

# MINDFULNESS

## THE ART OF BEING



T: +27 51 401 2853 / +27 58 718 5125 / +27 51 505 1989 / E: [scd@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scd@ufs.ac.za) / [scclqq@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scclqq@ufs.ac.za) / [scdsouth@ufs.a.za](mailto:scdsouth@ufs.a.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za/kovsiecounselling](http://www.ufs.ac.za/kovsiecounselling)

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## THE ART OF BEING

Tobias van den Bergh

These days, it seems that we have become incapable of doing just one thing at a time. We often eat while at the same time watching a movie or series. We listen to someone talking while texting or checking our phones.

We regularly multitask, wrongfully thinking that it is the most effective way to get through that to-do list.

Often, we engage in these behaviours without noticing that we are engaging in these behaviours. We are on autopilot, mindlessly doing things with very little or reduced awareness.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

### RESEARCH SAYS:

*Regularly practising mindfulness has shown to increase wellbeing, alleviate stress, lower blood pressure, decrease depression and anxiety, improve concentration and rewire one's brain.*

*Although mindfulness practice has numerous possible health benefits, it is not a silver bullet.*

*It is important to seek professional help if you are struggling or feel overwhelmed. Nevertheless, it is worth trying out!*



*We eat without eating,  
watch without watching &  
listen without listening.*

We often don't realise that our habits, although enjoyable or rewarding, are causing us more harm than good. It limits our awareness and thus limits our experience, which could potentially increase our experience of stress.

For instance, a simple activity such as taking a shower or bath could induce a relaxation response within our bodies, but if you are taking a shower while constantly thinking of the tests and assignments coming up or about something challenging that happened during the day, your body won't be relaxing. In fact, it would probably induce a stress response. That's not to say that you should NOT think or NOT feel. With mindfulness the aim is not to stop your mind from doing what it is doing.





In other words, the aim is not to control our thoughts or emotions, but rather to become increasingly aware of what is happening within and around us, without becoming entangled in the thoughts or feelings our mind spontaneously generates. Mindfulness teaches us to guide our minds and focus on the present moment, without judgement.

Practising mindfulness is a deliberate process whereby we actively focus our mind on the here-and-now, while being aware of our surroundings and simply noticing (without trying to change it) where our mind tends to wander and gently guiding it back to the present moment. To accomplish this, use an anchor such as your breath to guide your mind to the only moment you'll ever have, which is the NOW.

***"Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experience."***

**Jon Kabat-Zinn**

# Mindfulness can be defined as:



*“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.”*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

*“A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.”*



Oxford Dictionary

*“Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality.”*

Thich Nhat Hanh



# BASIC STEPS TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

1

Find a comfortable place that is relatively quiet and free of distractions.

Sit straight-backed on a chair or with crossed legs on the floor, resting your hands on your lap or cupping them together. You could set a timer for 10 minutes to indicate the end of the meditation.

2

Close your eyes and take a couple of deep, cleansing breaths. Then, as you breathe normally, focus your mind on the experience of breathing. You can focus on an aspect of your breath such as the feeling of the air as it moves in through your nostrils and as it flows out of your mouth. You may choose to focus on the sensation of your belly rising and falling with each breath.

3

When your mind is anchored by noticing the flow of your breath, you can slowly widen your awareness. You may focus your mind on sounds that are close by and sounds that are further away. You may shift your focus to the different sensations you feel in your body or to ideas (i.e. thoughts) that your mind is producing. Do this while holding an awareness of the act of breathing.

4

Remember, the goal is to constantly and deliberately focus your mind on the task at hand. It is natural for the mind to wander. One way to help you notice where your mind wanders to is to remember the acronym **EMITS** – our mind produces Emotions, Memories, Images, Thoughts, and/or Sensations.

5

When your mind wanders, embrace and briefly consider the emotion, memory, image, thought or sensation it produced **without judging** it as good or bad. Just notice and acknowledge where your mind wandered to (i.e. non-judgementally) and gently and compassionately return your focus to your breathing. Then expand your awareness again.

6

When your meditation comes to an end, slowly open your eyes. Notice your environment – pay attention to what you see around you, what you notice without judging anything as good or bad. **When your mind judges, simply notice** that thought for what it is: a thought that happens within you, but it is NOT you.

There are numerous ways to formally and informally practise mindfulness, such as body-scan meditation, drinking tea mindfully, counting meditation, mindful walking or simply washing the dishes. The main goal remains to constantly focus your mind on the present moment, non-judgementally. This is an active process, and the more you practise, the greater the possible health benefits you could reap. This way, you become more of a human being than merely a human doing.





# RESOURCES



## WEBSITES

[www.yogiapproved.com](http://www.yogiapproved.com)  
[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)  
[www.freemindfulness.org](http://www.freemindfulness.org)  
[www.pocketmindfulness.com](http://www.pocketmindfulness.com)

## APPS

Headspace  
Stop, breathe and think  
Mindfulness App  
Happify  
Brain.FM  
Joyable  
Calm

## CONTACT US AT:

+27 51 401 2853 (BFN)

+27 58 718 5125 (QQ)

+27 51 505 1989 (SOUTH)

[scd@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scd@ufs.ac.za)

[scdqq@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scdqq@ufs.ac.za)

[scdsouth@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scdsouth@ufs.ac.za)

## BOOKS

"The Power of Now" by Eckhart Toll

"Feel the fear and do it anyway" by Susan Jeffers