

# Being Mindful

Mindfulness is the foundation of an ancient Buddhist practice known as Vipassana, or insight meditation.



*Western medicine is now recognizing it as a tool for dealing with stress, chronic pain, and other medical and psychological conditions.*

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is best described as the practice of being more aware in the present moment. It involves finding, developing and sustaining present moment awareness. This awareness includes paying attention to everything that exists in the present moment—your breathing, the thoughts passing through your mind, the sounds around you—and also understanding the constantly changing nature of the present moment.

### Examples of mindfulness practice include:

- Becoming aware of breath and feeling the stomach rise and fall with each breath
- Feeling the various physical sensations of an emotion
- Paying attention to all of the sounds in a room
- Noticing what happens in the body when there is stress
- Watching the thoughts that arise when there is boredom



## Benefits of Mindfulness

### Research has found that people who practice mindfulness can experience:

- Improved social skills
- Improved working memory
- Improved planning and organizational skills
- An increase in self-esteem
- A sense of calmness, relaxation and self-acceptance
- A better quality of sleep
- A decrease in depression
- A decrease in overall anxiety and test anxiety
- A decline in negative emotions
- Fewer conduct and anger management problems

## Research on Mindfulness

Current research shows the potential for mindfulness to affect the brain's structure and neural patterns. Scientists have seen these results last not only during mindfulness practice, but also during the daily life of practitioners.

Thicker cortical regions related to attention and sensory processing have been found in long-term meditation practitioners compared with non-meditators. Studies have also found a correlation between mindfulness

practice in couples and an enhanced relationship, as well as the benefits of mindfulness on familial relationships.

In children and adolescents, studies have proven that mindfulness can improve academic functioning, decrease symptoms of overall anxiety and test anxiety, decrease aggressive behavior, increase attention, improve social skills, enhance sleep patterns, and instill an overall sense of calm.