

Sitting Meditation

in the tradition of Vipassana, Insight or Mindfulness

What is mindfulness? One definition of mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” Try approaching it the way you would play with a child—or be attentive to something or someone you find easy to love—rather than as a somber practice that you “should” do. Consider it a gift you are giving yourself, opening it as often as you wish.

What is mindful meditation? Mindful meditation is a formal practice of essentially focusing your mind on the present moment experience, and noting your experience without trying to change it. Meditation can help reduce stress because it allows you to observe your habitual reactions to stressors, and respond consciously, rather than getting caught up in the constant activity of the mind.

How to practice meditation:

- Choose a time and place where you can meditate without being interrupted. It’s OK if there are some noises in your environment—it’s just part of the present moment.
- When you start, it’s a good idea to meditate for only a few minutes at a time on a regular basis, daily if possible. With practice, you can increase the time bit by bit. It can be helpful to set a timer (the free *Insight Timer* app is useful) for 1, 5, 15, or 30 minutes—whatever is doable.
- Sit in a comfortable, relaxed, yet alert position. You may sit in a chair with thighs parallel to the floor and feet grounded, or on a cushion on the floor so the knees are level with the crest of the hip bones, supporting an uplifted spine.
- Once you are seated, know you are ready to begin, and bring your attention to your breathing without trying to change or manipulate it. Just notice how it feels as your breath passes through the nostrils or moves the abdomen. (You may use breath awareness as your main point of focus for your entire meditation, or choose another point of focus, such as body sensations, sounds, or thoughts and emotions.)
- When you notice your mind has wandered, there’s no need to judge yourself—it’s the nature of the mind to think. Simply notice where your attention has gone, acknowledge it, then bring your mind back to the main point of focus you have chosen (e.g., the experience of breathing in and breathing out). This may happen frequently during a session.
- During your meditation, emotions, mental reactions, or physical discomfort may arise. Remember, there is no need to try to get rid of these experiences. It can be useful to open to them; they are part of the present moment, and therefore part of the meditation. (For example, if you feel pain, notice the difference between the sensations and any thoughts about them. Or, if you feel impatient to finish the meditation so you can move on to your next activity, see if you can explore the feeling of impatience. Where do you feel it in your body? Does it feel tight? Does it affect your breathing? etc.) When you are ready, return to your main point of focus.



After your meditation, notice how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally. With practice, over time, you will build your awareness like a muscle. You may naturally become increasingly mindful in ordinary activities as well. Allow mindfulness to be a moment-to-moment adventure.