



TRINITY
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Whole-Person Benefits of

Mindfulness & Meditation

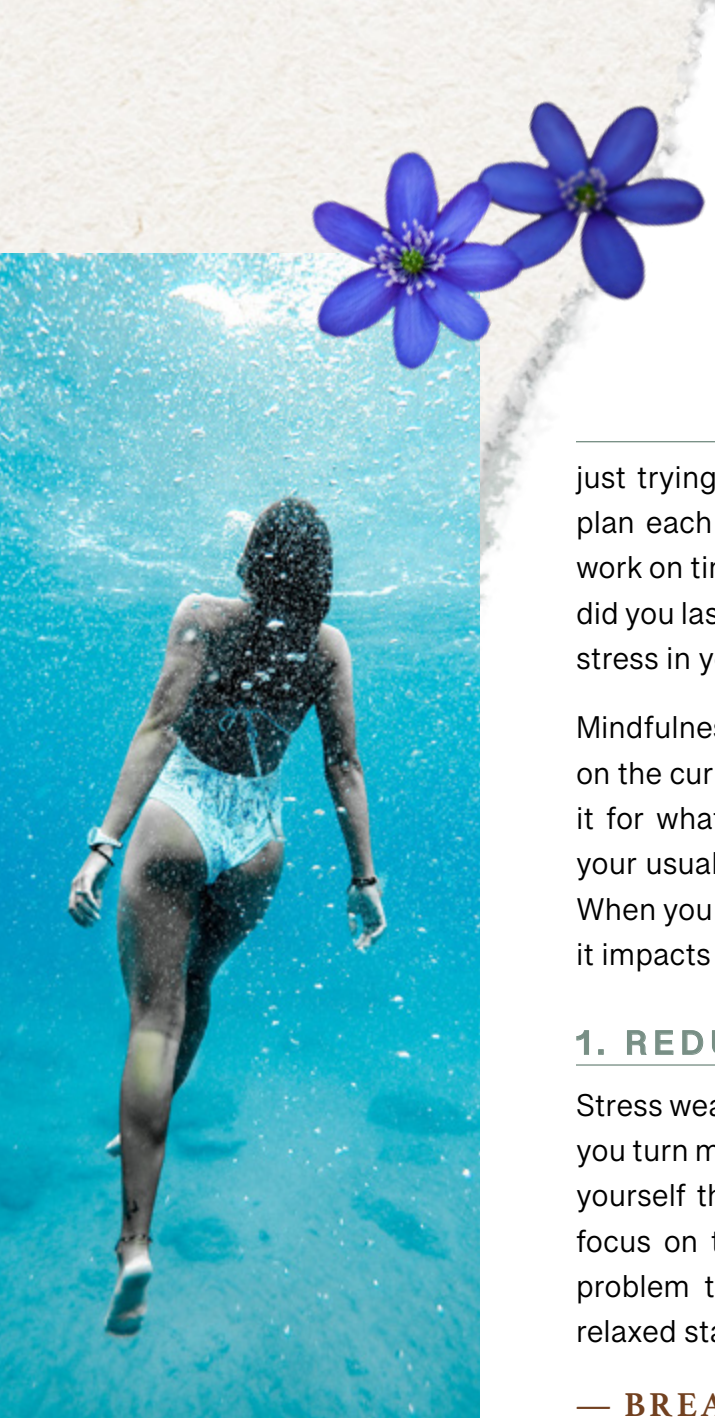
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_____ In the midst of your busy life, do you find yourself just trying to keep your head above water? Maybe, you have to plan each day carefully so you can get everyone to school and work on time. Everyone may need something from you. But, when did you last take time for yourself? One of the best ways to reduce stress in your life is to focus on being present.

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the current moment, taking time to accept it, and appreciating it for what it is. It allows you to shift your thoughts away from your usual preoccupations and adopt a larger perspective of life. When you adopt a daily meditation practice, such as mindfulness, it impacts more than just your mind. The whole body can benefit.

1. REDUCED STRESS

Stress wears down your body, your health, and your energy. When you turn mindfulness and meditation into a habit, you can support yourself through stressful times. Mindfulness can enable you to focus on the big picture rather than zeroing in on a particular problem that is stressing you out. To achieve a calmer, more relaxed state, consider these elements of mindfulness:

— BREATHING EXERCISES

Breathe in and out slowly and focus all of your attention on the air moving through your body. Exhale for twice as long as you inhale to activate your parasympathetic nervous system. This will reduce your heart rate and blood pressure and leave you feeling calmer.

— SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion starts with being mindful of your emotions. What is going on inside of you? Name your feelings, even if you don't like them. You can also name your resistance to these feelings. Self-compassion involves speaking to yourself the way you would talk to a friend. Be kind rather than tearing yourself down.

— MINDFUL EATING

If you've been feeling overworked and overwhelmed, sometimes you just need to slow down. One of the best opportunities to do that is during a meal. Practice mindful eating by consuming your food very deliberately, paying attention to the sensations of holding the item, smelling, tasting, chewing, and swallowing it. It will help you re-center on your present moment, rather than hurrying through your meal so you can check more items off your to-do list.



2. BETTER MENTAL FUNCTIONING

Mindfulness and meditation don't just impact your stress levels; they can also influence your brain's health. In one recent study, mindfulness was associated with both enhanced brain structure and brain function.¹ It can help you reduce interference from things you've learned previously and get a fresh perspective on new experiences and situations. Here are three tips for using mindfulness to support your memory:

- Notice when you have previous information or experiences that are impacting your ability to learn something new.
- Take a moment to intentionally differentiate the new information from the old.
- A few times each day, spend two minutes paying attention to what you're doing at the moment. Consider the thoughts and judgments passing through your mind. In short, be intentionally observant of what is going around you and inside you.



3. HEALTHIER EMOTIONS

When you practice mindfulness and meditation daily, you are more in tune with your emotions. This allows you to assess your feelings without having to react to them. For example, one study found that when participants were exposed to a guided mindfulness meditation, their brains could control negative emotions better than those who were not exposed to the meditation.

When you're not emotionally reactive, you may have better opportunities to engage with people around you and make wiser decisions that benefit you in the long term. Over the next several weeks, practice mindfulness daily and observe how you respond to difficult or stressful situations. Do you feel less of a need to react strongly? This could be a result of your commitment to mindfulness and meditation.²

4. DEEPER FOCUS

Our world is full of distractions that bombard the senses. Your kids yell; your phone vibrates; the oven beeps; someone knocks on the door. It's harder than ever to focus on a singular input because there are so many of them happening simultaneously. Multitasking can reduce your concentration levels, but focusing on a meditation practice can help you stay present through your daily tasks.

— BOUNCE BACK FROM DISTRACTIONS.

Bringing attention back to your breath each time you feel your mind wandering during meditation helps remind your brain to focus. This translates into your daily activities because you can return to the task at hand faster when something distracts you at work or home.

— CONTROL YOUR STRESS REACTION.

Because meditation helps reduce your stress, you can focus better during high-pressure situations. When your emotional health is good, you don't have to waste energy dealing with emotional triggers; you can simply name your emotions and move on.



Conclusion **Improve Your Overall Well-Being**

Mindfulness and meditation have been around for thousands of years, and they are still central to humanity's well-being. People meditate for a wide variety of reasons; sometimes it's to relax and practice self-care, and other times it is to support the body and mind through stressful or overwhelming situations. Regardless of your reasoning for adopting a new meditation or mindfulness practice, you can reap whole-body benefits that extend beyond your initial goals. If you do find yourself experiencing severe emotional upset, talk with your doctor, pastor, or therapist to determine if mindfulness and meditation are right for you at this time and to discover what may work best for you.

If you want to get more from your wellness practice, take your habits to the next level by enrolling in a natural health education program from Trinity School of Natural Health. Becoming a Certified Natural Health Professional can equip you to holistically support yourself and the people around you. To find out more, call 800-428-0408, option 2, to speak to an enrollment specialist or visit TrinitySchool.org/CNHP.



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References

1. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/high-octane-brain/201906/mindfulness-and-memory>
2. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2016.00451/full>