

# Patient Handout: An Introduction to Meditation and Mindfulness

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a type of attention that involves being fully present in the moment. It means noticing and accepting what is happening around and within us, without judging or trying to change it. This practice can be used at any time, in any place.

## What is Meditation?

Meditation is a practice where we focus our mind, usually with the help of a technique, to achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm state. Mindfulness is a type of meditation, but there are many other forms.

## Why Should You Practice Mindfulness and Meditation?

Research has shown that mindfulness and meditation can help:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Improve focus and concentration
- Enhance self-awareness and empathy
- Improve emotional well-being
- Improve physical health, like lowering blood pressure

## How to Practice Mindfulness:

1. **Choose your moment:** It can be during any routine activity, like brushing your teeth, eating a meal, or during a break at work.
2. **Observe the moment:** Pay attention to all the details of the activity. If you're eating, notice the texture, taste, and aroma of the food.
3. **Acceptance:** If your mind wanders, that's okay. It's part of the process. Gently bring your attention back without judging yourself.

## How to Practice Meditation:

1. **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a calm and comfortable spot where you won't be disturbed.
2. **Choose a Time:** Try to meditate at the same time each day, if possible. Start with a few minutes and gradually increase the time.
3. **Focus Your Mind:** Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths. Try to concentrate on your breath or a word or phrase.
4. **Let Thoughts Pass:** It's normal for thoughts to arise. The aim isn't to suppress them but to acknowledge them without getting caught up and then gently return your focus to your breath.

## Sample Mindfulness Exercise:

### The Five Senses Exercise

1. **Notice five things you can see.** Look around and bring your attention to five things that you hadn't noticed before. Perhaps a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or a knick-knack in the corner of a room.
2. **Notice four things you can feel.** Maybe this is the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.
3. **Notice three things you can hear.** Listen for and note things in the background that you had been filtering out, such as an air conditioner, birds chirping outside, or an appliance humming in the next room.
4. **Notice two things you can smell.** Maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either; perhaps there's an overflowing trash can or raw meat.
5. **Notice one thing you can taste.** Take a sip of a drink, chew a piece of gum, or notice the taste in your mouth or open the air for a hint of taste.

## Sample Meditation Exercise:

### Breathing Meditation

1. **Sit comfortably in a quiet place**, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths.
2. **Try to breathe naturally** and focus your attention on your breath as you inhale and exhale.
3. **If your mind wanders** and thoughts come into your mind, that's okay. Just notice the thought, and then gently bring your attention back to your breath.
4. **Start with just two minutes**. As this gets easier, extend your sessions to five minutes, then ten minutes