



# How to practise mindfulness

Practising mindfulness can help to promote positive wellbeing for you and your learning community. Learn more about how.

## How do you practise mindfulness?

### There are two main ways of practising mindfulness

The first is 'formal' practice, otherwise known as mindfulness meditation. This means sitting in a chair doing nothing other than paying attention in a mindful way, whether that's for 40 minutes or doing a mini meditation for one minute. The second way to practise mindfulness is 'informal' practice. This means being mindful in our day-to-day life while we're doing things, for example, paying attention when in class, while driving or washing the dishes.

### Meditation is a traditional pathway

Mindful meditation can be practised in a variety of ways such as moving attention through various parts of the body (body scan) or concentrating on the breathing. In either case, you're using the sense of touch while observing (but not reacting to) any thoughts or feelings that come up. Simply practise noticing experiences, thoughts and emotions with a sense of curiosity rather than judgment and, if the attention wanders to the past or the future, keep gently bringing the attention back to the body or breathing.

Here's how to give breath meditation a try:

- Let yourself be free of any expectations about how the meditation should go
- adopt a relaxed but upright sitting posture with the eyes closed
- when settled, using the sense of touch, focus the awareness on the breath
- observe and acknowledge what's being experienced in that moment, without trying to change thoughts or feelings or to solve any problems that arise
- focus as you breathe at the point where the air enters and leaves the body
- if strong thoughts or feelings arise, practise making space for them without resisting or fighting them, all the while gently refocusing the attention back on the breath
- after the time you gave to practise, gently open your eyes, reconnect with the environment, and then gently move onto whatever needs your attention.

You may want to start with five or 10 minutes of meditation once or twice a day and then build it up as you become more comfortable with the practice.

### **It's not always easy but keep going**

You'll find your thoughts wandering and that's completely normal. There's no need to berate yourself when the mind wanders – just gently bring it back to the breathing each time. It's the very practice of repeatedly bringing your attention back to your breath, and learning to be accepting and self-compassionate, that creates a mindful state.

### **You can practise mindfulness in nearly everything you do**

You can take a mindful approach to everyday activities, no matter how mundane or simple they might be. The so-called informal practice of mindfulness is easy to build into your day. Next time you have a snack, take your time and focus on the feel, smell, taste and sensation of chewing. You can bring your full awareness to the task of brushing your teeth or washing the dishes. The beauty of mindfulness is that you can do it anywhere, anytime, with no special equipment required.

## **Mindfulness practice in the classroom**

### **Why not incorporate mindfulness into your classroom?**

You can practise your daily routine and share the benefits with children and young people by:

- giving them the opportunity to learn mindfulness meditation techniques
- sharing how mindfulness increases self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and better decision-making
- encouraging them to identify situations when they feel mindfulness would be helpful
- encouraging children and young people (and your colleagues) to use the Smiling Mind website to learn more about and practise mindfulness
- using mindfulness to focus in on a particular skill (for example, self-awareness).

Not all children or young people will be interested or engaged with mindfulness, and that's OK. Offer it as

an optional classroom activity and invite children to participate in their own time.

### **Consider having information available for families so they can support the practice at home.**

Involving families and helping them understand what mindfulness is and how it supports their children's learning means that the whole learning community can benefit from the practice. You could invite families to sit in on a classroom mindfulness session (Smiling Mind has resources to develop your skills in facilitating mindfulness meditation) or talk to your leadership team about teaching mindfulness as part of your social and emotional curriculum.

### **Be You Wellbeing Tools**

Learn more about specific tools for mindfulness in [Wellbeing Tools for You](#) and [Wellbeing Tools for Students](#).

## **References**

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