

# *Mindfulness 101*

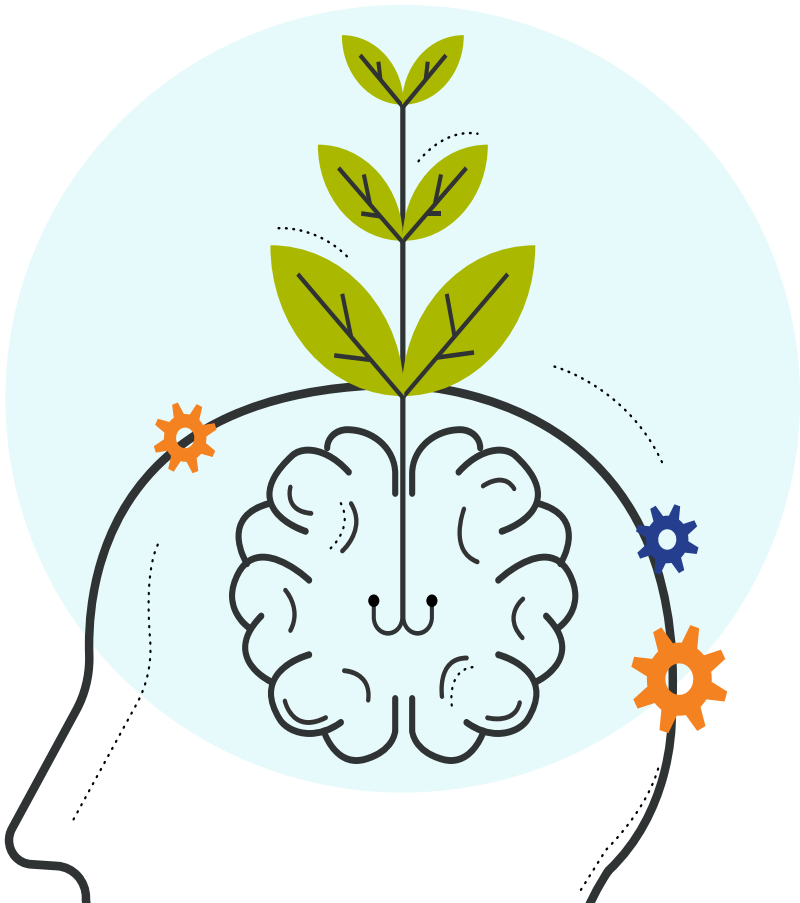
## *What is mindfulness?*

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Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way; **on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally**, in the service of self-understanding, wisdom, and compassion.

”

- Kabat-Zinn, 2014



### **"Paying attention on purpose"**

It trains us to attend to our life experiences in a more intentional and balanced way, being it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

### **"In the present moment"**

It enlightens our awareness to be fully present with experiences here and now, instead of mind being entrenched in the past or future.

### **"Non-judgementally"**

It cultivates self-compassion so that we can be kind to ourselves in time of stress, instead of being critical and judgmental that creates more suffering.

## **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF MINDFULNESS**

### **Does mindfulness equal to meditation? *No***

Mindfulness meditation is one school of meditation traditions; and yet, meditation is just one form of mindfulness practice. (Go to page 4 to find out more about different mindfulness activities.)

### **Does mindfulness equal to relaxation? *No***

The purpose of practicing mindfulness is not for relaxation; but relaxation could be a by-produce of mindfulness, when you are at ease in the present moment.

### **Do I need to be a Buddhist to practice mindfulness? Does it clash with my own religious practice? *No***

Mindfulness has become a secular practice and gained its popularity in Western countries in recent decades, though it was originally adapted from Buddhist traditions. (Go to page 3 to find out more about history of mindfulness movement.)

## **APPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS IN THE SECULAR WORLD**

Originated from Buddhist meditation traditions, the modern secular practice of mindfulness was largely sparked by the work of Kabat-Zinn (1982), who developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. The programme helps to alleviate stress and emotional suffering associated with a range of medical conditions.

In the next decade or so, mindfulness was introduced to the field of psychology and psychotherapy. One prominent programme is Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) developed by Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2002, 2013). Integrating MBSR with elements of cognitive therapy, MBCT was initially developed for prevention of recurrent depression, and has later been applied to treat a great number of physical and psychological conditions.

Over the years, MBSR and MBCT programmes have complemented each other, and driven the application and research of mindfulness practice across different fields, from

medicine, psychology, expanding to education, sports, legal system, and corporate setting.

Mindfulness programmes run by Mind Science Centre are based on the work of MBSR, MBCT, as well as other evidence-based Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), and are adapted to cater to the unique needs of different populations we serve, with the aim to build resilience across all ages in the community.

### ***Some evidence-based benefits of regular mindfulness practice***

(Williams & Penman, 2011):

- Feel happier and more contented with life
- Decrease anxiety, depression, and irritability
- Improve concentration and memory
- Enjoy better and more fulfilling relationships
- Reduce the risk of developing illness from chronic stress, e.g., hypertension
- Reduce the impact of serious conditions, e.g., chronic pain and cancer
- Bolster the immune system and help to fight off colds, flu, and other diseases

# Mindfulness practice

(Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013)

Mindfulness is not just about sitting straight and meditating, you can choose to do any of the following activities as your own mindfulness practice.

## SITTING MEDITATION

Sit either on a chair or on the floor (with the support of a meditation cushion, or zafu), and practice meditation by paying gentle attention to your chosen object of focus. The objects of attention could be breath, body, sounds, thoughts, feelings, and choiceless awareness which means anything that comes into your field of awareness.

\*If your body does not allow you to sit for long, you can choose to do a lying-down meditation as well



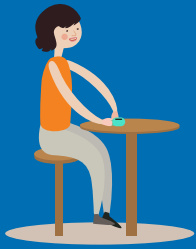
## BODY SCAN

Lie down on a yoga mat, and re-establish contact with the body by paying gentle attention to physical sensations of each part of your body, from toe to head.

\*To prevent falling asleep during body scan practice, you can choose to do a sitting-up body scan as well.

## MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Stand up or lie down on a yoga mat, and practice mindful movement by paying gentle attention to every move you make with your body. Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and any stretching exercise could be a good mindful movement practice, as long as you stay mindful.



## MINDFUL EATING

Complete a meal by waking up all your five senses and paying full attention to sight, smell, touch, taste, and even sound of food. It may give you a different experience that you have long forgotten.

## MINDFUL WALKING

Take an intentionally slow or fast walk that does not bring you to anything, but just to be with your body and breath.



## MINDFULNESS IN DAILY LIVING

You can turn every activity in your life into mindfulness practice, such as mindful brushing-teeth, showering, and cooking.

***Mindfulness is a way of living, and you just need to be creative.***

# Practice tips: Attitudes & Commitment

(Kabat-Zinn, 2013)

## 7 Attitudinal Foundation of Mindfulness Practice

### TRUST

Develop a basic trust in yourself and your own wisdom in making the best decision for yourself. Honour your feelings and intuition, and take full responsibility for yourself.

### BEGINNER'S MIND

Cultivate a beginner's mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time. This allows us to keep curious and open to every unique experience of life.

### NON-STRIVING

Mindfulness practice is about non-doing, just being. It has no goal other than for you to be yourself. With practice, movement towards your other goals will take place by itself.

### PATIENCE

Understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time. Training our mind and body takes times, so there is no hurry to expect immediate results.

### ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is not passive resignation. It means seeing things as they actually are. You are more likely to respond wisely, when you have a clear picture of what is going on.

### NON-JUDGING

Learn to observe your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and any experiences arise during your practice as they are, without judging them as good or bad, right or wrong.

### LETTING GO

Cultivate the attitude of letting go, or non attachment to pleasant or unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and situations. Just let them be, and observe them moment by moment.



### COMMITMENT

Keep consistent effort to train your mind "muscles", as how people train their body muscles. Make mindfulness practice into a daily habit, and just do it.

# My Mindfulness Practice Journal

- What's my experience of practicing mindfulness today?
- Any thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations?
- Before, during, and after practice?
- Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

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Set your own SMART goals for mindfulness practice

SMART stands for

**Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound**

e.g., Practice 3-minute breathing space 3 times/day, after waking up, during lunch break, and before going to sleep

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## References

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**Mind Gym, an initiative by Mind Science Centre**  
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