

# Mindfulness

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Mindfulness can help you deal with the stress of deportation. This chapter covers the following topics:

- What is mindfulness?
  - What are the benefits of mindfulness?
  - How do I meditate?
  - Meditation scripts
  - Meditation resources
  - Meditation groups
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## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about paying attention to the present. It is about noticing your thoughts, emotions, and how your body feels. It's about not judging yourself or giving yourself a hard time. When you are aware of your five senses or your mind, you are being mindful!

Mindfulness is not about fixing what is wrong with you.

Instead, it is about accepting what is going on inside you. It's about being gentle and kind to yourself. It helps us stay connected to the moment. We can then respond in healthy, caring ways.

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, but it is not a religion for most people. Instead, it is a way to explore your mind and body. Some people see mindfulness in every religion. Prayer can be a form of mindfulness.



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*Does your heart race every time you step out of your house or enter a public place? Practicing mindfulness helped me be aware of physically overwhelming experiences at the onset. I could feel perspiration on my upper lip. My palms start getting sweaty. My body tenses up. These are the warning signs that remind me to just breathe. During these episodes, I found that I was not breathing. Doing nothing else but concentrating on my breathing made this experience bearable. Soon thereafter, I was more and more in control.*

**—Mindfulness Program Participant**

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## What are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness has many benefits. It can help you manage stress and control your emotions. It can even change how your brain works. It can help you not get stuck in bad thoughts. It can help you be happier.

Other benefits include:

- Better able to fight disease
- Lower blood pressure and heart rate
- Better mental focus
- Better handle of emotions
- Lower anxiety and depression
- More growth after trauma
- More self-compassion
- Less burnout

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*Have you felt alone, out of place? You are not alone. I experience that regularly. No one seems to understand what I am experiencing. I rely on mindfulness to assist me in channeling my focus. I do so by simply concentrating on the breath. This simple act is what grounds me and allows me to function normally.*

—Anonymous

## How do I Meditate?

Meditation is a common way to practice mindfulness.

**No training is needed to meditate!** There is no one right way to meditate. There is no “good” way, and certainly no “bad” way. If you can breathe, you can meditate.

**Practice alone or with a group.** Find someone who knows how to meditate to help you get started. You can meditate alone or with a group.

**When to practice.** In the beginning, try to meditate for 5 or 10 minutes. Make that time longer bit by bit. Try different times of the day: morning, evening, or afternoon. Try to practice every day. But, if something comes up, that’s OK! Let go of what you think should happen.

**How to sit.** Many people meditate sitting down with their eyes closed or open. Sit in a chair or cross-legged on a pillow, floor, or bed. Sit up straight, but be relaxed. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs.

**Common Difficulties.** It’s normal to feel restless, bored, and sleepy. Your mind may wander. That’s totally okay. You don’t need to get rid of thoughts when you are meditating. Do your best to notice your thoughts. Label them as they come. You might label them things like “thinking about the past,” “feeling restless,” or “feeling bored.” Then, see if you can bring your attention to your breathing. Meditation takes practice. Do your best to be curious. No matter what happens, try not to judge yourself.

**Meditation and Trauma.** Sometimes meditation makes you remember things. It may dig up traumatic memories. This may make you feel stressed or anxious. Meditation can help you deal with these feelings. But, it is not a cure-all. If focusing on your body brings up traumatic memories, try focusing on a safe image or sound. If difficult memories keep coming, talk with a mental health professional. Look for a meditation group for people who have trauma.



## Meditation Scripts

Many begin their meditation journey by using meditation scripts, or words they can read or listen to while meditating. Read each script slowly to get used to it. After a while, you can say the words silently to yourself. Give each step about 1 minute, but feel free to go at your own pace.

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*I don’t always follow a specific regimen other than just to breathe in times of stress. This sounds simple enough but it can be very difficult, especially when you are not practicing regularly.*

—Anonymous

## **A Seated Breath and Body Meditation Practice | Abbreviated from Mindful Magazine**

1. Begin by getting comfortable, sitting up straight but not rigid, in a position of ease. Close your eyes or lower your gaze toward the floor.
2. Take a few deep breaths. Get a sense of how you're doing at this moment physically, emotionally, and mentally. Is there tension or tightness anywhere? Is your mind busy or calm?
3. As you breathe in, bring a beginner's mind, noticing things for the first time. As you breathe out, bring the same sense. Rest your awareness on the breath.
4. Begin to sense your body sitting here. Feel into your whole body. What are your senses telling you? You may feel warm or cold. You may be itchy. Perhaps some areas don't have any feeling at all – a blank. Spend the next minute feeling these sensations. Allow them to come and go.
5. If your mind wanders, where is it wandering to? Are you remembering something? Are you feeling anger or regret? Are you practicing what you will say to someone? Notice your thoughts as if you were sitting in a movie theater, watching images come and go on the screen. Notice the thought or emotion as if it were someone else's thought, not yours. Notice an opening up in yourself as you become more aware, more accepting.
6. Come back to the breath. Breathe in and out. Notice how the whole body expands when you inhale, and contracts when you exhale. The whole body is breathing.
7. As you end, congratulate yourself for taking time to meditate. Realize that you can take a few minutes to meditate whenever you wish.



*Have you experienced disappointment? I have and that is not something to be ashamed of. I constantly ruminate on these disappointments. Rumination occurs naturally when you allow your mind to take control. Mindfulness has taught me how to take control of my thought process. This has allowed me the freedom to take life as it comes and adjust as needed.*

**— Anonymous**

## **Gratitude Meditation | Mindvalley Academy**

Gratitude practice can help us tap into hope. It can help us boost our mood. That said, it's not easy to focus on the positive when you feel stressed. Be patient with yourself as you try this meditation. You can always return to the breath if it feels too stressful.

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Take a few deep and slow breaths.
2. Think about something that's troubling you. It's best to start small. Name something that annoys you. Perhaps the room you're in is cold and drafty.
3. Now see if you can flip it to something positive. For example, perhaps the room is cold and drafty, but it's raining and you're able to stay dry.
4. Continue to think of things or experiences that you don't like. Do your best to find something positive about each thing or experience. Challenge yourself. Maybe they are helping you learn or grow. Perhaps you notice how you have kept going even when things are hard. Maybe you have found new ideas you didn't have before.
5. You can also simply repeat, "I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_" and notice what comes up.

## **Mindful Walking | Adapted from Mindful Walking, Segal, Williams & Teasdale Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression**

Mindfulness is about being aware of what we're doing, thinking, and feeling. Mindful walking is simple. You can do it without people knowing what you're doing. Many people walk everyday, but most of us don't focus on the process of walking and how the body feels.

1. Standing still, become aware of your feet. How do your feet feel when they touch the ground? Flex your knees a few times to get a sense of how your feet and legs feel.
2. When you start walking, notice how you move your weight into each leg. One leg "empties" and the other leg takes over to support your body
3. With one leg "empty," allow the other heel to rise slowly. Move it forward, feeling your leg. Place it down to get ready for the next step. Feel your weight move to this leg.
4. Continue walking. Notice how your feet, legs, hips, and upper body feel.
5. If you stop, notice how you feel when you stand. Notice how it feels when you start moving again.

# Mindfulness Resources

Need more meditations? Check out this website for more meditation scripts! [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XSgYgKhvpM1ugg3\\_00Q074nBXIZq4CLo/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XSgYgKhvpM1ugg3_00Q074nBXIZq4CLo/view?usp=sharing)

**Phone apps.** There are lots of free mindfulness phone apps. These apps offer:

- Guided meditations
- Timers
- Calming sounds
- Soothing voices
- Tips on how to sleep better or be less anxious

You can use these apps on the bus or train, at work, or before bed. You can choose long or short meditations. Some popular apps include Aura, Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Mindfulness Coach and UCLA Mindful. Do an online search for more information on these apps.



*Remind yourself that the deepest stillness and peace does not arise because the world is still or the mind is quiet. Stillness is nourished when we allow the world, the mind, and the body to be just as they are for now, moment by moment, and breath by breath.*

— Williams & Penman, Mindfulness

[Tergar.org](http://Tergar.org). Tergar is an international meditation community. It has a program for beginners who want to start meditating. The program is called “The Joy of Living” and is based on the book by the same name. Tergar has meditation communities all over the world, including ones in Mexico City and Puebla, Mexico. It also has online classes, meditation practice materials, and more. There is also a website in Spanish: [espanol.tergar.org](http://espanol.tergar.org)

Some meditation groups may say they are Buddhist. They may use words like “Sangha” (community), “Zen” (meditative state), or “Vipassana” (insight). You may not have to be Buddhist to join. Many groups are open to anyone joining their group. Some mindfulness groups also focus on mental health. They can help you reduce pain or deal with stress and anxiety.



*It is common to question your purpose. I do so repeatedly. My relationships aren't exactly as I had envisioned. Mindfulness meditation provided me the space and compassion to accept people as they come. I learned to let the little things go and focus on what makes that person special to me.*

— Mindfulness Program Participant

# Meditation Groups

Meditation groups are great ways to meet people and practice. If you are a beginner, they can help you learn. They can help you keep going when you feel like quitting. Some are face-to-face while others are online. Many groups begin with a few friends meeting in someone’s home.