



# Mindfulness Meditation

Being mindful simply means directing your attention to your thoughts, feelings or surroundings without passing judgement about your experience. This is also described as being in the present moment, or simply *being* not *doing*. Mindfulness involves simply observing what's going on around you, in your mind body and the environment, without doing anything, just allowing yourself to be aware of what's happening.

Mindfulness has many benefits; it can help you feel more relaxed, manage stress better and lower your risk of developing problems such as depression and anxiety (see '*Full Catastrophe Living*' by Jon Kabat-Zinn in Further Reading).

Meditation is one way to be mindful; meditation can help train you to become more mindful in other parts of your life.

Here is an extract from Jon Kabat-Zinn's book that describes the sitting meditation:

'We call the heart of formal meditation practice "sitting meditation" or simply "sitting" ... To practice sitting we make a special time and place for non-doing ... We consciously adopt an alert and relaxed body posture so that we can feel relatively comfortable without moving, and then we reside with calm acceptance in the present without trying to fill it with anything.

It helps a lot to adopt an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck and back vertically aligned. We usually practice the sitting meditation either on a chair or on the floor. If you choose a chair, the ideal is to use one that has a straight back and allows your feet to be flat on the floor.

The basic instructions for practicing the sitting meditation are very simple. We observe the breath as it flows in and out. We give full attention to the feeling of the breath as it comes in and full attention to the feeling of the breath as it comes out. ... And whenever we find that our attention has moved elsewhere, wherever that may be, we just note it and let go and gently escort our attention back to the breath ... Each time you become aware [of your mind wondering] you gently bring your attention back to your belly and back to your breathing, no matter what carried it away. If it moves off the breath 100 times, then you just calmly bring it back 100 times, as soon as you are aware of not being on the breath.'

This type of mediation can be performed once or twice a day for 10 – 20 minutes.

Being mindful is not just about meditation. You can incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine. For example:

- Eating mindfully can enhance your experience of food. Slow down your speed when you eat and pay attention to the appearance of the dish, to the texture of the food and the subtlety of the flavours.
- When you're walking in the countryside or walking down the street , whether the scene is familiar to you or not, try to see the details of the world around you through fresh eyes, use all the senses to appreciate your surroundings