

Mindfulness: A practice

Novant Health Employer Solutions

What exactly is mindfulness?

“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”

– Jon Kabat-Zinn

Most of us spend each day having silent conversations with ourselves. Mindfulness is thus a kind of listening.

It is a kind of mental exercise for the mind, much like physical exercise for the body.

How does it change the brain and us?

Research has found that meditators appear to lose less gray matter and that meditating reduced the cognitive decline associated with normal aging.

Meditators who had practiced five years or more had “significantly larger volumes” of gray matter in the hippocampus, an area crucial to memory and learning.

Hundreds of studies on meditation and mindfulness have shown that it can help with addiction, depression and anxiety.

What are the consequences of disconnection from your body?

- Fatigue: It takes a lot of energy to keep shutting off a part of ourselves.
- Chronic anxiety.
- Symptoms: Loss of vitality, chronic pain and stress-related conditions (e.g., fibromyalgia, bodily pains).

How can you reconnect to your body?

- Pause: Become aware of what is happening in your body instead of getting lost in reactive thoughts, emotions and actions. You can then instead relate differently to your experience, and act rather than react.
- Body scan: Helps to re-establish contact with your body, to reconnect the conscious mind to the feeling states of the body, to feel more relaxed and more at home in your body.

Different methods: Let's practice!

- Focused attention: Concentrate using your nondominant hand. Notice what it feels like, stay present.
- Focusing on breath: Count 10 in and out breaths. Notice when your mind goes somewhere else and bring it back to the breath.