

# Mindfulness - What is It?

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The practice of mindfulness has roots in the meditative practices of mainly Eastern religious traditions though here we offer a secular pragmatic approach for health care professionals. Mindfulness is simply *paying attention on purpose in the present moment in a non-judgemental way during everyday activities.*

The essence of mindfulness is being able to observe and attend to the experience without hastily making judgments or being reactive in a manner that would interfere with or lessen our capacity to understand and act skilfully.

The health promoting qualities of mindfulness are being confirmed in an increasing number of research articles and the emerging neuroscience on the interdependence of cognition, emotion and behaviour.

Dr Ron Epstein and his colleagues at University of Rochester Medical School in their mindfulness research describe four qualities of exemplary health professionals: attentive observation, critical curiosity, informed flexibility – the ability to match the appropriate response to the situation at hand and presence.

Mindfulness is a natural ability that we all possess, use and can enhance.

## **How can mindfulness be enhanced?**

- Regular formal mindfulness meditation practices
- Engaging in our daily life through mindfulness
  - Non-meditation practices that promote mind-body awareness through hobbies, sports, yoga, tai chi, music, reflective journaling, psychotherapy
  - Mindful attention we can give to daily routines or habits and becoming aware of the moments we have switched into an 'autopilot' mode in our life

## **Rationale for Promoting Mindfulness**

- To improve the quality of care, reduce burnout and promote professional well-being by:
  - Increasing awareness of one's affective, cognitive and social factors that contribute to medical errors.
  - Increasing the capacity for lowering one's own reactivity to challenging situations
  - Communicating mindfully to reduce the risk of misunderstandings, to be open to new information and acknowledge the contributions of team members

## **Research**

An excellent bibliography and summary of key research findings available through the Mindfulness Awareness Research Center (MARC), UCLA Semel Institute, University of California <http://marc.ucla.edu/> (click on resources)

Krasner, M.S., Epstein,R.M., Beckman. H; Suchman, A.L., Chapman, B., Mooney, C.J. and Quill,T.E. (2009) Association of an Educational Program in Mindful Communication With Burnout, Empathy, and Attitudes Among Primary Care Physicians. *JAMA*. 302:12, 1284-1293 (doi:10.1001/jama.2009.1384)

## **SUGGESTED RESOURCES For MINDFULNESS MEDITATION**

Listed here are only a few of the many and growing number of many excellent resources.

### **Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation Resources – audio**

Jon Kabat-Zinn *Mindfulness For Beginners* Audio CD may be ordered through most booksellers or at <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>  
Consider Series 2 which introduces a range of mindfulness meditation practices

Introductory online course and audio downloads at The Insight Meditation Center (IMC)  
<http://www.audiodharma.org/onlinecourses.html>  
<http://www.audiodharma.org/talks-intromed.html>

Introduction to mindfulness meditations that you can practice on your own access these audio files through University of California Los Angeles, Mindfulness Awareness Research Center  
<http://marc.ucla.edu/> (click on *mindful meditation*)

Susan Piver (Ed) (2008) *Quiet Mind. A Beginner's Guide to Meditation*. Six simple practices presented by leading Buddhist teachers and includes a CD of guided instructions

### **Books on Mindfulness Meditation**

Martina Bachelor (2001) *Meditation for Life*

Stephen Bachelor (1997) *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*.

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness*.

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) *Wherever you go, There you are*.

Jack Kornfield (1993) *A Path With Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*.

Jack Kornfield (2000) *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*.

Bhante H. Gunaratana *Mindfulness In Plain English*. Available for purchase and full text available online: <http://www.budsas.org/ebud/mfneng/mind0.htm>

Bob Sharples (2005) *Mediation and Relaxation in Plain English*

### **Mindfulness Meditation Readings for Health Professionals:**

Mark Epstein (1998) *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart. A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness. Lessons from Meditation and Psychotherapy*.

Mark Epstein (2007) *psychotherapy without the self. a buddhist perspective*.  
Fabrizio Didonna (Ed) (200) *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness*.

Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegel, and Paul R. Fulton, (Ed) (2005) *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*.

Kevin Griffin (2004) *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*.

Saki F. Santorelli (2000) *Heal Thy Self: Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine*

Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, John Teasdale (2002) *Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse*.

Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn. (2007) *The Mindful Way through Depression. Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness*.

## **Websites**

**Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)** is designed to help people who suffer repeated bouts of depression and chronic unhappiness. It combines the ideas of cognitive therapy with meditative practices and attitudes based on the cultivation of mindfulness.

<http://www.mbct.com/Index.htm>

### **Center for Mindfulness in Medicine at UMASS Boston - Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**

Site includes links to MBSR program across North America and internationally.

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/home/>

A website on Buddhism and addictions with talks that can be downloaded:

<http://www.kevingriffin.net>

## **Mindfulness Meditation Training Resources for Therapists**

Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society, University of Massachusetts's Medical School, Worcester, MA 01655 <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>

Insight Meditation Society, 1230 Pleasant Street, Barre, MA 01005 [www.dharma.org](http://www.dharma.org)

Spirit Rock, P.O. Box 909, Woodacre, CA 9473 [www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org)

Cape Cod Summer Symposium [www.neei.org](http://www.neei.org)

True North Insight Meditation [www.truenorthinsight.org/](http://www.truenorthinsight.org/) (A Canadian organization)

### **For additional information, you can contact:**

[Ted.Bober@oma.org](mailto:Ted.Bober@oma.org)

[Ann.Davidson@oma.org](mailto:Ann.Davidson@oma.org)