

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

To the mind that is still, the universe surrenders. – Lao Tzu

Although the concept of mindfulness originated over 2,500 years ago, it is only recently that it has received so much attention in the popular press. During this time, mindfulness has been the topic of numerous self-help books, articles and lectures. Proponents of mindfulness often tout the many social, emotional, mental and physical benefits of engaging in activities that promote mindfulness, commonly defined as the moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment. But is mindfulness just a fad, or is there empirical data to support these claims? According to the American Psychological Association (APA), there is strong evidence for the following benefits of mindfulness:

- Reduction in stress – along with depression, anxiety.
- Decreased rumination and worry – along with greater feelings of happiness and subjective well-being;
- Improved concentration and mental clarity – the ability to focus on the task at hand, be creative and solve problems;
- Improved memory – especially working memory, even under stressful conditions;
- Decreased emotional reactivity – the ability to stay calm and avoid over-reacting in emotionally charged situations;
- Greater adaptability and flexibility – being resilient and navigating change with ease;
- Increased relationship satisfaction – including relationships with spouses, family members, friends, coworkers and supervisors;
- Enhanced self-insight – and increased compassion for self and others;

In addition, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports mindfulness meditation can help improve immune functioning and help alleviate high blood pressure, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, anxiety, depression, insomnia and other health conditions. It has also been used to help people quit smoking.

While the evidence supporting the benefits of mindfulness on physical and emotional well-being continues to emerge, many people are still unsure how to make mindfulness a part of everyday life. Fortunately, there are small steps you can take today to begin to incorporate mindfulness-based activities into your daily routine.

Sources:

1. "What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research," from the APA journal *Psychotherapy* (Vol. 48, No. 2).
2. Website: <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation>

