

What is mindfulness?

Put simply, mindfulness is about paying attention! Not, the kind of attention in class you hear from teachers such as, "Pay attention!" but the kind of attention you can give to anything you do in your life. Bringing attention to your senses (i.e., smell, touch, taste, sound, and sight) in everything you do in your life as minor as brushing your teeth to a task that is more involved such as walking to class or engaging in some after school activity provides a new opportunity to be "mindful." When you pay close attention to everything you do, without judgment, you open yourself up to seeing everything in life as it is happening in this moment. You begin to wake up to the unfolding of your life. For example, instead of getting somewhere and wondering how you got there you are actually present to what is occurring while it is taking place.

10 mindful tips for minimizing school stress for teens

1. Get organized this can include: your homework environment, locker, books, binders/folders, and bag. If it helps make a list of "to do's" to break down complex projects or long homework loads.
2. Notice your breathing at school, during after school activities, and while you do homework. You can always count breaths, "breathing in one, breathing out one," to calm yourself and slow a rushed or anxious breathing pace.
3. Try not to worry about things that are out of your control or haven't happened yet. For example, after you take a test, worrying about what grade you get isn't going to change your actual test grade.
4. Doing one thing at a time instead of parts of many things at one time.
5. Do things that you enjoy in the mix of many hours of work. This might include taking short breaks, stop to "smell the roses."
6. Reduce self-pressure and exaggerated or unrealistic expectations.
7. Watch when you jump on the train of thoughts and jump off the train. A thought is just a thought not reality or a fact.
8. Appreciate who you are. You rock! Even if you don't think so.
9. Be open to new experiences and see the same things with fresh eyes.
10. Use mindfulness when you do your homework or take tests.

doing schoolwork mindfully

You can bring mindful awareness to anything you do, including your schoolwork. Follow these steps to help you center yourself before you begin your homework or start to take a test. If you find yourself getting tense or stressed while in the middle of your work, you can repeat this process at any time.

- * Get into a comfortable sitting position.
- * Place your hands in your lap or on your desk.
- * Open your ears to the sounds you notice and allow yourself to be in the room right here, right now.
- * Place one or both of your hands on your stomach. Without changing your breath, notice how your stomach gently rises on the in-breath and falls on the out-breath.
- * Take five breaths, just as they already are, not trying to change your breaths in any way.
- * Notice how your body feels.
- * If you feel anxious (or have any other feelings that aren't helpful), take one deep breath. As you release this breath, imagine that you are gently breathing out these feelings.
- * Take your next breath and picture ease and peace coming in.
- * See yourself taking your entire test or doing all of your homework assignment with ease.
- * Imagine yourself gently putting down your pen or pencil when you are done and congratulating yourself on putting forth the effort and doing your best. If you like, you can actually congratulate yourself and even say to yourself that you are intelligent.

You are now ready to begin your test or homework assignment. If you feel stuck, remember that you can take another breath at any time or even repeat the whole process.



Stressed Teens

Gina Biegel, MA, LMFT is the author of *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress* and creator of the audio CD entitled, *Mindfulness for Teens: Meditation Practices to Reduce Stress and Promote Well-Being*. You can learn more at www.stressedteens.com

Take a
Chill
iPhone/iPad App

