

## Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction. It is an acquired skill which, when practiced regularly, can reduce stress hormone release the decrease activation of the sympathetic nervous system, that part of us that operates the “flight or fight” response.

Mindfulness is simply the process of being fully aware and attentive on a moment-to-moment basis. Generally the practice begins as a breathing practice where the attention is focused on the present moment. This releases the mind from past or future thoughts, the tangled web of thoughts that frequently occupy the mind and cause anxiety and stress. As practice continues one develops greater awareness, tolerance, and appreciation of their whole life experience without being sidetracked by the emotions of the moment or expectations of how things should be.

Mindfulness meditation is just one of many techniques and meditation styles. It can be incorporated into other traditions or practiced exclusively for its medical benefits. There is little evidence favoring one technique over another and really becomes a matter of personal style.

It helps to listen to instructional videos and to read books about meditation. Setting aside a period of time every day to meditate is also important.

### Suggestions

#### Books:

1. Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment—and Your Life, by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Dec. 28, 2011). Dr Kabat-Zinn is credited with bringing meditation into mainstream medicine, and for pioneering Meditation-Based Stress Reduction methodology. He has a number of books available. There is also a good You-Tube video of him speaking about mindfulness meditation at Google.
2. Mindfulness in Plain English, by Bhante Gunaratana (Sept. 6, 2011)

#### Websites:

1. Audiodharma.org: An archive of free talks given at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City. Although the speakers are frequently practicing Buddhists, the talks are completely secular in nature and can be enjoyed by all. The series “Introduction to Meditation” is an easy place to begin.
2. <https://sites.google.com/site/mindfulnessonlinecourse>.