

## Mindful Breathing Practice

In *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*, Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein describe mindfulness as “the practice of cultivating nonjudgmental awareness in day-to-day life” and bringing “full attention to the body and mind in the present without trying to alter or manipulate the experience.”



**In mindful breathing, you will essentially just breathe normally and cultivate an awareness of breathing in and out.** There are no special techniques of breathing in this practice. As is human, after focusing on your breath for some period of time, your mind will wander. This is normal. Simply notice and acknowledge that your mind wandered, and then gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Read the following meditation to yourself, pausing after each paragraph. You can practice mindful breathing for 5 minutes, or for 15 minutes by just lengthening the pauses between paragraphs.

Take a few moments to be still. Give thanks to yourself for taking the time for this practice.

Bring your awareness to your breath, noticing where you feel it most in your body. This might be in your nose, sinuses, neck, chest, belly, or somewhere else.

Breathing normally and naturally, be aware of breathing in and breathing out. Simply maintain this awareness of breath. Breathing in and breathing out.

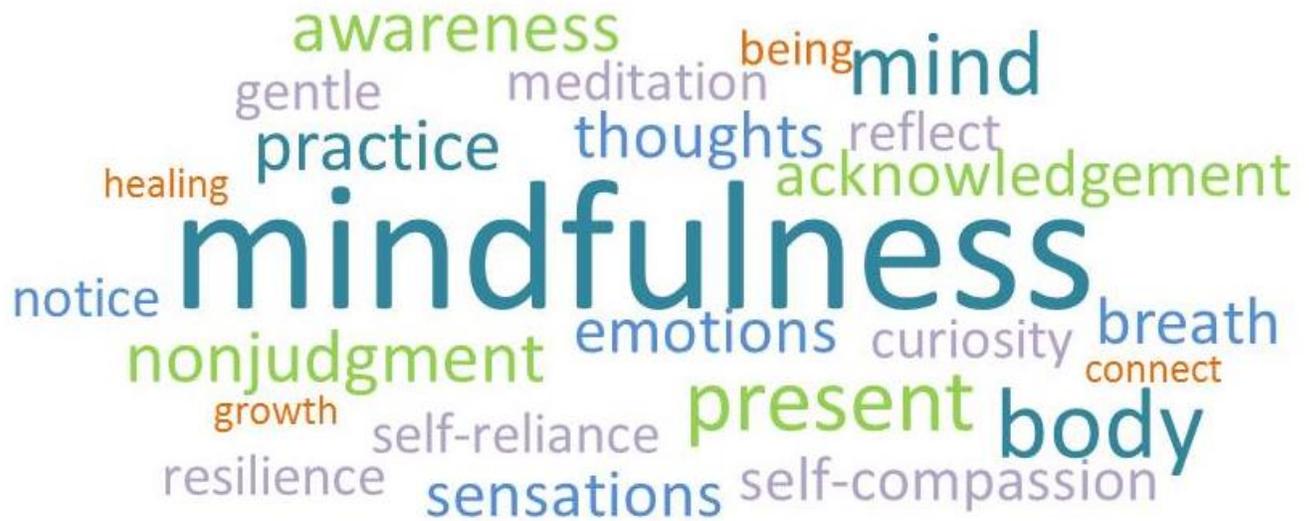
Without judgment, be aware of your breath as it ebbs and flows in and out like the waves of the sea. In this moment, there is no place else to go or to do. Just be in the here and now, noticing your breath. Breathing in and breathing out.

From time to time, your attention may wander away from the breath. When you notice this, simply acknowledge where you went and then gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Breathing normally and naturally, just be aware of your breath as it comes and goes without manipulating it in any way.

As you come to the end of this meditation, give thanks for yourself for taking this time to be present, realize that this is a gift you give yourself.

Adapted from Stahl, B., & Goldstein, E. (2010). *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.



Mindfulness can be applied to any moment during our days. Indeed, we can incorporate mindfulness informally into our daily lives by pausing briefly to take note of sensations like the smell of our shampoo or the feel of the water when we take a shower, the warmth of the sun as it hits our face, or the beauty of the mountain at sunset. We can build a practice of checking in with ourselves—noticing what we are thinking and feeling both physically and emotionally—that can help us be proactive in managing the stresses of our lives. We can even be more mindful in our interactions with others through simple things like really stopping and listening to their response when we ask how they are (or giving a more authentic and mindful response when someone asks us how we are).

“Mindfulness is really a playful adventure within life itself . . . a befriending and inhabiting of this present moment for its own sake.”

--Jon Kabat-Zinn

When we embody the principles of nonjudgment, self-compassion, curiosity, awareness, and acknowledgement, embracing the present moment (even when that moment is one of pain or distress) can be calming, informative, and liberating.



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