

Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

“Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn



What is mindfulness? How is it practiced? How to access it?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. It is an ability that every human being already possesses.

Understanding Mindfulness

Instinctually we are wired for survival, not for happiness. This often results in our innate *negativity bias*, our natural tendency to react more readily and dwell on negative stimuli like stress, fear, and doubt. To achieve mindfulness, we must be intentional about being positive. We are “*Velcro for the bad, Teflon for the good.*”

Why Mindfulness is Important?

- Increases self-awareness
- Decreases judgmental thinking
- Allows us to react appropriately to situations
- Brings us to the present moment on purpose
- Allows us to be aware of bodily sensations
- Allows us to determine whether or not an experience is pleasurable, not pleasurable, or neutral without bringing in any other ideas

What are the Psychological Benefits of Mindfulness?

- Reduced rumination
- Decreases obsessive thinking
- Stress reduction
- Decreases negative emotional reactivity
- Increases cognitive flexibility
- Boosts working memory
- Increases focus

Activities That Can Also Be Mindfulness Practices

Healthy activities can include: reading, writing, yoga, art, gardening, dancing, listening to music, enjoying nature, and swimming.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space – and that is the power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” – Viktor Frankl

How to Practice Mindfulness

- **Take a seat** – find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet
- **Set a time limit** – 5 to 10 minutes is best for beginners
- **Notice your body** – you can sit or kneel, just make sure you are in a stable position
- **Feel your breath** – follow the sensation going out and in
- **Notice when your mind has wandered** – simply return your attention to your breath
- **Be kind to your wandering mind** – don't judge yourself or obsess over thoughts, just return to your breath

Understanding Self-Compassion

What is Self-Compassion?

- Treating ourselves with same kindness we would readily give to a friend or loved one
- Being flexible and non-judgmental with ourselves

The Three Components of Self-Compassion

- **Mindfulness** – ability to know when we are suffering
- **Common humanity** – understanding that suffering is part of life, and that we all go through challenges
- **Self-kindness** – offering ourselves compassionate words/gestures to sooth ourselves

Benefits of Self-Compassion?

- Reduced hyper-arousal/parasympathetic nervous system normalizes
- Avoid burnout (brain going into catastrophic mode)
- Heightened receptiveness and curiosity to our surroundings and ourselves
- Decreased inflammation
- Improved immune system functioning
- Blood pressure and heart rate decrease
- Ability to see new possibilities

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