

Introduction

Welcome to the practice of Mindfulness. Are you unsure about what “Mindfulness” means? Perhaps you have heard about it on the internet, or been recommended to the practice by a friend or a physician? Or maybe you’ve picked up this book in the hopes that someone can finally help you really deal with all the stress and unhappiness that everyday life seems to bring?

We are glad to say that you’ve come to the right place. We truly want this book to help you develop an understanding of practical techniques that can make mindfulness part of your everyday life, helping you feel less stressed and more satisfied. If you are a beginner, have no fear, this book was written for a beginner who might know nothing of mindfulness, who only has the conviction that they need to do *something* to improve their daily life. That is why the instruction and exercises found within this book are designed to be simple and achievable for someone with no knowledge of mindfulness.

So let’s take a moment before you read any further. Sit down. Close your eyes and breathe in. Can you feel the chair underneath your body? Do you feel how it cradles and supports you? Now, look deeper within, experience how your muscles relax as you sit, how your lungs pull the air in and out of your body. Perhaps you can even sense the beating of your heart. Wait a few moments as you breathe in and out, and then, as if you were awakening from a deep sleep, slowly open your eyes. How do you feel? Relaxed and calm? Maybe even suddenly less stressed?

This is an example of a simple mindfulness exercise. How did it make you feel? For these few moments, were you able to stop to feel yourself breathe and focus on your own physical being? This may seem like a simple thing to do, but ask yourself, how often, over the course of your day, do you ever do this? Does it seem strange to you now that you have never made time for checking in with yourself, to see how you are doing, or feeling? And now that you have experienced a taste of how mindfulness can help you feel, can you imagine being able to feel this sense of wholeness on a regular basis? Yes? Then this is the right book for you.

Let’s get started.

Chapter 1: What is Mindfulness?

Learning to embrace a state of mindfulness requires you to first understand what you are signing up for. Mindfulness may seem like yet another Internet-related buzz word, but it is a highly respected and impactful form of behavior moderation. And it is a highly effective antidote to the stresses of modern life.

Mindfulness is about nurturing a state of being present and aware of everything we are doing, as we do it. Generally, this in-the-moment focus of mindfulness is intended to be part of a broader approach to living your whole life. Going even further, we can say that mindfulness is about helping you to become more fully aware of your inner thoughts, your physical state and your emotional landscape at each moment. The combination of these two intentions is, essentially, “mindfulness” - a state in which you are able to live in the “now”.

As you grow more familiar with mindfulness, you will find that you are able to live each moment of your life with a greater ability to process your emotions and thoughts without getting caught up in the drama that goes on around you. Indeed, with the help of mindfulness techniques, you should find that you will be able to handle stressful situations with a greater sense of purpose and less reactive impulses. And, as you work to build up this state of attention, you will be able to exert greater control over both your reactions and your actions.

This might seem to be a call for emotional detachment, but it is not really - it is instead a call for a greater sense of attention to the life that is going on around you, as well as a developing intention to experience each moment. An integral part of this intentional way of living comes with the acceptance of the positive and negative aspects of life and an acknowledgement that neither will persist forever. This concept is why mindfulness, in essence, is strongly about fostering a sense of non-judgement. Non-judgement can be defined as the ability to step back from intrusive or overwhelming feelings, actions or thoughts so they can be evaluated rationally. Mindfulness asks us to view these intense feelings and moments with a clear head and a good sense of perspective.

This intentional step-back does not mean that someone who practices mindfulness simply abandons important feelings or tries not to care. What mindfulness asks us to recognize, though, is that the kinds of excessive feelings which make our heart pound and our muscles tense are simply not good for us. And our reactions to these primal feelings are very often not to our benefit.