

# UNDERSTANDING MINDFULNESS

---

## Mindfulness as Attentiveness

Mindfulness practices can be multi-layered. Initially and at its base, mindfulness means increased alertness and self-awareness. This allows a person to be more naturally attentive in daily activities and more aware of the impacts of their behaviour. This can already open the way to more thoughtful choices.

## Mindfulness as Creativity and Flexibility

At another level of development, mindful practices allow a person to become more open-minded and less impulsive in situations, staying open to more possibilities. This allows healing and change from old patterns.

## Mindfulness as Contemplation and Personal Growth

Another path of mindfulness is to develop and live in purposeful and nonjudgmental awareness of every present moment. Releasing habitual value judgements allows room for new meaning to emerge. In this way, mindfulness is both a tool for attaining greater health and also an outcome in itself; it shifts from a *state* to a *trait*.

The focus of this kind of practice is not on changing situations in life; rather, the focus is on changing the *self* that is witnessing and experiencing, thereby changing the experience itself. Change occurs at the point of our response toward what is happening. When we are fighting against what is happening, this creates suffering and increased anxiety, fatigue or pain. When our response changes, pain and conflict often lessen while alertness, kindness and self-compassion increase.

*Mindfulness is not “thinking about nothing.” Rather, it is about being in a state of mind equally “quiet and bright.”*