



# ThinkWell

## What is Mindfulness?

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#### Health Matters ThinkWell Series

##### ***Opening [0:00–2:40]***

Hi, Do you ever find yourself responding to the stresses of life through survival mode – fight, flight, freeze or fawn which in daily life can be expressed as irritation, aggression, procrastination, avoidance or people-pleasing, a mode which often leads to ill-health if sustained long-term? Would you prefer to spend more of your time in easy mode – calm, kind, co-operative, clear-minded, better able to balance your work, rest and play?

If so, mindfulness could help you just as it has supported me personally and millions of others around the world.

Over the next few minutes, we'll talk briefly about what mindfulness is, where it comes from, the science backed benefits and how you can bring it into your daily life.

But first "Take a moment to notice your posture as you sit or stand. Feel the ground under your feet or perhaps the chair under your hips, become aware of any tension in your shoulders, your hands, your jaw or your forehead. Pay attention to how it feels to breathe, the air moving in through your nose or mouth, filling your lungs and then releasing. Can you hear sounds close to you, or at a distance. These simple actions – paying attention to what's happening inside us or around us, in this moment – is the essence of mindfulness.

But what exactly is mindfulness? Where does it come from, and why are doctors, scientists, and even CEOs talking about it today? That's what we'll explore over the next ten minutes. Welcome to this short journey into the world of mindfulness – a practice that's ancient in its roots, but cutting-edge in its relevance."

### ***Part 1: What is Mindfulness? [2:40-3:50]***

“Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, without judgment. It means becoming aware of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and environment, as they are – not as we wish they were, not as they were yesterday, but right now.

This simple concept is deceptively powerful. Consider how often we’re lost in thoughts, usually ones that add to our stress levels – replaying the past, planning the future, judging ourselves or others. Mindfulness brings us back to the now, grounding us in the only moment that’s truly real.

You don’t need incense, a mountaintop or a silent space to practice mindfulness. You can be mindfully washing the dishes, walking the dog, or listening to someone speak. It’s less about clearing your mind, and more about becoming aware of it.”

### ***Part 2: A Brief History of Mindfulness [3:50-4:45]***

“Though it’s a modern buzzword, mindfulness is anything but new - Its roots stretch back over 2,500 years. Nor is it confined to religious practices though it was a central part of Buddhist teachings and early Christian practices. The idea of focusing inwards to observe thoughts and feelings has been echoed in many spiritual paths.

Fast forward to the late 20th century, when mindfulness stepped into Western medicine. A key figure here is Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist who in 1979 developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) at the University of Massachusetts. His goal? To bring the benefits of mindfulness into hospitals and clinics – stepping away from religious ties – but using evidence-based science to prove its worth.”

### ***Part 3: The Science of Mindfulness [4:45-6:30]***

“So... does it work? The answer from science is a clear and resounding yes.

Over the past few decades, hundreds of studies have explored how mindfulness affects the brain and body. Here are some of the highlights:

**Stress reduction:** One of the best-documented benefits. It gives us tools to steer our nervous system from survival / stress / uneasy mode to a more peaceful, at ease mode. Mindfulness lowers cortisol, the stress hormone, and helps people manage anxiety and emotional reactivity.

**Mental health:** Mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and even PTSD. Programs like MBCT – Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy – are now recommended by healthcare services worldwide for preventing relapse in depression.

**Physical health:** Regular mindfulness practice can lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve sleep, and even support immune function.

Brain changes: MRI studies show that mindfulness can increase the thickness of the prefrontal cortex – associated with focus and decision-making – and shrink the amygdala, the brain’s fear centre.

This isn’t magic – it’s neuroplasticity. Our brains change based on how we use them. We can develop our mental fitness through practice. And mindfulness, it turns out, is like going to the gym... for your mind.”

#### ***Part 4: Bringing Mindfulness Into Daily Life – 6:30-8:05]***

“You might be thinking – this all sounds great! ... but I don’t always have time to sit and meditate for 30 minutes a day? Though regular practice is worthwhile, the good news is, mindfulness can be practiced in small moments too.

Try this: when you brush your teeth next, just notice. The sensation of the bristles, the taste of the toothpaste, the sight or sound of the running water. That’s mindfulness.

Or set a reminder once a day to pause, take 3 conscious breaths, and check in with your body. You might start to notice patterns in your thoughts, gain emotional clarity, and feel a little more grounded.

There are great apps like Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer, offering guided meditations from 1 to 20 minutes. Even a few minutes a day has measurable effects. If you can make the time, there are many local classes and live online sessions to be found and mindfulness teachers that will come to workplaces to support your wellbeing.

And if you work in a high-stress job or live in a high stress environment– mindfulness can help you respond as you might wish, instead of simply reacting. To operate with clarity and compassion instead of autopilot.”

#### ***Closing [8:05-10:00]***

“Mindfulness isn’t about escaping life – it’s about fully living it. With awareness, with compassion and with presence.

It’s a practice rooted in ancient wisdom, validated by modern science, and available to anyone, anytime.

So, as you go about your day, remember: this moment – right now – is the only one you truly have. How will you meet it?

Thanks for reading. May your next breath be a mindful one.”

***End***