



## Mindfulness in a Nutshell

Mindfulness – whether you love it or hate it, it is one of those universal things that just about all of could use more of – think of it like a muscle that needs regular exercise and when you take the time to work it out, the payoff is huge! Whether you are just starting out, or looking for tips to grow, the following is a brief primer with helpful tips.

As a refresher, remember that:

***“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally...It's about knowing what is on your mind.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn***

Google mindfulness and you will find literally thousands of how-to guides, but the version that I still prefer and use in my own sessions comes from **Marsha Linehan, PhD**, developer of **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy**. She breaks the process of mindfulness down into 6 concrete, but interrelated skills – the “What” skills (as in what you are doing) and the “How” skills (how to perform each action).

“What” Skills	“How” Skills
1. Observe	4. Non-judgmentally
2. Describe	5. One-mindfully
3. Participate	6. Effectively

Seems pretty straightforward so far, right? Here are the details:

- 1. Observe** – this involves noticing your experience and what is happening around and within you. Many people find it helpful to start with the five senses – what can you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste right now in this moment? Build from there – what thoughts are you having? What are you saying to yourself? What emotions are occurring? What situation do you find yourself in? What’s happening around you?
- 2. Describe** – put words to the things you noticed while observing. Label your experiences in order to make sense of them. Remember words are powerful though – be as accurate and objective as possible.
- 3. Participate** – jump into your moment with both feet. Observing is an action word – don’t stop living or stop an experience in order to observe it. Actively practice your new skills in day-to-day life. Participate in life. As Linehan wrote, “become one with your experience, completely forgetting yourself.”
- 4. Non-judgment** – Practice observing, describing, and participating without evaluating the experience as either positive or negative. Accept things without judging them. It can be harder than you might expect, but it has tremendous impact on mental health. And in those situations where you find yourself unable to be non-judgmental, just notice what is occurring, call it what it is, and remember not to judge yourself for judging.
- 5. One-mindful** – this is often the hardest thing for people these days. In a culture that encourages and celebrates mindless multitasking, I am asking you to slow yourself down. Complete one activity at a time, with mindful and conscious attention. Concentrate and focus on that one experience, noticing every minute detail and appreciating that moment fully. Let go of distractions. Give each action your full attention.
- 6. Effectiveness** – do what works for you. Avoid judgments, avoid the shoulds and musts, avoid comparing or competing. Focus on your experience and finding ways to augment it based on what works for YOU. Act skillfully and from that place of mindfulness that you are now learning to tap into.