

# Introduction to mindfulness for persistent pain

## Introduction

Do you feel that you are in a daily battle with your pain?  
Is your mind full of thoughts, fears, frustrations or muddle?

Do you feel like you are always rushing?

Does your mind and body feel disconnected?

Mindfulness can help you find a calmer way to live life despite having pain.

## What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is simply paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally. It is based on meditation practice which helps you to:

- allow your mind to settle more in the present moment
- accept what is here, for better or worse
- let go of fruitless and exhausting struggles
- focus your energy on the things that you can change
- help you notice pleasant experiences

## What mindfulness is not:

Mindfulness is not very easy to explain, and sometimes the best way to understand it is to try it.

It is also important to be clear that mindfulness is not a cure for pain and does not remove uncomfortable situations from our lives, but helps us relate to them in a different way.

Mindfulness is not relaxation. Some people can find mindfulness calming and feel more settled but this is a helpful by-product rather than the aim of it.

Mindfulness meditation has been used for thousands of years within the Buddhist tradition. The benefits of meditation practice for health and wellbeing have been researched, and now a non-religious version of the mindfulness approach is widely offered by the NHS as part of effective healthcare.

Reference No.

GHPI1609\_10\_22

Department

Pain  
Management

Review due

October 2025

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## Gloucestershire and Herefordshire NHS Mindfulness Course

The Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Pain Self-Management Service offers an NHS course specifically tailored for people with persistent pain. The team involved with the course are qualified and experienced mindfulness teachers.

The course involves attending 8 weekly online sessions on Zoom (so requires a laptop/tablet/phone to participate), in a group setting and daily meditation practice at home. Each session is pre-planned. Probably the most important part of the course is doing some home practice each day which will take around 20 minutes, so it is worth thinking about whether you will have the time and motivation to do this before enrolling on the course.

The course is based on the Breathworks 'Mindfulness for Health' book by Burch and Penman which is available from most book retailers or via County Council libraries.

### Comments from previous attendees on our Mindfulness Course:

"Mindfulness has brought me a peace and contentment with my situation that I have not experienced for many years."

"I was fairly sceptical as to its usefulness for me and my pain and to what level it might help me. After a few weeks and investing the time, I found it truly helpful in changing my attitude to my sensation."

### How do you learn to be more mindful?

Learning to be more mindful requires a little teaching and a lot of practice. Many people find attending a course helps them to understand mindfulness more and start practising meditation regularly.

The following websites have online courses although there may be a charge.

#### **Be mindful**

Website: [www.bemindfulonline.com](http://www.bemindfulonline.com)

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### Breathworks

Website: [www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/methods-for-living-well-with-pain-and-illness](http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/methods-for-living-well-with-pain-and-illness)

Or you could ask in your local library for help to find courses in your area.

There are also two mindfulness courses run at St Michael's Hospice in Herefordshire, one for health problems and the other for stress. There is a small charge for these courses.

### Recommended mindfulness resources

If you would like to find out more about mindfulness, there are some good resources available. Here are a few we recommend:

#### Online videos

- An introduction to mindfulness (Mindfulnet.org, 3 mins)  
Website: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbizmVKHdgs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbizmVKHdgs)
- 'About mindfulness' - (Dumfries & Galloway's, 7 mins)  
Website:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=IPuTqDI99qM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=IPuTqDI99qM)
- BBC News (David Sillito, 3 mins)  
Website: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-16406814/scans-show-mindfulness-meditation-brain-boost](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-16406814/scans-show-mindfulness-meditation-brain-boost)
- All it takes is 10 mindful minutes (Andy Puddicombe, 9 mins)  
Website:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzR62JJCMBQ&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzR62JJCMBQ&feature=em-share_video_user)

#### Books

- 'Mindfulness for Health' by Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman
- 'Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World' by Mark Williams and Danny Penman

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**Websites**

**Headspace**

Website: [www.headspace.com/science](http://www.headspace.com/science)

**Breathworks**

Website: <http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/what-is-mindfulness>

**The Free Mindfulness Project**

Website: [www.freemindfulness.org/](http://www.freemindfulness.org/)

**Tara Brach**

Website: [www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/](http://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/)

Content reviewed: October 2022

