

MINDFULNESS OR MINDLESSNESS?

The following material was taken from several different internet sites. Much of it has been shortened or is in outline form only for brevity's sake and also to reduce the possibility that this book will be used as promotion for these practices. The reason for presenting this material is to show the reader what proponents of mindfulness are saying rather than a critique from those who disavow it, such as the authors of this book. And the reason we stand against it, despite its growing popularity, is that the practices easily lead to being invaded by demonic spirits. Yes, here is another popular trend that has hidden dangers. Please evaluate the evidence.

We will make comments throughout this chapter, presented in this font.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

While some people may still consider the mind-body connection New Age theory, it's emerged as a bonafide medical phenomenon with evidence-based science to support it. At the core of the mind-body connection, mindfulness has enjoyed a tremendous surge in popularity in the past decade, moving from a mostly obscure Buddhist concept founded about 2,600 years ago to mainstream psychotherapy.

Scientists have discovered that mindfulness techniques can help improve physical health in several ways, including relieving stress, treating heart disease, lowering blood pressure, reducing chronic pain, improving sleep, and alleviating gastrointestinal difficulties. While it's not a panacea, mindfulness has also been found to decrease migraine attacks and pain.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The term mindfulness can be defined as a moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment. It can be promoted by certain practices or activities, such as meditation, but it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them. There are multiple ways to cultivate and practice mindfulness.

MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

The goal of any mindfulness technique is to achieve a state of alert, focused relaxation. That's accomplished by deliberately paying attention to emotions, thoughts, and sensations (free of judgment) to enable the mind to refocus on the present moment. All mindfulness techniques are a form of meditation.

“Meditation” is the key concept here. Meditation is not prayer, which is focused attention on and communion with God. Prayer is truly mindful, fully conscious talking to our Lord. It is in states brought on by meditation that opens one up to the presence of demonic spirits. And the various breathing techniques are the path to an altered state of consciousness making the meditator vulnerable.

BASIC MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing or one other area of focus listed below. You will notice that your mind will wander into thinking since this is what our minds do. The practice is to notice when this happens and bring your awareness back to the breath or other focus choice.

»• Body sensations

Notice body sensations, such as tingling, pulsing, or even no feeling, and allow some exploration of the sensation. Pay attention to each part of your body in succession from head to toe.

»• Sensory

Detect sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, and then let them stay in your awareness as long as you would like without judgment. When the mind begins to stray from the immediate sensation, bring your attention back to your choice of focus.

»• Emotions

Allow emotions to be present. Practice a steady and relaxed naming of emotions: “joy,” “anger,” “frustration.” Accept their presence and let them go.

»• Urge surfing

Cope with cravings (for addictive substances or behaviors) and notice how that changes and eventually may pass. Observe how your body feels as the craving enters. Replace the wish for the craving to go away with the knowledge that it will subside as you continue to focus on the sensations, emotions, and thoughts brought forth from the craving.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

You can conduct mindfulness practices on your own.

»• Art Therapy

Remember how much fun it was to paint, draw, or mold things out of clay when

you were a child? It turns out that making art can be a powerful therapeutic tool for adults, especially in the treatment and management of pain. Called art therapy, this type of psychotherapy can help modify your response to emotional and physical problems related to pain.

In a study of almost 200 people hospitalized for a medical issue or surgery, researchers found that participating in art therapy for an average of 50 minutes significantly improved their moods and lowered levels of pain and anxiety.

»• Meditation

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years to help deepen understanding of life's sacred and mystical forces. Today, meditation is also commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction.

Meditation is an umbrella term for various ways to accomplish focused attention and may even lead to a relaxed state. There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques that have meditation components. These practices have been shown to reduce stress, which may help cultivate better health outcomes.

A sense of calm, peace, and balance achieved through meditation can benefit your emotional well-being and overall health. The great news is that the benefits of meditation don't end when the session ends. It can continue to bring tranquility to you throughout the day and help prevent over-reactive behaviors when the going gets rough.

»• Tai chi

The ancient form of gentle Chinese martial arts called Tai chi (TIE-CHEE) is sometimes referred to as meditation in motion. It promotes serenity through gentle, flowing movements. The self-paced series of postures or movements are done slowly and gracefully while practicing deep breathing.

There is growing evidence that this mind-body practice has value in treating or preventing many health problems. And you can get started even if you aren't in top shape or the best of health. The movements are usually circular and never forced, the muscles are relaxed rather than tensed, the joints are not fully extended or bent, and connective tissues are not stretched. Tai chi can be easily adapted for anyone, from the most physically fit to people who use wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

»• Yoga

Derived from the Sanskrit word "Yuji," meaning yoke or union, yoga is an ancient Indian practice that brings the mind and body together. Multiple studies have confirmed that yoga offers many mental and physical benefits. Increasing evidence shows that yoga could be a useful adjunct therapy to help reduce migraine frequency. Research suggests that practicing yoga may help stimulate the vagus nerve, shown to be effective in relieving migraine symptoms.

LET'S START WITH MEDITATION.

Meditation is a way of altering our state of mind and mood so we can become more tranquil and centered in the core strengths of our inner life. By exercising our attention and attitude with easy steps, a more tranquil and detached state of awareness can be achieved for both the body and mind.

Proponents of meditation are largely unaware, or will not admit, that it moves a person, unconsciously, to a place or state where the demonic kingdom takes advantage. And the end result is demon possession. At first, the experience or awareness of the supernatural is exciting and surreal. This is at first, and may last for a long period of time, but the demons will eventually express themselves, exerting themselves, in ways that provoke fear and confusion.

One of the first phases of meditation is to gently redirect our thoughts to become more aware of the peaceful quietness that already exists within us. The initial use of meditation is ideal for those who seek a haven of peacefulness to rest and recover from the tensions in our outer life. This inner meditative state is also a place for healing mental and emotional disturbances as we release anxieties, disappointments, and irritations into this peaceful state. . . .

BENEFITS OF A REGULAR MEDITATION PRACTICE

- »• Stay Calm: Be more effective in pressure situations like exams & sports. . . .
- »• Creative Thinking: More original and innovative thinking and problem solving. . . .
- »• Excellent Memory: Retain new information and recall stored information better. . . .

MINDFULNESS: AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF EFFECTIVE MEDITATION

Mindfulness is a state of awareness that allows us to make sense of what is happening to us. . . . Mindfulness is a practice of becoming detached from our usual state of mind and mood so we can review our choices of response.

In our ordinary waking state, our automatic habits and reactions tend to dominate. While this frame of mind is essential most of the time, we also need to review what we are doing and whether some improvements would be useful. . . .

Mindfulness is a way of using a detached perspective to evaluate our own behavior and attitudes . . .

MINDFULNESS IN ACTIVE MEDITATION

Mindfulness is used in all of the exercises and meditations in Active Meditation. In this manner, mindfulness provides these benefits:

1. It leads to a more expanded frame of mind that is detached from our usual attitudes, beliefs, and mindset. . . .
2. When mindfulness is combined with the active meditations, it becomes possible to mobilize the support of our Higher Self to supply the healing force of compassion, hopes, and courage. . . .
3. Mindfulness in Active Meditation can assist us in recognizing and removing our blind spots. . . .
4. Mindfulness in Active Meditation allows us to recognize and correct the many limiting beliefs we formed when we were naïve and inexperienced. . . .
5. The extraordinary benefits of mindfulness are incorporated into every Active Meditation exercise. . . . [I]t becomes possible to add the support and influence of our Higher Self.
6. Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.
7. While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it's more readily available to us when we practice on a daily basis.
8. Whenever you bring awareness to what you're directly experiencing via your senses, or to your state of mind via your thoughts and emotions, you're being mindful. . . .
9. The goal of mindfulness is to wake up to the inner workings of our mental, emotional, and physical processes.
10. Meditation is exploring. It's not a fixed destination. Your head doesn't become vacuumed free of thought, utterly undistracted. It's a special place where each and every moment is momentous. . . .
11. Mindfulness meditation asks us to suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind. . . .
12. Mindfulness is available to us in every moment, whether through meditations and body scans, or mindful moment practices like taking time to pause and breathe when the phone rings instead of rushing to answer it.

THE BASICS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, breaking down our conditioned responses. Here's how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

1. Set aside some time. . . .
2. Observe the present moment as it is. . . .

3. Let your judgments roll by. . . .
4. Return to observing the present moment as it is. . . .
5. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back.

That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.

A SIMPLE MEDITATION PRACTICE [shortened for brevity in this book].

1. Sit comfortably.
2. Notice what your legs are doing.
3. Straighten your upper body—but don't stiffen.
4. Notice what your arms are doing.
5. Soften your gaze.
6. Feel your breath.
7. Notice when your mind wanders from your breath.
8. Be kind about your wandering mind.
9. When you're ready, gently lift your gaze.

COMMON MINDFULNESS QUESTIONS

1. Is there a wrong way to meditate? A right way to meditate? People think they're messing up when they're meditating because of how busy the mind is. But getting lost in thought, noticing it, and returning to your chosen meditation object—breath, sound, body sensation, or something else—is how it's done. . . .
2. Are there more formal ways to take up mindfulness practice? Mindfulness can be practiced solo, anytime, or with like-minded friends . . .
3. Do I have to practice every day? No, but being that it's a beneficial practice, you may well find that the more you do it, the more you'll find it beneficial to your life.
4. How do I find a meditation instructor? If you want to make mindfulness a part of your life, you'll probably want to consider working with a meditation teacher or instructor. . . .
5. How do yoga and mindfulness work together? There are a number of yoga poses that will help you with your mindfulness meditation practice. . . . We have not listed these.
6. What are the benefits of meditation? Of course, when we meditate it

doesn't help to fixate on the benefits, but rather just to do the practice. That being said, there are plenty of benefits. Here are five reasons to practice mindfulness.

- Understand your pain.
- Connect better.
- Lower stress.
- Focus your mind.
- Reduce brain chatter.

7. What exactly is mindfulness? Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

EXCERPTS FROM WIKIPEDIA APRIL 6, 2022

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely bringing one's attention in the present moment without evaluation, a skill one develops through meditation or other training. Mindfulness derives from *sati*, a significant element of Buddhist traditions, and is based on *Zen*, *Vipassanā*, and Tibetan meditation techniques. Though definitions and techniques of mindfulness are wide-ranging, Buddhist traditions explain what constitutes mindfulness such as how past, present, and future moments arise and cease as momentary sense impressions and mental phenomena. Individuals who have contributed to the popularity of mindfulness in the modern Western context include Thích Nhất Hạnh, Herbert Benson, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Richard J. Davidson, and Sam Harris.

»• **Shortcomings**

»• The popularization of mindfulness as a "commodity" has been criticized, being termed "McMindfulness" by some critics. According to Safran, the popularity of mindfulness is the result of a marketing strategy: "McMindfulness is the marketing of a constructed dream; an idealized lifestyle; an identity makeover." The psychologist Thomas Joiner argues that modern mindfulness meditation has been "corrupted" for commercial gain by self-help celebrities, and suggests that it encourages unhealthy narcissistic and self-obsessed mindsets.

»• According to Purser and Loy, mindfulness is not being used as a means to awaken to insight in the "unwholesome roots of greed, ill will and delusion," but reshaped into a "banal, therapeutic, self-help technique" that has the

opposite effect of reinforcing those passions. While mindfulness is marketed as a means to reduce stress, in a Buddhist context it is part of an all-embracing ethical program to foster “wise action, social harmony, and compassion.” The privatization of mindfulness neglects the societal and organizational causes of stress and discomfort, instead propagating adaptation to these circumstances, according to Bhikkhu Bodhi, “Absent a sharp social critique, Buddhist practices could easily be used to justify and stabilize the status quo, becoming a reinforcement of consumer capitalism.” The popularity of this new brand of mindfulness has resulted in the commercialization of meditation through self-help books, guided meditation classes, and mindfulness retreats.

»• Mindfulness is said to be a \$4 billion industry. More than 60,000 books for sale on Amazon have a variant of “mindfulness” in their title, touting the benefits of Mindful Parenting, Mindful Eating, Mindful Teaching, Mindful Therapy, Mindful Leadership, Mindful Finance, a Mindful Nation, and Mindful Dog Owners, to name just a few.

»• Buddhist commentators have criticized the movement as being presented as equivalent to Buddhist practice, while in reality it is very possibly denatured with undesirable consequences, such as being ungrounded in the traditional reflective morality and therefore, astray from traditional Buddhist ethics. Criticisms suggest it to be either de-moralized or re-moralized into clinically based ethics. The conflict is often presented in concern to the teacher’s credentials and qualifications, rather than the student’s actual practice. Reformed Buddhist-influenced practices are being standardized and manualized in a clearly distinct separation from Buddhism seen as a religion based in monastic temples, as expressed as mindfulness in a new psychology ethic practiced in modern meditation centers.

»• Risks

»• In media reports, people have attributed unexpected effects of increasing fear and anxiety, panic, or “meltdowns” after practicing, which they suggest could expose bipolar vulnerability or repressed PTSD symptoms. However, according to published peer-reviewed academic articles, these negative effects of meditation are rare for mindfulness meditation and appear to happen due to a poor understanding of what actually constitutes mindfulness/meditation practices.

It is easy to see why so many are attracted to mindfulness and attendant meditation techniques. It is popular, praised, and considered essential to living in the world as it is.

Will this chapter do much to cause someone to evaluate mindfulness? Will readers buy into the demonic connection to mindfulness and meditation? Maybe or maybe not, especially when it comes from someone who is part of the Christian community. The downward spiral of Christianity and religion in general plays a large role here. Spirituality is approved and applauded, but not biblically oriented Christian spirituality. Still, the Christian community must speak out on these issues—it is being prophetic, caring, and evangelistic all at the same time.

Mindfulness/meditation are a part of the Christian experience. Every Sunday we write a “Gospel Meditation” for our church’s bulletin. These are based on the passage being considered for the sermon. It is mindful, it is meditation, and it is alert, focused, thoughtful, conscious, and perfectly biblical. And here is the best part, it is safe from invasion by demonic spirits.