

Mindfulness

If you're looking to try mindfulness for the first time, or you'd like to continue practising meditation from home, this guide can help. Here is a curated list of free and paid-for resources to help you practise mindfulness and meditation without leaving the house.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment.

This means being aware of what's going on *right now*. When we lead busy lives, we very rarely stop and think about what's going on around us. Mindfulness is about practising that in a number of ways.

What does it mean to be “aware of the present”?

Mindfulness can seem like a vague concept because there are lots of different ways to practise it. Here are some concrete examples of what that can mean:

- During a journey, taking notice of the things you pass along the way – the sights, the sounds, and the smells.
- Making small changes to your routine to be more aware of where you are and what you're experiencing
- Sitting for a moment and just listen to the things around you
- Closing your eyes, breathing slowly, and paying attention to whatever thoughts come to you, recognising them, then letting them go

So is it a form of therapy, a religion, or something else?

Mindfulness is a practice with Buddhist origins, and has been practised for thousands of years. Many people treat mindfulness as a religious practice, but it has also been adopted in western healthcare, and you can receive mindfulness therapies on the NHS.

You don't have to be religious to practise mindfulness – you can just practice the technique if you want. After all, that is what it is at the core – a technique for stepping back and being more aware of what's going on.

Does it actually work, or is it just a fad?

Mindfulness-based therapy has been shown to be an effective treatment for a variety of mental health difficulties, including depression. The NHS currently offers mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for people who have recurring depression with three or more relapses.

Mindfulness can help improve your wellbeing by:

- Increasing your awareness of your thoughts
- Detaching you from your thoughts and helping you to consider whether or not they are helpful
- Helping you practise thinking about your thoughts in a non-judgemental way and being kinder to yourself
- Making you feel calmer.

Mindfulness can also be helpful for people who don't have mental health difficulties. We all deal with stressful events, worry about things, and have negative thoughts that go round and round in our heads. Mindfulness can help us to be more aware of how we're feeling. It can help us step back from our situation to calm down. Above all, it can help us feel like we're in control, because we can always detach ourselves from our thoughts and feelings.

Is it right for me?

Practising mindfulness is generally a helpful exercise, but there are some situations where it has the potential to be harmful. If you have severe depression, or you're experiencing a serious episode, making yourself even more aware of your thoughts and feelings might be too distressing to help. It may be more suitable if you experience mild depression. But it's important to check this with your GP.

How do I practise Mindfulness?

There's a wide range of ways to practice mindfulness, whether you read a mindfulness book, listen to a mindfulness audiobook, attend a mindfulness session, or even go on a mindfulness retreat. However, not everybody who teaches mindfulness is qualified to deal with mental health difficulties and how you might react to a mindfulness session.

The problem is that mindfulness has exploded in popularity, and it can be difficult to work out which courses, books, or groups actually work. This is why many people are understandably wary of mindfulness.

The Oxford Mindfulness centre has some tips on practising mindfulness safely:

- Try out something of a low-intensity, such as a mindfulness book, recording, or an app. Something like a retreat is best thought of as a “high-intensity” way of practising mindfulness, and could be riskier.
- If you want to practise mindfulness with a teacher, consult a mental health professional like a GP or specialist first, and see if they have any recommendations.
- Choose a teacher from the UK Network of Mindfulness-based Teachers.

<https://guideposts.org.uk/wellbeing/mindfulness/>

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<https://guideposts.org.uk/support-us/>

Free resources

General information on mindfulness

Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/how-to-learn-mindfulness/#>

- Information on mindfulness, how to practice it and how it can help with mental health problems
- Links to other resources including training courses

NHS – Mindfulness

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

- Learn what Mindfulness is, how it helps mental wellbeing, how to be more mindful, the different Mindfulness practises, is Mindfulness helpful for everyone and more tips on wellbeing
- Part of their the NHS A-Z Health resources with links to other resources

Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/mindfulness>

- Information and resources on mindfulness by the Mental Health Foundation
- Part of their A-Z resources on mental health with links to other resources

Free courses & videos

Be Mindful – Free Introduction

<https://www.bemindfulonline.com/free-introduction-to-mindfulness>

- Free introduction to Be Mindful mindfulness course

Future Learn – Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/mindfulness-wellbeing-performance>

- Free 4 week online course where you learn mindfulness techniques to reduce stress and improve your wellbeing and work/study performance
- Please note that you will have to upgrade (fee involved) to obtain a certificate of achievement once you're eligible

NHS – Bedtime Meditation Video



<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/bedtime-meditation/>

- Free 30 minute video to prepare you for restful sleep
- A blanket, some cushions and a mat for the warm-up are useful

Oxford Mindfulness Centre

<https://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/free-online-mindfulness-course-sessions/>

- Free online Mindfulness sessions & Introductory course
- Course is held via Zoom video conferencing (from June 2020)

YouTube – Boho Beautiful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p29mwfzpNc4&list=PLb09q0R7gAwQ3ou1IUWZcJZEtgNeoJNf>

- A collection of 25 gentle and calming guided meditation videos ranging from 9 – 16 minutes in length

Music to help you meditate

YouTube – Meditative Mind

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheMeditativeMind/featured>

- Meditation music, healing music based on solfeggio frequencies, mantra chants and various other resources for meditation, relaxation, sleep and healing

YouTube – Meditation Relax Music

<https://www.youtube.com/user/YourRelaxMusic1/featured>

- Mindfulness relaxing music combined with beautiful nature landscapes
- Suitable for mediation, sleep, yoga, pilates, message, spa, study or work

YouTube – Meditation Relax Club – Sleep Music & Mindfulness

<https://www.youtube.com/user/meditationrelaxclub/featured>

- Music for meditation, sleep, background (yoga and pilates class), spa, home, sound therapy and concentration

Paid-for resources

Be Mindful

<https://www.bemindfulonline.com/>

- 4 week online programme of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) course

- Complete the training at your own pace with videos and interactive sessions
- Course fee is currently £30

Breathworks

<https://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/>

- Mindfulness and compassion training including courses, products and teacher training
- Choose from taster sessions to professional development courses

British Association for Mindfulness based Approaches (BAMBA)

<https://bamba.org.uk/>

- Community of mindfulness practitioners, teachers, trainers and researchers
- Find a mindfulness BAMBA teacher by postcode

Headspace

<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>

- Guided meditations, animations, articles and videos
- Subscription training currently £9.99 per month or £49.99 per year

Oxford Mindfulness Centre

[Learn Mindfulness: Find a Course](#)

- Choose from 5 days to 8 weeks courses
- Fees vary according to type and length of course

NHS Apps Library – Be Mindful

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/be-mindful/>

- Online course for reducing stress, depression and anxiety
- App currently costs £30

Udemy – Mindfulness

<https://www.udemy.com/courses/search/?courseLabel=6680&q=mindfulness&sort=relevance&src=ukw>

- Choose from 340 online Mindfulness training courses
- Courses start from £9.99 each