

## Why Practice Mindfulness?

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Go to <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition> to link to the studies listed below...

Studies have shown that practicing mindfulness, even for just a few weeks, can bring a variety of physical, psychological, and social benefits. Here are some of these benefits, which extend across many different settings.

- Mindfulness is good for our bodies: A seminal study found that, after just eight weeks of training, practicing mindfulness meditation boosts our immune system's ability to fight off illness.
- Mindfulness is good for our minds: Several studies have found that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and stress. Indeed, at least one study suggests it may be as good as antidepressants in fighting depression and preventing relapse.
- Mindfulness changes our brains: Research has found that it increases density of gray matter in brain regions linked to learning, memory, emotion regulation, and empathy.
- Mindfulness helps us focus: Studies suggest that mindfulness helps us tune out distractions and improves our memory and attention skills.
- Mindfulness fosters compassion and altruism: Research suggests mindfulness training makes us more likely to help someone in need and increases activity in neural networks involved in understanding the suffering of others and regulating emotions. Evidence suggests it might boost self-compassion as well.
- Mindfulness enhances relationships: Research suggests mindfulness training makes couples more satisfied with their relationship, makes each partner feel more optimistic and relaxed, and makes them feel more accepting of and closer to one another.
- Mindfulness is good for parents and parents-to-be: Studies suggest it may reduce pregnancy-related anxiety, stress, and depression in expectant parents. Parents who practice mindfulness report being happier with their parenting skills and their relationship with their kids, and their kids were found to have better social skills.
- Mindfulness helps schools: There's scientific evidence that teaching mindfulness in the classroom reduces behavior problems and aggression among students, and improves their happiness levels and ability to pay attention. Teachers trained in mindfulness also show lower blood pressure, less negative emotion and symptoms of depression, and greater compassion and empathy.
- Mindfulness helps health care professionals cope with stress, connect with their patients, and improve their general quality of life. It also helps mental health professionals by reducing negative emotions and anxiety, and increasing their positive emotions and feelings of self-compassion.
- Mindfulness helps prisons: Evidence suggests mindfulness reduces anger, hostility, and mood disturbances among prisoners by increasing their awareness of their thoughts and emotions, helping with their rehabilitation and reintegration.
- Mindfulness helps veterans: Studies suggest it can reduce the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the aftermath of war.
- Mindfulness fights obesity: Practicing "mindful eating" encourages healthier eating habits, helps people lose weight, and helps them savor the food they do eat.