

The benefits of 'being in the present'

6 October 2017, by Maura Hohman, Healthday Reporter



Yoga and tai chi are two mind-body practices that help increase mindfulness along with their physical and relaxation benefits.

There's also [mindfulness meditation](#), a very focused approach developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn. He is creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

However, you don't need a formal program to incorporate mindfulness into your day. Here are some ideas:

(HealthDay)—When you have a full schedule, multitasking might seem like the best way to finish your endless to-do list.

But the brain actually benefits from focusing on one activity at a time.

When you commit to training your attention and exerting control over your mind, you're practicing [mindfulness](#). While it has become a popular psychotherapy technique, mindfulness originated in Buddhism over 2,000 years ago.

The idea of mindfulness is that life should be lived in the [present moment](#). In addition to improving your focus, the practice can bring stress and insomnia relief, and pain reduction.

How?

One explanation comes from a study published in the journal *Psychiatry Research*. The study found that mindfulness can change the concentration of gray matter in areas of the brain involved in learning, memory, regulating emotion and more.

- When you start a task, imagine you're doing it for the first time. Be curious. Feel sensations like you've never experienced them before.
- Focus on your breathing. Take notice as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Follow your breath. It's a reminder that you're alive.
- When you're overcome with emotion, take a step back and trace the emotion's origin and duration. Mindfulness teaches recognition that emotions are fleeting, which helps to reduce fear and anxiety.
- Embrace imperfection. Once you understand that the world is filled with it, it becomes less upsetting.
- Always try to immerse yourself in your surroundings; this helps you be present and connect with the world around you.

More information: The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has more on the positive brain changes from [mindfulness](#) and on meditation itself.

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