

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the short term for *mindfulness meditation practice*. This is a form of self-awareness training adapted from Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present, moment-by-moment, without making judgments about what we notice.

Our minds can be focused on things in the past, present or future. We often find ourselves ruminating about events that have already happened, or worrying about things that could happen. Mindfulness is a practice which encourages us to attend to the present moment. There is good evidence that mindfulness practice can help people cope more effectively with depression and anxiety and physical health conditions including chronic pain and illness.

If you haven't tried meditation before, though, you might notice that your attention wanders and is not easily controlled. Mindfulness strengthens our ability to pay attention in the present moment, but also increases our awareness of how our minds fluctuate, often in unhelpful ways. People who practice mindfulness regularly find that it helps their ability to stay in the present moment without being deflected.

Making judgments about our own experiences can often lead to us becoming quite distressed. For example, thoughts like "this is horrible" and "I can't take any more" are both judgments associated with distress. Practicing mindfulness teaches us to accept more of our experience without judging it. This has been shown to help people live more fulfilling lives.

Vocabulary

ruminating - thinking carefully and deeply about something
wanders - not paying attention to something
fluctuate - keeps changing and becoming higher and lower
deflected - moved in a different direction
distressed - very unhappy, worried, or upset

Comprehension Questions

1. What is mindfulness?
2. Why should we practice mindfulness?
3. What does it mean to 'cultivate a non-judgmental attitude'?

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever tried to meditate?
2. Would you be interested to go to meditation classes?
3. Why or how do you think meditation works?
4. Do you know anyone who meditates?
5. What do you think of people who meditate?
6. Do you think you need to practice mindfulness?
7. What benefits do you think mindfulness brings?
8. What would be the best time of the day and the best place to practice mindfulness?
9. Do you think practicing will help you live longer?
10. Do you think everyone should try mindfulness for twenty minutes each day?

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