

# What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, being aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not be overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it's easier to access when we practice it on a daily basis.

Whenever you bring awareness to what you're experiencing through your senses, or to your state of mind through your thoughts and emotions, you're being mindful. And there's growing research showing that when you train your brain to be mindful, you're actually remodelling the physical structure of your brain.

## How we can practice mindfulness?

**Focus on your breathing:** you can do this action several times a day. Check to make sure you are breathing a regular breath. Take some deep breaths as well.

**Take Time for you:** Take a moment to take in what is around you, what do you see, hear and smell? Know that you are ok at this moment. The idea is to pay attention to the present moment.

**Set an intention:** Choose a positive affirmation such as love, kindness or happiness, to tune your mind to.

Set your thoughts free: When you find your mind wandering when you are paying attention to the present moment, acknowledge those thoughts, and let them float by.

## Grounding Exercise

When you start to feel overwhelmed or anxious, try this grounding exercise. Look around your environment and note:

- 5 things you can SEE
- 5 things you can HEAR
- 5 things you can TOUCH
- 5 things you can SMELL
- 5 things you can TASTE

Some may be heard to note but as you focus on this exercise you're attention is drawn to your 5 senses

*Remember: Mindfulness is a lifetime practice*



# MINDFULNESS & BREATHING

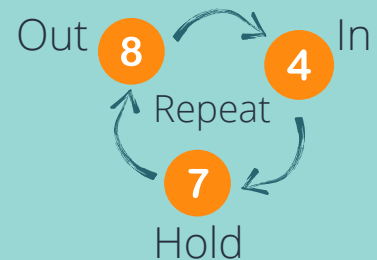
## How can breathing help us practice mindfulness?

Mindful breathing is a very basic yet powerful mindfulness meditation practice. The idea is simply to focus your attention on your breathing—to its natural rhythm and flow and the way it feels on each inhale and exhale. Focusing on the breath is particularly helpful because it serves as an anchor—something you can turn your attention to at any time if you start to feel stressed or carried away by negative emotions.

Some breathing exercises to practice:

### 1 THE 4-7-8 BREATHING TECHNIQUE

Breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds. This breathing pattern aims to reduce anxiety or help people get to sleep.



### 2 SIGHING AND YAWNING

Try to breathe through your nose. This should reduce the number of yawns and sighs. Breathing in through your mouth gives your body too much oxygen and creates high respiration.



### 3 Breathing Waltz

At the first signs of over-breathing do this exercise.

The '9-second cycle' involves taking one breath every nine seconds.

1. Breathe in and out slowly... in a smooth light manner...

Breathe in for 3 seconds, Hold for 3 seconds, Breathe out for 3 seconds

(like a waltz ...1 2 3, 1 2 3 ...).

This will produce a breathing rate of 6-7 breaths per minute.

1. Say the word **relax** or let it go to yourself every time you breathe out.
2. At the end of each minute (after 6-7 breaths) hold your breath (don't take a gulp of air) for 10 seconds and then continue breathing in the 9-second cycle.
3. Continue breathing this way until all the symptoms of over-breathing have subsided.

*Remember: You are in control*