



Focus on the present moment.

In the rush to accomplish life's necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment — missing out on what you're doing and how you're feeling. This factsheet explores how to focus on and reconnect with the present moment.



The present moment.

It's a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your day while listening to the radio and commuting to work, and then plan your weekend. Did you notice whether you felt well-rested this morning or that the flowers were in bloom along your route to work?

Paying more attention to your own thoughts and feelings in the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing.

Visit the [online NHS Choices Moodzone for more information on mental health](#).

Mindfulness.

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment — and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness is now being examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in happiness (Positive Psychology: Harnessing the Power of Happiness, Mindfulness, and Personal Strength – Ronald D. Siegel - 2009).

Try these simple mindfulness techniques:

- Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing or on a word or "mantra" that you repeat silently. Allow thoughts to come and go, returning your focus on breath or mantra.
- Notice subtle body sensations such as an itch or tingling and let them pass. Notice each part of your body in succession from head to toe.
- Notice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. Name them "sight," "sound," "smell," "taste," or "touch". Try doing this at a regular time every day.
- Allow emotions to be present without judgment. Practice a steady and relaxed naming of emotions: "joy," "anger," "frustration."
- Try something new, like walking a new route at lunchtime or changing your evening routine around. This can help you notice the world in a new way.
- Try not to latch onto a particular idea, emotion, or sensation, or to get caught in thinking about the past or the future. Instead watch what comes and goes in your mind, and discover which mental habits produce a feeling of wellbeing or suffering.

If you want to develop your breathing awareness skills, try taking up yoga or tai-chi.

Mindfulness and mental wellbeing.

Professor Mark Williams, former director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre, says:

'Mindfulness also allows us to become more aware of the stream of thoughts and feelings that we can experience, and to see how we can become entangled in that stream in ways that are not helpful. This lets us stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns.

Gradually, we can train ourselves to notice when our thoughts are taking over and realise that thoughts are simply 'mental events' that do not have to control us. Awareness of this kind also helps us notice signs of stress or anxiety early and helps us deal with them better'.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommend mindfulness as a way to prevent depression in people who've had three or more bouts of depression in the past.

Practising mindfulness.

There are lots of resources available online to help you practice mindfulness, including websites like [mindful.org](#) and [bemindful.co.uk](#). You can take online courses or even find a local teacher to help improve your mindfulness skills.

Download the [Headspace app](#) to discover mindfulness and meditation techniques to help manage everyday pressures.

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Life felt like a blur of meaningless moments. Now I understand how to take a breath and refocus on myself, inside and out.