



## **Beating Anxiety With Mindfulness** <sup>[1]</sup>

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### **It Has Never Been Easier!**

The first ones to use mindfulness as a way to enhance their overall well-being were Buddhist monks. Today, this meditation technique is successfully used by people who struggle with all kinds of problems, including social anxiety.

In short, mindfulness is a state where you choose to pay attention to what happens in the moment (here and now) without judging the experience. This technique is particularly good for people with social anxiety because it keeps them away from the vexing future and all the negative thoughts associated with the possibility of failure.

### **Where Can You Practice Mindfulness?**

Anywhere, as long as you focus on what you're doing in that moment. Mindfulness can be easily practiced at home, at work, on the bus, while you eat and even in the shower. You just have to pay attention to your thoughts and actions.

### **Mindfulness Should Sometimes Be Avoided**

A word of advice, don't practice mindfulness during tasks that require you full attention. This might include, driving, operating heavy equipment or any other task that, if not done properly, can jeopardize your safety and the safety of others.

### **Become Fully Aware of Your Surroundings**

The first thing you need to do, is to become aware of everything around you. Your surroundings will act as an anchor, keeping you firmly embedded into the present. In general, people with anxiety are often focused on what might happen. Even when they're working on a specific task, their mind wanders into the future. Placing yourself in the present takes away all the pressure, doubt and uncertainty. Just look around and be fully aware of the ambience. You can even name the objects that surround you, like for example: pieces of furniture, windows, doors, etc. It might be boring at first, but make an effort to continue because it's worth it.

## Describe What You See, Hear, Smell, Taste or Feel

Now that you're completely aware of your surroundings, it's time to get more involved in the process. Using your mind's voice, describe every sensation that you experience. It could be the sound of traffic, the smell of flowers, or a light breeze coming from the windows. Use all your five senses to connect with the environment. Gather as much detail as possible in order to fully experience the present moment. Allow your mind to absorb every color, shape, texture. If a thought pops into your head, just ignore it for now and continue focusing on your surroundings.

## Focus on Your Thoughts or Actions

Now that you're deeply rooted in the present, you can slowly divert your attention towards your inner self. You might notice various thoughts and sensations that appear and disappear. Some thoughts are more intense than others and some sensations are pleasant while others are unpleasant. Nevertheless, try to observe each thought, emotion and sensation, as it appears on your mental screen. You may notice that everything moves slower when you pay attention to what happens in your head.

## Refrain from Judgment

Whilst paying attention to your inner self, you might feel the need to analyze and interpret every thought or emotion. It's absolutely normal to feel that way, since your mind is designed to process and analyze everything. In this last part of the exercise, try to refrain from judging and labelling your thoughts and emotions, even though it sounds hard. Remember that the whole purpose of mindfulness meditation is to pay attention to what happens in the present and nothing more. Accepting every thought and emotion, regardless of their positive or negative connotations, leads to self-acceptance.

## You Now Have Control over Your Thoughts

Not only do you learn how to remain centered in the present, but you also master the ability to stay calm and avoid the toxic influence of negative thinking. You're no longer controlled by the brain's automatic tendency to analyze and interpret every piece of information. With the help of regular mindfulness meditation, you will eventually gain the ability to choose whether a thought should or shouldn't be disregarded.

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