

The Point of Mindfulness

Paying Attention on (and with) Purpose

It's been estimated that our minds process anywhere between 6,000 to 60,000 thoughts per day. That's a lot.

Granted, each of us carries what amounts to the world's most powerful supercomputer in our skulls. Even so, with that many thoughts to manage each and every day, it's inevitable for things to get a bit jumbled up in there.

When our thoughts get too jumbled, it becomes easy for us to get stuck in the past, worried about the future, and more likely to struggle with distressing thoughts and emotions.

When that happens, a little mindfulness can help.

Focusing a Jumbly Brain

A common misconception about mindfulness is that it's meant to be a relaxation exercise or a way to empty our minds and shut off thoughts and emotions.

In reality, it's a practice that teaches us to be more alert and aware of what's going on with our thoughts and emotions without judging ourselves for having them.

The goal of any mindfulness practice is to make self-awareness second nature. By registering thoughts and emotions as they happen, we can respond more thoughtfully, calmly, and positively—even in stressful or overwhelming situations.

Learning to observe our inner lives in this intentional, nonjudgmental way gives us space to recognize and address strong thoughts and emotions before they can overwhelm us. This, in turn, helps us put the brakes on and reset when we're feeling overly stressed or anxious or get stuck in a negative thought loop.

正念的真正的重點

有意識的專注

人類的大腦很繁忙，據估計每天要處理將近六千甚至到六萬個念頭。

可以想像，我們的頭腦相當於世界上最強大的一台超級電腦，但是每天要處理這麼多的想法，不可避免有時會讓思考變得有點混亂。

當我們的思緒變得混亂時，我們很容易陷入過去，擔憂未來，更容易與痛苦的情緒掙扎。

在這種情況下，練習一下正念會有幫助。

集中混亂的大腦

很多人誤以為正念就是練習放鬆，或是一種阻斷思想和情緒的方法。

事實上，正念是一種讓我們能以不加批判的態度，對自己升起的念頭和情緒，如實地察覺並清楚明白。

任何一種正念的訓練，目的都是讓我們對自我的察覺變成一種習慣，而習慣成自然。經由在念頭和情緒升起時如實察覺，我們可以更冷靜、正向、而週到地回應，尤其是在壓力情境中。

學著用這種有意識、無批判的方式觀察我們的內心活動，會讓我們有餘裕去識別和處理強烈的思緒和情緒，防止被負面情緒淹沒。反過來說，這也讓我們在感到過度緊張或焦慮時，避免陷入負面思考循環，能夠踩剎車並重新調整。

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The Many Benefits of Mindfulness

Research shows that regular mindfulness practices can reduce stress and improve:

- Physical and mental health
- Emotional wellbeing
- Communication and relationships
- Sleep quality

Though effective by themselves, mindfulness practices are commonly used to supplement more traditional mental health care methods, like counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy. They've even proven to be as effective as some anti-depressant medications for treating anxiety and depression.

A Simple Do Anywhere Mindfulness Exercise

Another great thing about mindfulness is that it doesn't have to be complicated. You don't need extra tools or equipment—just your brain and a little time to spend in quiet focus to practice a focused attention exercise like this one:

- Take a couple of deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Return your breathing to normal and notice where you most feel it. Your nose? Your chest or stomach?
- Now, note any other physical sensations, such as the feel of sitting or standing, the movement of air, or the feel of clothing on your skin.
- Whenever a stray thought comes up, notice it and think, "I'm having a stray thought".
- Gently guide your attention back to your breathing and body

This might feel awkward, and it's completely normal to get distracted by a thought or two. Try not to judge yourself or any thoughts or feelings. Instead, acknowledge and refocus your attention.

正念的許多好處

研究證明，規律進行正念練習能減少壓力，並改善：

- 身體和心理健康
- 情緒健康
- 與人溝通和人際關係
- 睡眠質量

雖然練習正念本身就有效，但正念也常被用來輔助心理健康治療，譬如心理諮商與認知行為療法。正念甚至被證實在治療焦慮和憂鬱方面跟某些抗憂鬱藥物一樣有效。

簡單、隨時隨地可以做的正念練習

正念的另一個好處是，完全不需要工具或設備，只需要你的大腦和一些時間，在安靜中來進行以下集中注意力的練習：

- 深吸幾口氣，通過鼻子呼吸，再透過嘴巴呼出。
- 恢復正常呼吸，注意你最能感受到呼吸。是在鼻子？胸腔或腹部？
- 現在注意其他身體上的感覺，例如坐著或站著的感覺，空氣的流動，或衣服接觸到皮膚上的感覺。
- 每當分心或有其它念頭出現，覺察時告訴自己：「我分心了。」
- 再輕輕地把注意力放回覺察呼吸和身體感覺

也許開始會感覺不自然，但分心是正常的。盡量不要責怪自己或產生負面想法或情緒，只需要接受並重新回到方法上。

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Finding More Mindful Moments

Here are some ideas for peppering long and short mindfulness moments throughout your day. Mix and match to find something that works for you, remembering that you're not trying for perfection – just practice.

Time It. Use a timer when performing the focus exercise outlined above. Start with one or two minutes—and then gradually work your way up to 5, 10, or 15-minute sessions if you can.

Practice Presence. Pause throughout your day and use all your senses to observe the world around you. Notice and name 3 or 4 things you can see, hear, smell, or touch. Pay attention to physical and emotional reactions as you name each one and then move on to the next without judging or giving in to distraction.

Listen Actively. Practice being in the moment and focused on conversations and interactions with others. Acknowledge emotions and attention drift, and then guide your attention back to what your conversation partner is saying just as you'd redirect your internal focus when it strays.

Embrace the Everyday. Chances are you do dozens of daily tasks on autopilot, like brushing your teeth, getting dressed, making tea or coffee, and feeding pets. Use those as opportunities to practice quiet breathing and deliberately focus your attention on the mechanics and sensations of each task.

尋找更多正念的時刻

以下是一些把練習正念融入在你日常生活的方法；時間可長可短，你可以任意組合，找到適合你的方式。要注意的是：不追求完美，只要持續不斷地練習。

時長。當你要開始做專注練習，用計時器來計算時間。先從一到兩分鐘開始，如果可以的話，逐漸增加到五、十、十五分鐘的時間段。

練習當下。在一天中，嘗試練習暫停：停下手邊工作，利用所有感官去感知和覺察周遭世界，注意並能舉認三到四個你能看到、聽到、聞到或摸到的東西。在舉認每一樣東西時，注意身體和情緒的反應，再繼續到下一項。

積極傾聽。練習用專注當下的狀態跟他人交談和互動。如果覺察到情緒和注意力偏移，再把心念拉回來，同時注意力轉回到對方所說的內容。

擁抱日常。你可能常常如機器人般完成像刷牙、穿衣服、泡茶或泡咖啡、亦或餵寵物等例行公事。把這些當成正念練習的機會，安靜覺察呼吸，並有意識地專注於每項任務以及身體的覺受。