or online)
- Go for a run and focus only on running
- Listen to what another person is saying, without thinking about what you want to say next
- Take a dance class (in person or online)
- Practice yoga
- Play a challenging board game
- Set a five-minute timer and do any single activity for the whole five minutes
- Draw the emotion you are currently feeling