



Does your mind feel too full? It's time to try **mindfulness**

Juggling personal, family and work responsibilities. Financial pressures. Information overload. Life is stressful and it's easy to get distracted, lose focus and feel overwhelmed. Your work, relationships and health can all suffer.

Using simple mindfulness techniques that you can use anytime offers a convenient way to focus on the present moment, slow down your body and mind to help you better cope with everyday stress and feel more in control of your life.

What are the benefits?

Studies show that practicing mindfulness on a regular basis can be profoundly relaxing. It reduces anxiety, helps lift moods, improves attention and performance, and increases an overall sense of well-being.

How does it work?

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. The simplest is to focus on your breath. When you focus on each inhale and exhale, your breathing slows down and, in turn, your heart rate also slows down, helping any anxious, stressful feelings fade away. Your thinking becomes clearer. With practice, you'll feel more focused, energetic and able to handle life's challenges.



How to get started

- Find a quiet place to sit for 5 minutes or so, and gently close your eyes if you want.
- Relax your stomach, shoulders and jaw and begin to focus on your breath flowing in and out. Don't force it. If your mind wanders from your breath, bring it back by saying to yourself "I breathe in and I'm calm," and on the exhale say, "I breathe out and I let go."
- If intrusive thoughts arise, observe them like clouds drifting by without judgment, and return your attention to your breathing.

Additional mindfulness techniques include focusing your full attention on everyday objects like a candle flame or on simple activities like eating. For example, while eating, chew each bite very slowly, noticing the textures in your mouth and the flavors bursting on your tongue.

Remember, Health Advocate's Licensed Professional Counselors offer confidential help and coping techniques to help you identify and address your stressors, so you can feel more calm and in control. The program is available at no cost to employees, spouses, dependents, parents and parents-in-law. **In a crisis, help is available 24/7.**

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