

Mindfulness

A Superpower

Jill McDougall





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What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a powerful way to bring more peace and enjoyment into your life. It is practised by millions of people around the world and is not difficult to learn. Mindfulness activities don't require any special equipment, and they can take as little as ten minutes a day to do.

So, what is mindfulness? Simply put, it is the act of paying attention to just one thing. One Australian school student described it as "putting your mind in one place". An example of a mindfulness activity is slowly counting your breaths, in and out. By concentrating on just one thing, we clear our mind of other thoughts and worries. In this way, we become mindful rather than having a mind that is full!





Buddhist monks practise mindfulness through **meditation** in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Origins of Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness can be traced back to the word *sati*, which comes from the ancient Pāli (pronounced *pah-lee*) language of northern India. Basically, *sati* means awareness, or paying attention.

For thousands of years, mindfulness has been an important part of many religions. Buddhist monks and nuns practised mindfulness more than 2000 years ago, and they continue to practise it today. In the Islamic religion, mindfulness is practised by paying great attention to one's actions, thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness is also a part of the Christian tradition through meditation and prayer.

An American scientist, Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, was one of the first people in the **Western world** to use mindfulness as a way of helping people who were troubled. In 1979, he founded the Center for Mindfulness in Massachusetts, USA. Dr Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness program was used in hospitals to help patients who were suffering from pain and **anxiety**.

In recent times, people all around the world have begun to practise mindfulness because they find it helpful in their daily lives. This has led scientists to study how mindfulness works and how it affects the brain.



Some schools have programs for students to practise mindfulness.

Mindfulness Under the Microscope

Scientists have conducted many studies to investigate the effects of mindfulness. Most of the **research** shows that when mindfulness exercises are practised on a regular basis, people can experience some amazing benefits.

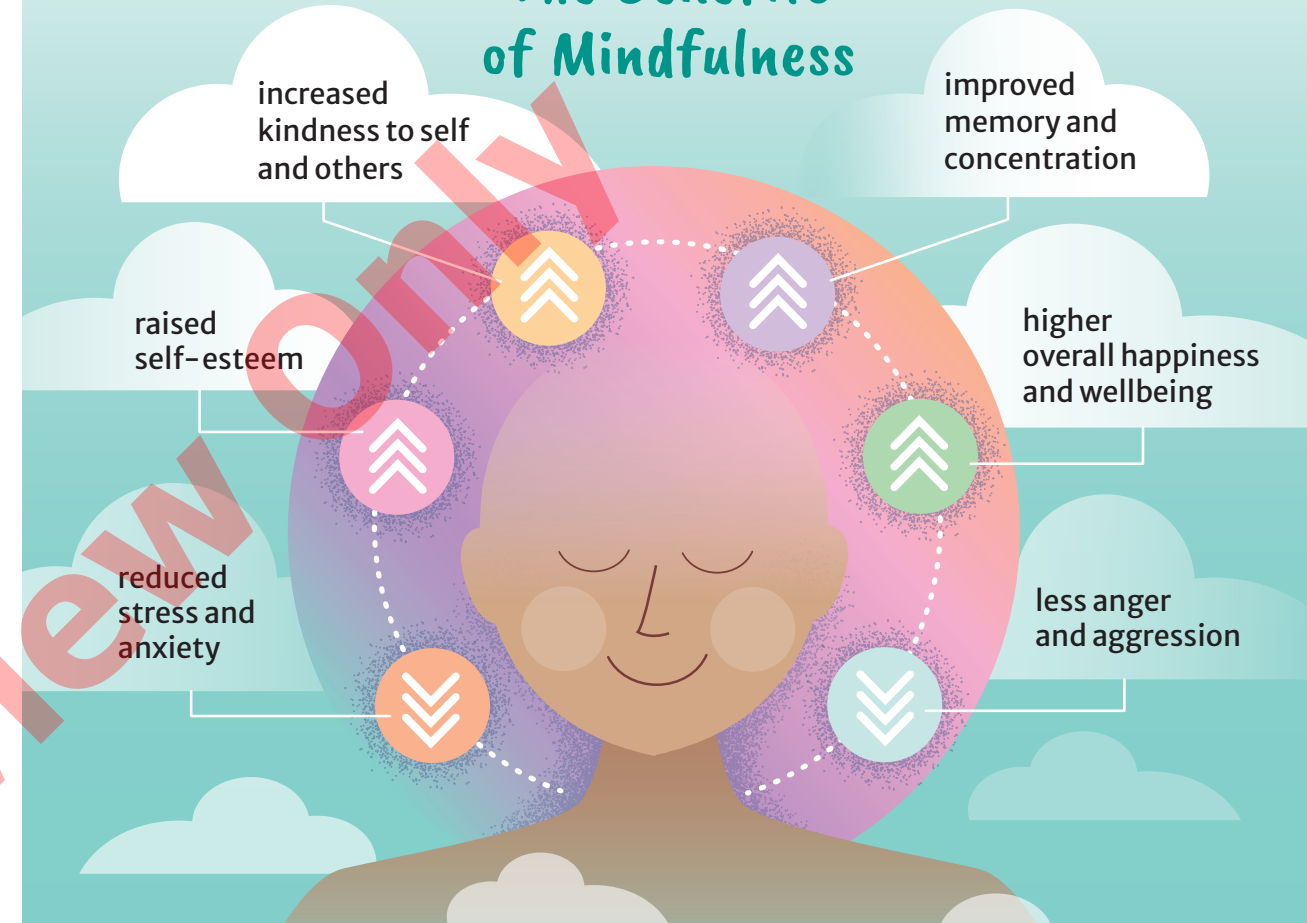
Mindfulness training has been found to reduce **stress** and anxiety, and boost **self-esteem**. It can also help people feel more kindly towards themselves and others. Mindfulness has even been found to improve the performance of athletes.

One exciting finding is that our memory improves when we regularly do mindfulness activities. Another result is that we can concentrate for longer on tasks. Therefore, mindful people make better learners!



Mindfulness can help with any skill that requires concentration and calmness, like performing music.

The Benefits of Mindfulness



There is such a range of benefits to mindfulness that many schools around the world have introduced mindfulness activities in the classroom. These schools have seen some pleasing results, such as calmer, happier students and fewer behavioural issues.

When you consider all the benefits of mindfulness, it's no wonder some people call it a superpower.