

What is Mindfulness?

Components of mindfulness are listed below. Each one can be integrated into your mindfulness practice. Practice the components that are more challenging for you.

- ❖ **Observe:** Without using words, the ability to see without attaching labels—we metaphorically step back in order to witness the mind and how it works. Use all 5 senses (smell, sight, sound, touch, and even taste) to take in your internal and external experience.
- ❖ **Describe:** Label, use words to represent your experience in non-judgmental terms. Instead of getting caught in the content of thoughts, label a thought for what it is (e.g. “planning about the future” for example, or “thoughts about the past”) label emotions (e.g., “I am experiencing anxiety”; “Anger is visiting me”), and physical sensations (e.g., “my heart rate is increasing”; “I notice that my chest feels heavy.”)
- ❖ **Non-judgmental, Accepting stance:** Approaching one’s experience with *curiosity* and *acceptance* regardless of the desirability of the experience.
 - Just being in the experience without trying to “fix” or change it—without labeling the experience as “good or bad”, no longer pushing experiences away or clinging to them
 - Our desire for pleasurable experiences creates mindless actions. When we cannot obtain what we desire, we suffer. When we do obtain what we desire, we find that our feelings of pleasure fade and thus we begin our search for pleasure again, becoming trapped in an endless cycle.)
- ❖ **Non-reactivity:** Mindfulness allows us to insert a pause between our thoughts, emotions and sensations and our habitual reactions to them.
 - Rather than thinking and feeling on automatic pilot, we grant ourselves the permission to notice and learn about our innate tendencies
- ❖ **Acting with Awareness:** The pause afforded by non-reactivity allows us to take a moment to decide how we would like to intentionally react.
 - With this new insight into our patterns of responding from observing, describing, and adopting a non-judgmental and open stance towards our thoughts, feelings, and emotions, we can use this to better inform our actions. Our reactions then have a greater opportunity to be in line with our goals, values, and intentions.
- ❖ **Courage:** Being mindful takes great strength—to be aware of experiences that are challenging takes the ability to accept reality. Reality is not always a place that is enjoyable to reside.
 - Our human tendency towards the path of least resistance leads us to want to alter reality in some way or escape to a different reality—mindfulness embraces the truth—it is only by accepting our current circumstance that we can build towards change.