

Introduction to Mindfulness



And the focus on **Body & Breath**

What is Mindfulness?

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

– Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn’t more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.”

– Sylvia Boorstein, *Don’t Just Do Something, Sit There*

"Mindfulness is being ‘in the flow’. It’s being right here, right now. It’s like when rappers are freestylin’. It’s a balance between being relaxed, and alert.” – G. E. Kram, *Transformation through Feeling*

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

- ❖ Jon Kabat-Zinn founded it in the 1970s, MBSR in 1979
- ❖ Ground it in medical science, e.g., randomized controlled trials focused on practical health and well-being issues
- ❖ Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center— as of 2017, more than 24,000 people had completed the training
- ❖ Retain the structure of the traditional **Four Foundations of Mindfulness** but remove Buddhist religion and terminology

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Standard practice in mindfulness instruction focuses on

1. mindfulness of the body and breath
2. mindfulness of feelings (sensations) or “emotions”
3. mindfulness of mind, consciousness, or “thoughts”
- ~~4. mindfulness of dhammās (or dharmas): the laws of nature and perceived realities of being a human~~
4. mindful compassion for self and other

Why Practice Mindfulness?

In short, it can help improve wellbeing. “Mindfulness can help you:

- Regulate and express your emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006);
- Develop and utilize better coping strategies (Tharaldsen & Bru, 2012);
- Be less easily distracted on non-task activities (Lutz et al., 2009);
- Help you sleep better (Howell et al., 2010);
- Practice self-compassion (Campos et al., 2016; Falsafi, 2016); and
- Potentially, build resilience (Bajaj & Pande, 2016).”

— [PositivePsychology.com](https://www.positivepsychology.com/what-is-mindfulness-definition-benefits/), “What is Mindfulness? Definition + Benefits”

Some Potential Benefits



- More friendliness and kindness toward yourself
- Lower anxiety, worry, and tension
- Less reactive self-management of chronic pain and illness
- Improved impulse control and emotional self-regulation

- Being less judgmental, more self-accepting and accepting of others
- Fewer conflict-based interactions and unhappy relationships with others
- Improved resilience, the ability to bounce back from failures and defeats
- More fully living life in ease, peacefulness, and gratitude.



“Mindfulness practice means that we commit fully in each moment **to be present**; inviting ourselves to interface with this moment in full awareness, with the intention to embody as best we can an orientation of calmness, mindfulness, and equanimity right here and right now.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn

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The body is our grounding in the present moment,
and. . .

. . .the breath is the anchor of the body.



Why Mindful Breathing?

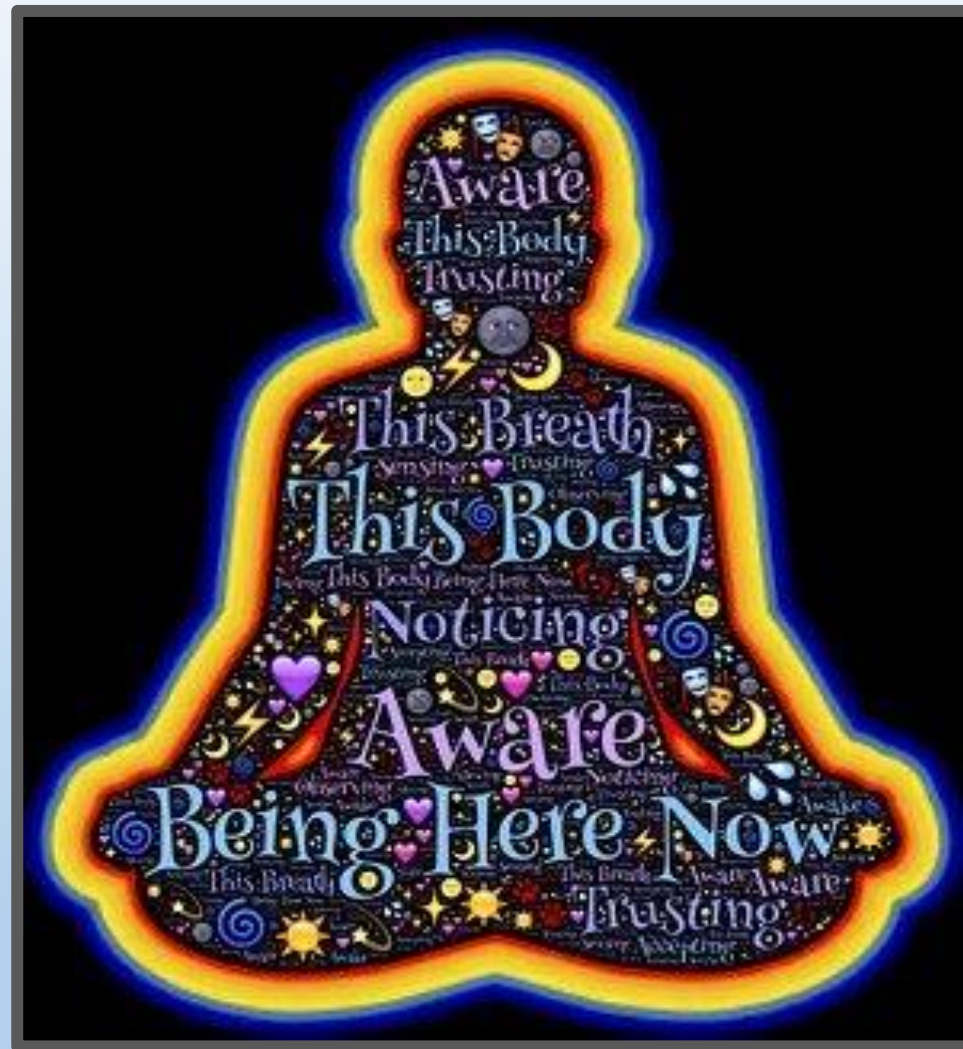


- ❖ Because, in moments of fear, anger, or stress, our **sympathetic nervous system** is “up-regulated” to “fight, flight, or freeze.”
- ❖ This was good for survival but is counterproductive in most situations in modern daily life.
- ❖ Our habitual patterns of reactivity often do not serve our goals or our relationships well. Whereas, . . .

- ❖ Mindful breathing engages the **parasympathetic nervous system** to “down-regulate” our physiology and, therefore, calm our emotions.
- ❖ This breathing room allows us to be **constructively responsive** rather than destructively reactive.
- ❖ This can build our capacity for **resilience**, the ability to **breath into** self-defeating thoughts and emotions and nurture our sense of



openness, curiosity, and equanimity.



...from the
Satipatthana Sutta,
the “establishment of
mindfulness” sutra
(circa 1st century BCE)

