



Mindfulness for attention and focus

Mindfulness is about making what you are doing right now, the most important thing in the world. Rather than perpetually striving to get things lined up just right, and reacting badly when things go wrong, we can learn to pause, consider and respond with thoughtful, effective action.

Research shows that people spend nearly 47% of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they are doing. In other words, many of us are operating on autopilot! In addition, we have entered what many people call the 'attention economy' where the ability to maintain focus and concentration is every bit as important as technical or management skills.

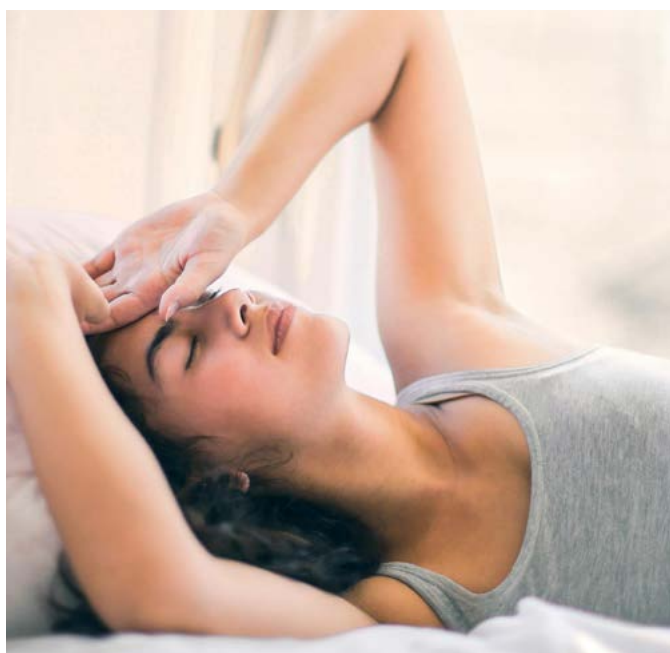
It has long been thought that meditation has many positive benefits including increased focus and attention, better memory, higher creativity and so on. There are two skills in particular that define a mindful mind: focus and awareness. Focus is the ability to concentrate on what you are doing in the moment, while awareness is the ability to recognise and release unnecessary distractions as they arise. Mindfulness is not just a passive practice, it is about developing a sharp clear mind.

MINDFUL TECHNIQUES

The good news is you can train your brain to become more focused, attentive and mindful. Here are some simple mindfulness exercises that you can use throughout your day:



- Researchers found that we release the most stress hormones within minutes of waking because thinking about the day ahead triggers our fight-flight response and releases cortisol into the blood. So, on waking, spend two minutes in bed noticing your breath. As thoughts pop into your mind, let them go, and return to your breath.
- At your desk or in your car, take 10 minutes to boost your brain with the following short mindfulness practice: Close your eyes, relax, sit upright. Place your full focus on your breath. Maintain an ongoing flow of attention on the experience of your breathing. If your mind wanders off, not a problem, simply let your mind wander back to the breath.
- Apply mindfulness when opening your email inbox. Emails have a way of seducing our attention and redirecting it to lower priority tasks. This is because completing small, quickly accomplished tasks releases dopamine in our brain which makes us addicted to email and compromises our concentration. Focus on what is important and maintain awareness of what is merely distraction.
- During the course of the day, mindfulness can help you to lead shorter more effective meetings. Before entering a meeting, take two minutes to practice mindfulness (e.g. on your way to the meeting). If possible, end the meeting five minutes before the hour to allow participants a mindful transition to their next appointment.
- As your day continues your brain starts to tire but mindfulness can help you stay sharp and avoid poor decisions. You can set a timer after lunch to ring every hour. When the timer rings, cease your current activity for a few moments and focus on your breath.



On waking, spend two minutes in bed noticing your breath. As thoughts pop into your mind, let them go, and return to your breath.



- As we move from meeting to meeting, task to task, or from work to home, we can accumulate emotional baggage such as negative emotions from a difficult meeting or a difficult interaction. We can apply mindfulness to these transitional gaps throughout our day to recalibrate our mindset. Try this simple 3 step process:
 - **Step 1 Digest:** Take a minute to think and reflect on the previous task, meeting or interaction you have just finished. Ask yourself what went well? And what could I improve? Then name one thing you managed to achieved. Savour this achievement for a moment.
 - **Step 2 Rest:** Take a minute or two to bring your focus and attention to the present moment by closing your eyes or softening your focus. Take some deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, just focusing on the sensation of your lungs expanding and as you inhale and completely relax as you exhale. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.
 - **Step 3 Recalibrate:** Now take a minute to think about your intentions or goals for the next situation or meeting – how do you want to act? What do you want to achieve? Think about specific qualities you'd want to be described as...Confident? Fair? Approachable? Think explicitly about what behaviours you will exhibit to achieve these intentions.

Try to practice this approach as regularly as you can – practice is the key to achieving mindfulness.

We would like to thank Centre for Corporate Health (cfch.com.au) for their assistance in the compilation of this factsheet.

Stock Photography by Andrea Piacquadio (pexels.com)



The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



This resource was produced with the support of Commonwealth Bank

This document is not and should not be considered as advice or support. Anyone who may have a need for such support should seek professional advice. This information is provided for CMHAA and is provided for general information purposes only. Links or references to material on external sites are provided for your convenience only and inclusion does not represent endorsement of the external providers.