

Mindfulness



Mindfulness has been found to be helpful with dealing with cravings. Mindfulness is a practice that originated in Buddhism, but you don't need to be a Buddhist or even religious to benefit from it.

Mindful awareness is about befriending and just letting ourselves experience the moment-to-moment experience of our thoughts, perceptions, feelings and body sensations with openness, curiosity and acceptance. Usually, we don't just experience our experiences – we layer them with our own thoughts/judgements. For example, when we are feeling sad, instead of just feeling sad (which will pass, as all feelings do), we say to ourselves things like 'Oh no I'm feeling sad'. 'This is terrible'. 'What am I going to do now?' 'I shouldn't be feeling like this'. 'I must cheer myself up'. These thoughts and judgements can actually cause us more pain than the feeling of sadness.

Here are 10 tips to start being more mindful right now:

1. Take a couple of minutes to notice your breathing. Sense the flow of the breath, the rise and fall of your belly
2. Notice what you are doing as you are doing it and tune into your senses. When you are eating, notice the colour, texture and taste of the food
3. When you are walking, tune into how your weight shifts and the sensations in the bottom of your feet. Focus less on where you are headed
4. Don't feel that you need to fill up all your time with doing. Take some time to simply be
5. When your mind wanders to thinking, gently bring it back to your breath
6. Recognise that thoughts are simply thoughts, which come and go; you don't need to believe them or react to them
7. Practise listening without making judgments
8. Notice where you tend to zone out (e.g., texting, web surfing, feeding the dog, doing dishes, brushing teeth, etc.). Practise bringing more awareness to that activity
9. Spend time in nature
10. Notice how the mind likes to constantly judge. Don't take it seriously. It's not who you are.