



भारतीय श्रमिक शिक्षा संस्थान
दत्तोपंत ठेंगडी राष्ट्रीय श्रमिक शिक्षा एवं विकास बोर्ड द्वारा संस्थापित
श्रम एवं रोजगार मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार
श्रमिक शिक्षण भवन, ला.ब. शास्त्री मार्ग, कुर्ला कोर्ट के पास, कुर्ला (पश्चिम) मुंबई- 400070

Indian Institute of Workers Education

Founded by Dattopant Thengadi National Board for Workers Education & Development

Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India

Shramik Shikshan Bhavan, L.B.S. Marg, Near Kurla Court, Kurla (West) Mumbai 400070

Tel/Fax : 022-26503532 Tel. 26503965

email : iiwemumbai@rediffmail.com

LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Facts For You

JUNE, 2023

Mindfulness



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. It is a mental state achieved by focussing on the present moment by acknowledging one's feelings, thoughts and body situation. Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses; one just has to learn how to access it.

Formal investigations into mindfulness in the Western world began in 1979 when John Kabat-Zinn developed what would become the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

Kabat-Zinn combined his studies of Hatha yoga with mindfulness practices and Buddhist principles he learned from his many teachers. Since then, research into MBSR and general mindfulness has exploded.

The Types of Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness can be cultivated through proven techniques. Here are some examples:

1. Seated, walking, standing, and moving meditation (it's also possible lying down but often leads to sleep);
2. Short pauses we insert into everyday life;
3. Merging meditation practice with other activities, such as yoga or sports.

Mindfulness Benefits

- When we're mindful, we reduce stress, enhance performance, gain insight and awareness through observing our own mind, and increase our attention to self and others' well-being.
- Mindfulness meditation gives us a time in our lives when we can suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness—to ourselves and others.
- It improves cognitive ability
- It slows down brain aging
- It reduces stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms
- It increases a sense of well-being
- It helps with pain management
- It improves quality of life for those living with chronic conditions

Improving brain health and slowing brain aging

A 2019 study Trusted Source of first-time meditators who underwent 40 days of mindfulness meditation training had positive changes in brain structure, including gray matter volume and cortical thickness. A 2020 study of 50 long-term meditation practitioners between the ages of 24 and 77 found significantly lower rates of annual brain tissue loss in meditators, specifically in regions shown to play a role in mood regulation, nervous system processing, and

emotional/cognitive integration. The study noted that “the results add further evidence to the emerging notion that meditation may slow the effects of aging on the brain.”

Anxiety, depression, and overall well-being

A 2019 study found that MBSR was effective at increasing well-being, reducing perceived stress, and increasing job satisfaction in the workplace based on self-reports from participants. A 2020 review found that MBSR was better than controls at treating young people with anxiety symptoms, but that treatment duration was an important factor. A 2020 study noted that introducing mindfulness and meditation practice during the pandemic was a lower-cost way to complement anxiety treatment. The study also noted that mindfulness and meditation practices translate well to people of different ages and ranges of ability. Regular mindfulness practice is beneficial for anxiety and depression, even without being integrated into a larger therapeutic framework.

Pain, disease management, and quality of life

A 2019 review showed that mindfulness interventions offered multiple benefits for individuals with cancer, including:

- reducing stress
- reducing pain
- improving quality of life
- reducing fatigue
- reducing fat and muscle loss in the late stages of the disease
- providing relief from digestive disorders
- improving symptoms of sleep disorders
- improving immune response
- providing support for caregivers

The review also noted that mindfulness may even help prevent cancer by increasing levels of melatonin, a hormone known to have anticancer properties.

Facts about Mindfulness

1. **Mindfulness is not difficult to understand or exotic.** It’s familiar to us because it’s what we already do. It takes many shapes and goes by many names.
2. **Mindfulness is not a special added thing we do.** We already have the capacity to be present, and it doesn’t require us to change who we are. But we can cultivate these innate qualities with simple practices that are scientifically demonstrated to

benefit ourselves, our loved ones, our friends and neighbours, the people we work with, and the institutions and organizations we take part in.

3. **You don't need to change.** Solutions that ask us to change who we are or become something we're not have failed us over and over again. Mindfulness recognizes and cultivates the best of who we are as human beings.
4. **Anyone can do it.** Mindfulness practice cultivates universal human qualities and does not require anyone to change their beliefs. Everyone can benefit and it's easy to learn.
5. **It's a way of living.** Mindfulness is more than just a practice. It brings awareness and caring into everything we do—and it cuts down needless stress. Even a little makes our lives better.
6. **It's evidence-based.** We don't have to take mindfulness on faith. Both science and experience demonstrate its positive benefits for our health, happiness, work, and relationships.
7. **It sparks innovation.** As we deal with our world's increasing complexity and uncertainty, mindfulness can lead us to effective, resilient, low-cost responses to seemingly stubborn problems.

Teaching Mindfulness

There are various ways to teach mindfulness, with modern technology. Mindfulness techniques can be successfully shared in person or remotely through online videos, podcasts, and even via Smartphone apps. Those participating must recognize that mindfulness should be practiced consistently and is best learned from a trained practitioner for it to be most beneficial.

Mindfulness Practice

The easiest way to **practice mindfulness is to focus on the breath, resting your attention on the inhalation and exhalation repeatedly.**

This technique is detailed in the Siva Sutras, a 9th-century text, believed to be written by the learned Vasugupta. While it may be ancient in origin, this technique is just as fresh and relevant today. It can be practiced in almost any context as a way to continually bring your attention back to the present moment over and over.

Here's a posture practice that can be used as the beginning stage of a period of meditation practice or simply as something to do for a minute, may be to stabilize yourself and find a

moment of relaxation. If you have injuries or other physical difficulties, you can modify this to suit your situation.

- 1 Take your seat.** Whatever you're sitting on—a chair, a meditation cushion, a park bench—find a spot that gives you a stable, solid seat, not perching or hanging back.
- 2 Notice what your legs are doing.** If on a cushion on the floor, cross your legs comfortably in front of you. (If you already do some kind of seated yoga posture, go ahead.) If on a chair, it's good if the bottoms of your feet are touching the floor.
- 3 Straighten—but don't stiffen— your upper body.** The spine has natural curvature. Let it be there. Your head and shoulders can comfortably rest on top of your vertebrae.
- 4 Situate your upper arms parallel to your upper body.** Then let your hands drop onto the tops of your legs. With your upper arms at your sides, your hands will land in the right spot. Too far forward will make you hunch. Too far back will make you stiff. You're tuning the strings of your body—not too tight and not too loose.
- 5 Drop your chin a little and let your gaze fall gently downward.** You may let your eyelids lower. If you feel the need, you may lower them completely, but it's not necessary to close your eyes when meditating. You can simply let what appears before your eyes be there without focusing on it.
- 6 Be there for a few moments.** Relax. Pay attention to your breath or the sensations in your body.
- 7 Begin again.** When your posture is established, feel your breath—or some say “follow” it—as it goes out and as it goes in. (Some versions of the practice put more emphasis on the out breath, and for the in breath you simply leave a spacious pause.) Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—return your attention to the breath. Don't bother judging yourself or obsessing over the content of the thoughts. Come back. You go away, you come back.
- 8 That's it.** 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.

Mindfulness Applications

Mindfulness is increasingly being combined and incorporated into other psychological approaches and therapeutic styles across all domains of life.

1. Mindfulness in education

Research shows that even brief mindfulness exercises have positive and immediate effects on memory performance (Lloyd et al., 2016). Furthermore, beyond the cognitive benefits, when students were given simple breathing meditation practice, their blood pressure and heart rate reduced, leaving them in a better position for learning and being examined (Tang, 2018). Mindful communication—speaking and listening with mindfulness—requires that our words reflect our values and a deeper connection to who we are, which can positively affect education – improving decision-making, focus, and attention. Mindfulness has also been found to reduce stereotyping and cross-cultural misunderstandings, to create a supportive and positive learning environment and experience (Tang, 2018). Adopting mindfulness in educational institutions encourages rational thinking, intuition, and creativity. When age-appropriate mindfulness exercises and games were introduced in schools, those least skilled in attention, planning, and organization were seen to improve the most (Tang, 2018).

2. Mindfulness at work

Workplace environments are an increasing source of stress and anxiety and may benefit the most from the positive impact of mindfulness training. After all, a non-judgmental, compassionate focus on the present can boost positive emotions, focus, attention, and imagination, all vital to occupational performance (Baas, Nevicka, & Velden, 2020; Seligman, 2011).

“Fortune 500 companies such as Google, Proctor & Gamble, Aetna, Facebook, and General Mills have been implementing large-scale mindfulness programs over the past few years” (Shapiro, 2020, p. 155). Such companies have witnessed considerable success from such interventions; not least decreased stress, improved decision-making, greater company loyalty, improved innovation, and boosted productivity. Indeed, an improved attitude, including compassion, kindness, and curiosity—central to mindfulness—can create an environment of psychological safety more conducive to teamwork, success, and creativity (Shapiro, 2020).

3. Mindfulness therapy

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) embraces mindfulness techniques, with considerable success, in treating anxiety and related conditions. Through mindfulness, the client is encouraged to adopt a more compassionate acceptance of harmful or toxic emotions rather than struggle, or fight, against them. “Mindful acceptance is an active, fully conscious,

softer attitude toward your mind and body and your life experiences” and it has the power and potential to help you get unstuck and move forward (Forsyth & Eifert, 2016, p. 165).

Like ACT, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is another third-wave cognitive behavioural treatment. It combines mindfulness meditation practices with existing therapeutic approaches to encourage both acceptance and compassion towards internal experiences.

MBCT’s approach recognizes that difficult emotions are intrinsically associated with certain situations and events, and that mindfulness can facilitate new orientations towards them.

MBCT has shown particular effectiveness with clients suffering from depression, helping them bring attention to their bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts “and to respond adaptively to the early warning signs of relapse” (Crane, 2009, p. 3).

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) combines cognitive, behavioural, and mindfulness-based strategies to treat self-injuring and suicidal clients with borderline personality disorder.

Individuals are encouraged to identify and accept things as they are, rather than reject or deny their reality, and non-judgementally focus on the present. Mindfulness techniques encourage paying attention, with purpose, and without judgment, to reduce feelings of suffering and being overwhelmed – balancing emotion and reason (Dobson & Dozois, 2021).

Conclusion

No single therapeutic approach or set of interventions can help everyone suffering from mental health issues all the time. However, mindfulness has proven effective in various situations, including helping persons who suffer from anxiety, depression, and addictive behaviour.

Not only that, mindfulness can easily be integrated into other approaches, such as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, as seen in newer, third-wave methods, including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy. Mindfulness techniques can be taught online, in-person, video training, and app-based–skills. These skills can be acquired quickly and used in multiple settings, including work, education, and parenting.

However, it is important that mindfulness techniques are recognized as most beneficial when performed over prolonged periods. While there are some immediate changes to the brain

during and after mindfulness sessions, when used over time, clients can experience improvement in how they handle stress, form and maintain relationships, and set meaningful, value-based goals for how they wish to live their lives. Mindfulness can easily be added to sessions or set as homework without interfering with other treatments.

(Reference: Internet Resources)

Compiled by,
Dr Asmita S Deshmukh.

Assisted by,
Shri Nilesh R Patade