

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness can be described as a state of non-judgmental awareness, particularly focused on the present moment. Three important components of mindfulness include intentionality, attention and acceptance. Mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn once said “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

The concept of mindfulness has a long history, and is linked to many cultures and religions throughout the world. It is an approach and practice that is extensively researched for its numerous benefits to the human mind and body.

The benefits of mindfulness aren't exclusive, and can be especially helpful in managing symptoms of headache or migraine disorders.



## Why?

Mindfulness practice can:

- Decrease symptoms of anxiety, stress, and chronic pain
- Improve cognition, concentration, and emotion regulation
- Assist with sleep and quality of sleep
- Increase tolerance of distressing situations;
- Increase relaxation and increase one's ability to cope with difficult situations (Baer, 2003).

Several studies have found, when practiced regularly, mindfulness may assist in the reduction of headache

and migraine disorder related symptoms. One [2018 meta-analysis](#) found that mindfulness meditation practice significantly reduced pain intensity and headache frequency for the research participants (Gu, Q., et al., 2018).

Another recent study published in [JAMA](#) concluded that participants of an eight week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program saw overall improvement in their disability, quality of life, self-efficacy, pain catastrophizing, and depression (Wells et al., 2020).

## How?

Mindfulness helps to change our responses to internal and external stimuli, ultimately shifting how we respond to things like pain or stress.

Mindfulness can be implemented into one's daily life in many ways. It may be through **informal** mindfulness exercises that include slowing down, and focusing on one-thing-in-the-moment. It can also be implemented through more **formal** practices like meditation or yoga.

One informal mindfulness exercise to try during any part of your daily routine that can assist in bringing your awareness to the present moment, is doing only one thing fully. For example, while doing one task (.ie. washing the dishes, eating your lunch, driving to work, taking a walk), only do the one task, eliminating all other distractions, focus in on that one task.

*Observe your experience*, without judging or evaluating it.

*Describe in your mind* what you are doing or seeing.

What do you see, hear, touch? Do you feel something? Give words to your feelings. Keep them free of judgments or evaluations.

How do you feel as you conclude your task? What are the physical or mental differences you feel now, than before your mindful task?

Taking small steps, engaging in different mindfulness activities or practices, and building these into your routine can be a powerful and essential component of reducing

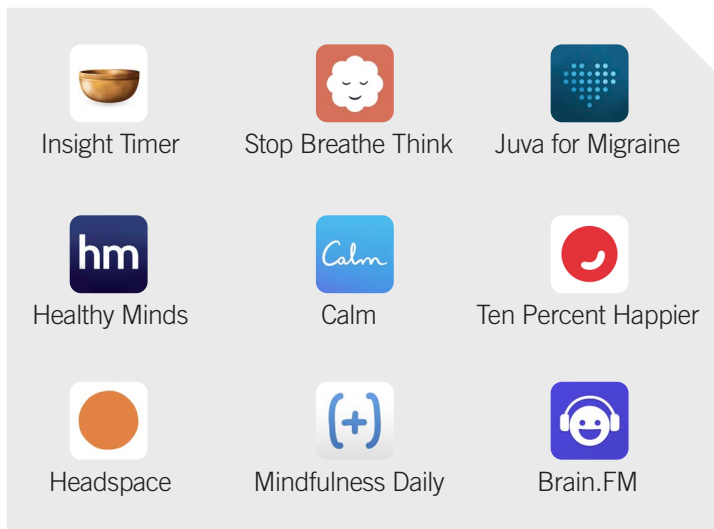
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stress, tension, and other symptoms of headache or migraine disorder. It may also be most effective when implemented alongside additional headache treatments, including medication and evidenced-based therapeutic modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Biofeedback.

Take a look at the additional resources below to expand your mindfulness practice!

## Other Resources

### Apps



### Websites

[PocketMindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today](https://pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today)

[MindfulnessExercises.com/mindfulness-meditation-beginners-free-ebook](https://mindfulnessexercises.com/mindfulness-meditation-beginners-free-ebook)

[AmericanMigraineFoundation.org/resource-library/mindfulness-for-migraine](https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/mindfulness-for-migraine)

[Headaches.org/2021/03/20/mindfulness-and-migraine](https://headaches.org/2021/03/20/mindfulness-and-migraine)

[DianaWinston.com/meditations](https://dianawinston.com/meditations)

[Mindful.org/take-a-mindful-moment-5-simple-practices-for-daily-life](https://mindful.org/take-a-mindful-moment-5-simple-practices-for-daily-life)

[Tools.PositivePsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-pack](https://tools.positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-pack)

[GrandRapidsCenterFormindfulness.com](https://grandrapidscenterformindfulness.com)

[RogelCancerCenter.org/podcasts/guided-imagery-podcasts](https://rogelcancercenter.org/podcasts/guided-imagery-podcasts)

[New.Counseling.IAState.edu/services/mind-body/mind-body-spa](https://new.counseling.iastate.edu/services/mind-body/mind-body-spa)

[UHCL.edu/counseling-services/resources/visualization](https://uhcl.edu/counseling-services/resources/visualization)

[Students.Dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/wellness-mindfulness/mindfulness-meditation/guided-audio-recordings/guided-imagery-visualization](https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/wellness-mindfulness/mindfulness-meditation/guided-audio-recordings/guided-imagery-visualization)

## Examples of Mindfulness:

Mindful walking

Meditation or prayer

Yoga or other intentional movement

Journaling

Mindful breathing

Gratitude practice



### Books

*Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief: Guided Practices for Reclaiming Your Body and Your Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2010)

*Little Book of Mindfulness: 10 Minutes a Day to Less Stress, More Peace.* Dr. Patricia Collard. 2014.

*Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: The MBSR Program for Enhancing Health and Vitality* Paperback – March 7, 2017 by Linda Lehrhaupt (Author), Petra Meibert (Author)

*The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* by Thich Nhat Hanh (1999)

*You Are Not Your Pain: Using Mindfulness to Relieve Pain, Reduce Stress, and Restore Well-Being—An Eight-Week Program* by Vidyamala Burch

### References

Baer, R. A. (2003). *Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review.* *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 125–143. [doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg015](https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg015)

Gu, Q., Hou, J. C., & Fang, X. M. (2018). *Mindfulness Meditation for Primary Headache Pain: A Meta-Analysis.* *Chinese medical journal*, 131(7), 829–838. [doi.org/10.4103/0366-6999.228242](https://doi.org/10.4103/0366-6999.228242)

Wells RE, O'Connell N, Pierce CR, et al. *Effectiveness of Mindfulness Meditation vs Headache Education for Adults With Migraine: A Randomized Clinical Trial.* *JAMA Intern Med.* 2021;181(3):317–328. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.7090