

FAST FACTS

Meditation

Mind-Body Medicine

What

Meditation refers to a group of techniques such as mindfulness, guided or transcendental meditation that train the mind to be focused on the present moment, or to focus on a particular object, thought, or activity, through attention and awareness.

Most spiritual and religious traditions practice some form of meditation whether it be in the form of prayers, mantra, or quiet contemplation, however meditation has become a popular practice for people to deal with stress and anxiety, to improve sleep, and to focus attention. Meditation has also been found to be helpful in managing symptoms associated with certain medical conditions such as pain and nausea.

How it works

Different practices will use different elements to achieve the state of focused attention, quiet the mind chatter, and decrease distraction. Common elements of meditation include:

- **Focused attention** where the mind is brought to be attentive and focused on a single thought or object. When the mind wanders it is brought back to the focus point repeatedly until it is able to remain focused for an extended period of time.
- **Controlled breathing** using the diaphragm and abdomen throughout the breath, helps to engage the vagus nerve and promote parasympathetic (rest, digest, repair) function, and turn down the sympathetic (fight, flight, freeze) stress response.
- **Other techniques** that can be used include mindful walking, where attention is brought to the movement and sensation of the legs and feet as you slowly walk through a park, forest, or along the beach.
- **Mindful eating** is another popular technique, where attention is paid to slowly chewing your food and focusing on the smell, taste, texture, and temperature of the food, actively engaging the senses in the process of eating.

Learn more

[Head Space](#)



Pros

- Improved stress management and resilience.
- Improved self-awareness
- Improved sleep
- Improved focus, attention, and memory
- Reduced anxiety and negative emotions
- Reduced blood pressure and heart rate
- Reduced muscle tension and pain

Cons

- Any form of meditation takes time to develop the skills and form a habit of making meditation a regular part of each day.
- Some people may find quiet, contemplative meditation difficult and would benefit more from guided or movement meditation initially.

Contraindications

People who have experienced traumatic events that have affected their mental well-being are advised to seek the advice of a qualified therapist before engaging in meditation practices.