






# What is mindfulness?

1  At the foundation of mindfulness, we understand that all life is lived in the present moment. We live, experience and make choices only at this moment. The past is unreachable and fixed; the future is unknown and uncontrollable. Now is all we have.

2  Mindfulness is the practice of becoming fully present in our lives. Often we dwell on the past in worry, regret, grief, shame, or longing. At other times we spend our energy fearing, worrying about or rehearsing the future. All too commonly, we occupy the present on autopilot—not noticing what is happening right now. *Mindfulness* means devoting conscious attention to our experience as it unfolds.

3  To be mindful is to direct and focus our attention and awareness. Mindfulness is not just being aware; it involves the contemplation of our present circumstances, and the feelings and thoughts those circumstances provoke. In practicing mindfulness, our purpose is to learn to govern our own minds.

4  The practice of mindfulness helps us to cultivate stillness, stability and peace of mind. It builds our capacity to contemplate our present situation with care, and to respond wisely and with compassion. As we walk through our lives, we stop, look, listen, and choose who we will be and what we will do. Rather than react automatically, we respond mindfully.

5  The practice of mindfulness meditation is *not* about seeking relaxation, nor is it about emptying the mind. Being mindful means embracing our present experience in all its complexity, whether painful or pleasant.