

Meditation and Mindfulness



MINDFULNESS

A working definition for mindfulness is to be observant of thoughts and feelings without judging them. To allow our body to be as it and accept it as it is.

The concept of mindfulness can follow you out of the practice of meditation and into daily life.

MEDITATION

At its simplest, meditation is the chance for the mind to quieten and the body to rest. There are many

benefits and options for utilising meditation practice.

The benefits of meditation:

- Complete rest
- Calming the central nervous system¹
- A break from stimulus
- Focus on the body, accepting it as it is (mindfulness).
- Not trying to nap, which can be frustrating for those who can't.
- For those who have trouble with orthostatic intolerance, just lying down can make you feel better.
- A boost in energy (however temporary).

¹ L.A. Martínez-Martínez, T. Mora, A. Vargas, M. Fuentes-Iniestra, & M. Martínez-Lavín. 2014. Sympathetic nervous system dysfunction in fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, and interstitial cystitis: a review of case-control studies. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24662556>

- Improve the immune system (University Health News Daily, 2018)
- Treat depression
- Reduced anxiety
- Reduce pain

A LITTLE RESEARCH

"Mindfulness meditation...has been shown by many studies as a moderately effective approach for pain relief. Brain imaging studies have also shown that similar brain areas are activated during both mindfulness meditation and pain-modulation techniques mediated by opioid receptors."²

"Through meditation, Dr. Pohl hopes to reverse some of the negative changes in the brain that can occur with chronic pain. "We have seen a decrease in cortisol and epinephrine levels, an increase in serotonin and gamma-aminobutyric acid levels, which are linked to relaxation and antidepressant effects, and an increase in natural killer cells. With sufficient practice, patients can establish patterns of thought that diminish catastrophization, thus decreasing pain," he said."³

MEDITATION AND ME

² Wen G. Chen, Ph.D, 2016, Mindfulness Meditation Reduces Pain, Bypasses Opioid Receptors <https://nccih.nih.gov/research/blog/mindfulness-meditation-pain>

³ Practical Pain Management, Meditation: A Pathway to Pain Relief <https://www.practicalpainmanagement.com/patient/treatments/alternative/meditation-pathway-pain-relief>

I meditate daily. It is one of my key tools for managing a chronic illness called fibromyalgia, the key symptoms include chronic pain, chronic fatigue and insomnia. The benefits of meditation have pervaded all facets of my life – I no longer get anxious without due cause. I feel profoundly calmed by the fact that I can attain deep rest in the face of constant fatigue and chronic insomnia, and I adore that this coping mechanism is freely available to me any time, any place. It also enabled me to cope through the intense sleep deprivation that small children bring. I am pretty passionate about it.

MEDITATION OPTIONS

You can:

- Simply focus on your breath for a few moments. How you breathe in, how the breath feels a little warmer on the way out. How your body feels when you exhale. How your breaths get a little longer as you relax. Don't push anything, just observe.
- Do your own body scan meditation – by quietly thinking of each part of your body in turn, noticing the feeling in each, accepting it, willing that part to relax and moving to the next.
- Do progressive relaxation – by tensing and releasing each part of your body in turn, you can encourage it to relax deeply. As an example, you could start with your feet, tense and release, your lower legs, upper legs, glutes, abdomen, arms, face.
- Guided meditations – YouTube has a heap available including Yoga Nidra, mindfulness meditations, meditation specific to pain or fatigue etc.

As an extra form of rest, you can lie down or recline in a chair with a heat pack.

SOME LINKS TO GET YOU STARTED

These are some of my favourites that I use regularly, all links are to YouTube.

Ten minutes or less

[Body Scan Meditation](#) 8 minutes

[Mindful Breathing](#) 5 minutes

[Relax Ground and Clear](#) 6 minutes

For Chronic Pain

[Yoga Nidra \(Relaxation\) for Chronic Pain](#) 29 minutes

[Body Scan Meditation for Chronic Pain Relief](#) 12 minutes

[Yoga Nidra for Chronic Pain](#) 22 minutes

[20 Minute Guided Meditation for Healing Chronic Pain](#) 20 minutes

[Hypnosis for Pain Control and Pain Relief](#) 25 minutes

Just Meditation

[Yoga Nidra Guided by Sarah McLean](#) 39 minutes

[Mindfulness Meditation Body Scan](#) 14 minutes

[20 Minute Mindfulness Meditation for Being Present](#) 20 minutes

[Sleep Hypnosis for Bedtime Total Relaxation](#) 30 minutes

QUICKS WAYS TO CALM YOUR MIND

- Drink a cuppa (mindfully, pay attention to every part of the process)
- Breath
- Sit outside for a few minutes
- Stretch
- Legs up the wall pose
- Journal
- Music
- Lavender essential oil
- Colouring
- Practice present moment awareness - focus into your body, your immediate vicinity, further
- Warm bath
- Meditate
- Speak to someone you trust
- Distract yourself