

Mindfulness meditation for stress relief

Meditation that cultivates *mindfulness* is particularly effective at reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions.

Mindfulness is the quality of being fully engaged in the present moment, without analyzing or otherwise “over-thinking” the experience.

Rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, mindfulness meditation switches the focus to what’s happening right now.

For stress relief, try the following mindfulness meditation techniques:

- **Body scan** – Body scanning cultivates mindfulness by focusing your attention on various parts of your body. Like progressive muscle relaxation, you start with your feet and work your way up. However, instead of tensing and relaxing your muscles, you simply focus on the way each part of your body feels without labeling the sensations as either “good” or “bad”.
- **Walking meditation** - You don’t have to be seated or still to meditate. In walking meditation, mindfulness involves being focused on the physicality of each step — the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the rhythm of your breath while moving, and feeling the wind against your face.
- **Mindful eating** – If you reach for food when you’re under stress or gulp your meals down in a rush, try eating mindfully. Sit down at the table and focus your full attention on the meal (no TV, newspapers, or eating on the run). Eat slowly, taking the time to fully enjoy and concentrate on each bite.

Mindfulness meditation is not zoning out, rather **a maintaining of awareness**. It takes effort to maintain your concentration and to bring it back to the present moment when your mind wanders or you start to drift off.

But with regular practice, mindfulness meditation actually changes the brain – strengthening the areas associated with joy and relaxation, and weakening those involved in negativity and stress.