



## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of strengthening an acute awareness of the present moment, with a compassionate, non-judgemental stance. This can be very helpful when a person has grown accustomed to a lifestyle of replaying past events and anticipating future events so much that they spend much of their present preoccupied with worry and concern.

The practice has historical roots in Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Daoism and Buddhism. John Kubat-Zan brought mindfulness to the United States as a practice to help with stress reduction. Since then, a robust amount of research has continued to turn out both short-term and long-term results showing symptom alleviation in a number of disorders, including anxiety (Roemer et al., 2008), depression (Teasdale et al., 2000), substance abuse (Bowen et al., 2006), eating disorders (Tapper et al., 2009), and chronic pain (Grossman et al., 2007) as well as improving well-being and quality of life (e.g., Carmody and Baer, 2008). From 2003-2010, studies began shifting to the neurological benefits, which have shown that mindfulness **“changes your brain!”** ([Lazar et al., 2005](#); [Pagnoni and Cekic, 2007](#); [Hölzel et al., 2008](#); [Luders et al., 2009](#); [Vestergaard-Poulsen et al., 2009](#); [Grant et al., 2010](#));).

**Mindfulness made simple** - Following is a short list of ways to begin practicing mindfulness:

- **Breath**– Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet space. Spend several minutes taking in deep long breaths, followed by long exhales.
- **Focus** – In a space with no distractions, pick a part of nature to focus on, noticing the many different details until it takes up your entire vision. This also works great with a fire.
- **Sound** – play instrumental or relaxing music while sitting with eyes closed, listening intently to each note