

# Mindfulness 101



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## Mindfulness

Understanding the concept of mindfulness is not easy. Popular culture might have led you to believe that mindfulness is about sitting still, closing your eyes, and trying to clear all thoughts from your mind. In actuality, mindfulness is about **focusing intently on the present moment**; it is something that can be applied in your day-to-day life and does not require you to set aside a special time for it. Below are some tips on how to get started.

## Mindfulness Tips

### ***Immerse your senses.***

If you're playing the piano, focus on how every key feels beneath your fingers and the sounds they make when pressed. If you're having a conversation with a friend, focus on every word they say, as well as their body language. Whatever your current activity is, think about your five senses and try to engage them—naturally—with that activity. If one of your senses is not really relevant (e.g., taste has no relevance to a piece of music) then do not pay attention to it.

### ***Breathing is something you can always focus on.***

You may find yourself wanting to practice mindfulness in the absence of an immediate, meaningful task to focus on. In these situations, you can always focus on your breathing—how does your chest feel as it expands and contracts? How do your mouth and nose feel as air comes in and out?

### ***Don't judge.***

Many thoughts will come into your mind as you go about your daily life. This is unavoidable—our brains are always working on an immense number of things. The important thing to keep in mind when practicing mindfulness is to let these thoughts pass without judgment. For example, one day during band practice, you might become aware of the thought “I have an exam tomorrow.” On its own, this thought does not cause anxiety or take away from the present moment. It is only once you begin to



apply judgments to this thought, such as “I’m not prepared for that exam, and I really need to study” that it starts to become problematic.

***Avoid ‘autopiloting’.***

The greatest pitfalls of mindfulness are the activities where we tend to zone out and lose focus, such as driving or cleaning. These tend to be repetitive or mundane tasks that we do not enjoy. Try to keep yourself focused and ‘in the moment’ even during these tasks.

