



# Mindfulness

## What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means to pay attention to whatever you are doing, right now.

Everything except sleep can be done mindfully.

For example we can eat our food mindfully or we can be thinking about other things without paying attention to what we are eating.

## What is mindfulness therapy?

Mindfulness therapy means to be able to practice mindfulness every day and to use it during difficult situations in life.

Mindfulness makes us aware of:

- **Thoughts** “I just can’t do it”
- **Feelings**: sadness, anger etc.
- **Behaviour**: aggression, withdrawing
- **Physical changes**: fast breathing, weight in stomach, pins and needles, nausea.

Mindfulness therapy means to simply observe what is happening to us in those four areas, particularly with our emotions. So we can learn how our mind works.

## What are the benefits of mindfulness?

Your mind is like any other part of your body. There are benefits from understanding how it works and you can train it to work better.

1. **Stability of mind** – maintaining your mind in an alert state not dull or agitated.
2. **Flexibility of mind** – choosing what to think about.
3. **Self awareness** – being aware of how your mind works.
4. **Acting** rather than **reacting** – becoming less reactive, e.g. when you are angry choosing how you will act.

It’s not called a practice for nothing. Like any other form of therapy, change will require practise.

## How does it work?

Most of our lives are spent ‘doing’; mindfulness works by ‘not doing,’ simply by observing. It works by letting us see and know our thoughts and emotions.

Thoughts like “I just can’t do it” we believe without even thinking about it. By being mindful of our thoughts we realise that they are just thoughts that we are having and there is no need to believe them.

When we feel ‘anger’ we start to realise that, we are angry now, but it will pass.

Our mind stops being controlled by strong feelings and thoughts and slowly comes under our own control.



## How do we practise mindfulness?

- Sit in a comfortable position; check your body is well supported but soft and loose.
- If you choose to keep your eyes open look at a spot on the wall until it is just out of focus.
- Listen to your breath moving in and out of your body.
- Be aware of the breath coming in, a small pause and then gently flowing out.
- As your mind wanders, let the thoughts go by and then bring your mind back to your breathing.
- As each thought enters your mind, watch it float past like a cloud and then return to your breathing, a gentle flow in, pause and long sigh out.
- Try and build up your practise to 10 minutes, use it if you are struggling to fall asleep, as often it is our busy mind that stops us sleeping.

## Examples of using mindfulness in everyday life

### Mindful walking:

- Whilst walking you concentrate on the feel of the ground under your feet, and your breathing.
- Just observe what is around you as you walk, staying IN THE PRESENT.
- Let your other thoughts go, just look at the sky, the view, the other walkers; feel the wind, the temperature on your skin; enjoy the moment.

### Mindful showering

Instead of thinking what you are going to do later on, focus on the shower itself.

- Enjoy the sensation of warm water flowing over your skin.
- Be aware of the smell of your soap or shower gel.

**Talk to your GP or your midwife at your next antenatal clinic appointment if you feel you need help with anxiety or depression.**

### Further help with mindfulness:

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/pregnancy-and-new-parents>

<https://www.headspace.com/how-it-works>

<http://www.mindthebump.org.au/>

<http://anxiety.jeanhailes.org.au/>

<http://www.panda.org.au> Post and Antenatal Depression Association (PANDA) 1300 726 306

<http://www.howisdadgoing.org.au>

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