

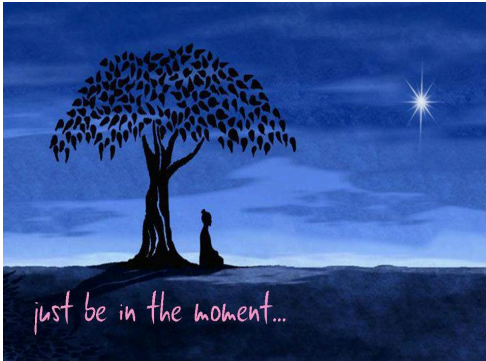


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Mindfulness ... What Is It, And Why Should I Do It?

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'Mindfulness' is talked about everywhere at the moment. And while it may seem new to Western culture, it is an ancient practice in Eastern philosophies. Mindfulness is defined as:

"Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn)

"Consciously bringing awareness to your here-and-now experience, with openness, interest and receptiveness" (The Happiness Trap)

The purpose of mindfulness is to bring you into the present moment, and to quiet your mind. If your mind wanders off, then bring your attention back to the present moment experience – remember ... there is nothing to change, control, or fix. The secret is to place all your attention on what it is that you are doing – be completely in the now and be curious about your 'now' experience. And rather than being led by thoughts and feelings, often influenced by past experiences and fears of future occurrences, you can live with full attention and purpose in the moment.

Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness creates space. It can provide the opportunity for clarity, focus, self-awareness, creativity, and compassion to arise. Mindfulness can also assist to respond more constructively; reduce anxiety and depression; lower stress and blood pressure; improve memory; and improve efficiency. Mindfulness is good for all of us!!

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Everyday Mindful Practices

- **Mindful Walking** – become aware of and absorbed in the movement of your body as you walk. Notice how the ground feels under your feet, your breath as you move, what you can see around you, how quickly are you walking? Use walking as an opportunity to ‘slow down’ or ‘let go’ of anything.
- **Mindful Listening** – take a moment to simply listen to the sounds in your environment. Don’t try and determine the origin or type of sounds you hear, just listen and absorb the experience of their resonance with your body.
- **Mindful Pause** – choose two times in your day when you will decide to bring your full attention to what you are doing – what do you notice? You may want to put a note in your calendar or phone to help you to remember to mindfully pause.
- **Mindful Phone Calls** – leave all of the phone calls you need to make, and the phone messages you need to return until a specific time in the day. Then when making these calls, mindfully pay attention to your breath, the speed of your conversation, and how well you are listening ... do this slowly.
- **Mindful Observation of YOU** – how often do you take time to ‘tune in’ to what you’re thinking, feeling or doing? Take the time to notice your thoughts, become aware of how you are feeling, and observe what body sensations you may have.
- **Mindful Eating and Drinking** – be curious about what you are about to put into your body. Is it hot, is it cold, what does it smell like, what are the subtleties you notice about it, what does the container it is held in feel like in your hands, what does that first mouthful taste like, how do you feel during and after you have consumed it? Are you mindfully enjoying what you’re putting in your body?
- **One Minute Breathing** – this can be done anywhere at any time, standing up or sitting down – all you have to do is focus on your breath for just one minute. You can just notice your breath without purposefully changing it, or you can choose to breathe in and count four, hold for four, then slowly let the breath out. Notice how your breath feels entering and exiting your body, how your nostrils feel, your chest, and your abdomen.
- **Body Scan** – scan your body from top to toe for any sensations of discomfort or tension. Attempt to soften these sensations in whichever way suits you. Next scan your body for any areas that lack sensation – don’t stress that you don’t feel any sensations, just be curious. Finally, scan your body for any sensations of comfort or ease. Be open to what is there.
- **Mindful Observation** – become aware of the environment you may be sitting or standing in. Pick something to focus on. Look at it as if it is the first time you’re seeing it.
- **Opening a Door** – at the moment you touch the door to open the door, allow yourself to be completely mindful of where you are, how you feel, and what you are doing. Try using this as a trigger to relax or to breathe more deeply.
- **Reading Your Calendar or To Do List** – look at it as if you have never seen it before. Rather than recurring appointments, ‘boring’ tasks, and ‘difficult’ conversations – see the possibilities that lie within your day ... within this moment.
- **Mindful Interruptions** – try to see an interruption in your day as an opportunity for a mindful moment. Take stock of what you’re thinking, how you’re feeling, and what you’re doing.
- **Mindful Tasking** – rather than finding yourself caught up in that familiar feeling of wanting something to end, cultivate contentedness in this current moment. Rather than a routine task, create an entirely new experience by noticing every aspect of your actions.
- **Five Things** – notice five things in your day that usually go unnoticed and unappreciated. These could be things you hear, smell, feel, see, or touch. Allow yourself to fall awake into the world and fully experience the environment.
- **Mindful ... Anything** – any activity you can think of can be used as a focal point for mindfulness. Just allow the activity to be your anchor to the present moment.

If you would like help in becoming more mindful to assist you with your thoughts, feelings or behaviours, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

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