

# Mindfulness: What it is and What it Isn't

It is...

Non-judgmental awareness of the moment.

Mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn, developer of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

The Four Basic Moves of Mindfulness:

1. Focus on one thing (say, your breath, or the dishes, or your conversation with a child).
2. Your mind wanders off.
3. You notice it wandered.
4. You shift attention back to that one thing again.

... and you do this over and over again...

*with curiosity and compassion.*

Hasenkamp, W. (2017, July 7). Catching the wandering mind: Meditation as a window into spontaneous thought. <https://doi.org/10.31231/osf.io/kjyr8>

Mindfulness is...

Awareness of your current state and relating to this state with gentleness and openness.



## Mindfulness is not...

### → It is not about being calm or being any particular way.

Although it is true that you can experience a sense of peace, calm, or relaxation while practicing mindfulness, these are not guaranteed outcomes. Mindfulness is just about noticing whatever experience we are having, including all the thoughts, feelings or physical sensations that are a part of it.

### → It is not about stress reduction, though it has been found to reduce stress.

Rather than remove stress, mindfulness helps us learn to relate to stress differently. There is now over 25 years of research with adults showing that mindfulness helps with stress by changing our relationship to it.

### → It is not the absence of thought.

Instead of aiming for an empty or blank mind where no thoughts are present, we learn the skill of becoming aware of our thoughts, without necessarily doing anything with them. It is how we relate to our thoughts, not the absence of them.

### → It is not about being complacent.

Acceptance does not mean agreement or complacency. It means acknowledging whatever is going on, which is a good idea because it is already happening. We take action to change situations when appropriate - for our well-being and the well-being of others - but we do so out of compassion and understanding versus reaction and frustration.

### → It is not religious.

Mindfulness practices are useful for all people, regardless of their spiritual or religious backgrounds or beliefs. It is a human experience that utilizes awareness and compassion that is within us all.

### → It is not a silver bullet.

When we are under stress or going through a difficult time we might look for 'techniques' to help us better cope. Mindfulness works, but it is important to approach it with the right attitude. Based on many years of research, it is well established that in order to fully benefit from mindfulness meditation, the best approach is to have a long-term view.