

# Mindfulness

In today's go-go-go constantly checking our smart phones society, it seems we're rarely alone with our thoughts. While mindfulness is not new—the practice has origins dating back 2,500 years or more—it is the realization of today's continual “busy-ness” that is no doubt helping fuel the growing mindfulness movement. Research shows that the practice can decrease negative thoughts, reduce stress, boost memory, improve focus, increase emotional intelligence, and enhance relationship satisfaction.

## What is Mindfulness?

As opposed to our minds being too **FULL** of activity, worries, and concerns, mindfulness is the state of being conscious, aware of, or “mindful” of one's surroundings. Additional definitions of mindfulness include:

- The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and feelings;
- The process of calmly accepting, acknowledging the present moment and the feelings, thoughts, and bodily perceptions and sensations that exist; and
- The gentle effort to be continuously present (according to scientist, writer and mindfulness guru Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD)

The purpose of mindfulness is an awareness of being “**in the moment**” and the directions we give our mind to stay fully present in our experiences.

## What Meditation & Mindfulness is NOT

The concepts of “**meditation**” and “**mindfulness**” can be confusing, so here is some clarification.

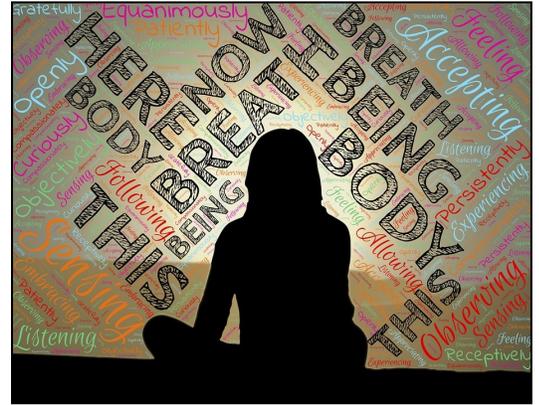
Meditation and mindfulness are **not**:

- Going into a trance or self-hypnosis
- Attempting to empty your mind
- Just for spiritual leaders
- Another form of positive thinking
- A reason not to work with mental health or medical professionals (though mindfulness can complement other supports)



## Why Mindfulness is Needed

- Fear and anxiety can cause pain or interrupt our lives and are worthy of our attention
- Depression, anxiety, or trauma can be frequently masked by withdrawal, alcohol or other drugs, abuse of food, lost work performance, and other physical symptoms like sleep disruption
- Meditation helps us learn that we can pay attention to unpleasant sensations and thoughts and still be okay
- Changing mental states through attentive mind-body experiences can transform destructive reactions into peaceful insight and acceptance



## Mindfulness is an Important Ally

- Balancing distortions, moving from hyper arousal and chronic stress to calm and relaxed attention.
- Reducing fight or flight responses, activated stress hormones, immune deficiencies, worsening depression, and memory impairment
- Checking chronic stress that becomes a debilitating barrier frequently associated with depression, panic and anxiety disorders, and mood regulation
- Lessening the dependence on alcohol and drugs that interfere with life
- Restoring balance, needed especially for combat Veterans and others suffering from PTSD, traumatic grief, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and individuals with social anxiety

**Stop *striving* and you will start *thriving*. Remember that everything happens in the present moment. For more support related to using mindfulness to help in work and life, contact the EAP.**

This is an edited version of the article written by Elaine M Schachelmayer, Tribune News Service, and edited by EAP staff, with permission from Volume 19, No. 8 Brown Bagger, Employee Assistance Report, [writeitrightllc.com](http://writeitrightllc.com)

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