

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

You might notice that the terms mindfulness and meditation seem to be used interchangeably. If you search online, you'll find different definitions for each. Here's our interpretation:

Mindfulness is awareness of what you are feeling, sensing or thinking right now, without wishing it to be different.

Meditation is a mental training technique. There are many kinds of meditation. Some are aimed at focusing attention, by concentrating on breath, sound, or repeated phrases, for example. Other meditations cultivate social skillfulness, such as kindness, gratitude or empathic listening. And yet others bring awareness to the body, with body scans, walking or yoga. Meditation can be practiced in solitude or with others. For some people, doing it with a group can provide additional support, validation and inspiration.

Increasingly, mindfulness and meditation are media buzzwords associated with wellness. But it's not just a passing trend; the buzz is largely driven by a significant body of neuroscience research about our ability to change the way we think, feel and act. Meditation and other mindful practices are tools of change.

BRAIN BITS: SOME NEUROSCIENCE OF MEDITATION

Scientists have proven that by repeatedly practicing new thought patterns, you can create more effective, automatic behaviors. Just like physical exercise makes the body stronger during physical activity and throughout daily movement, time allocated to training the mind yields an immediate benefit and longer-term improvements too.

MRI scans reveal that the brain is "plastic" and can reorganize itself, both physically and functionally, throughout your life. You're never too old to train your brain and realize the benefits. Some of the benefits of meditation that researchers identified include activating areas of the brain that are associated with self-awareness, thinking and focus; it's also been found to decrease gray matter in areas of the brain that play an important role in anxiety, stress¹ and mind-wandering².



¹ [Source: Holzel, B. et al. Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging, 2011](#)

² [Garrison, KA. et al. Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience, 2015](#)

M2 React Less Resource Guide

DATA BITS: WHY PRACTICE?



FEEL BETTER



THINK BETTER



CONNECT BETTER

Google After 12 months of participating in mindfulness training, Google employees reported:
³**13% increase** in overall well-being **19% increase** in ability to manage work-related stress **19% decrease** in impatience with oneself and others

PRACTICES FOR WORK, HOME AND OUT AND ABOUT

It's called **practice** because you're consciously setting aside time to train your brain to be more present, more responsive, more resilient, less judgmental. Like any other skill, practice helps you be more prepared to manage the demands of daily life with more ease.

Guided meditation practices for your office or home

- [Arriving in mindful presence \(5 minutes\)](#)
- [Compassion practice \(5 minutes\)](#)
- [Breath, sound and body practice \(12 minutes\)](#)

Mindful practices to build into your day

- Next time you're waiting in line or at a stoplight, notice your breath instead of looking at your phone
- Close down your email and browser and concentrate on just one project or activity. Try it for 30 minutes and build from there as needed.
- Right before bed, jot down three things for which you are grateful.
- Notice if you're feeling tired, angry, hungry or anxious. Acknowledge negative thoughts without judgment. Take a few calming breaths and ask, "What can I do about it?"

³ Interview with Bill Duane, Superintendent of Well-Being at Google, "10% Happier with Dan Harris" August 9, 2017