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# MIND BREW

Office of Student Success



## A reflection on the benefits of mindfulness.

THE LEARNING SPECIALIST TEAM

Mindfulness seems to be the new psychology buzzword. While it can sometimes feel like the next passing fad, the practice of mindfulness has been backed by numerous scientific studies.

There is often a misconception with what mindfulness entails. Most people imagine meditating in a zen garden. However, mindfulness is simply focusing one's awareness on the present moment (Leland, 2015). It is paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment.

We often find ourselves caught between a rock and a hard place. We often ruminate or dwell on our past failures. If we aren't ruminating, we find ourselves worrying about the future. As a result, we aren't paying attention to what is going on in the present moment. This can deteriorate our focus, our mental health, and even our academic performance.

Let's take the learning skills and academic performance example. It takes significant cognitive effort, focus, and control to study effectively. Many students struggle with focusing their limited attention on complex tasks such as studying for medical school lectures. The lack of focus or attention to the task at hand presents itself when you sit down for a test. You can't seem to recall any of the details, you find yourself dwelling over all of the things you didn't do to study effectively, or start to spiral into what will happen to you if you fail the exam.

Stopping this mindset seems impossible, however research on mindfulness has some promising results that prove otherwise.

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"Wherever you  
are, be there  
totally."

ECKHART TOLLE



### Learning Skills and Academic Performance

Maintaining focus is a crucial skill in learning and academic performance. At the heart of mindfulness is focus. With consistent mindfulness practice, studies demonstrate students are able to focus on the task at hand while filtering out distractions. Studies have also demonstrated that students who were trained in mindfulness had better study habits, planning, and organizational skills. Additionally, for students with testing anxiety, mindfulness training enhanced memory and concentration during tests which improved their overall test performance (Docksai, 2013).

### Job- Skill Development

Medical professions depend on quality of patient care. Patients consider physicians with good bedside manner to be more skilled. Medical students who participated in mindfulness training reported feeling higher levels of empathy and compassion towards patients, reported lower levels of stress in their program, and received higher performance ratings (Leland, 2015).

### Practicing Mindfulness

While it is objectively easy to see the benefits of implementing mindfulness, it is another to actually commit to a consistent practice. Some studies have shown increased mood, decreased stress, and reduced blood pressure after one session. Some benefits like increased focus and decreased stress may be experienced after a few weeks and others take longer to develop. However, the majority of studies conclude that a consistent practice of 10 to 20 minutes per session at least three times a week produces significant benefits after just eight weeks.

### Mindfulness Techniques and Resources

We want to leave you with access to free, scientifically backed mindfulness resources. Descriptions on each are below and can be accessed through the QR codes on this page.

**UCLA Mindfulness Center:** Provides guided mindfulness meditations, transcripts, and guides. Resources are available through the website and through the UCLA Mindfulness Center App.

**Center for Healthy Minds:** Provides practical mindfulness based exercises, challenges, and reports through the Healthy Minds App.

**MBSR Course:** This is the original, 8 week mindfulness course that includes instruction and practice based on one mindfulness technique per week.

Remember, these are just some of the ways to practice mindfulness. As long as you are paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and you show up consistently, you have a mindfulness practice.

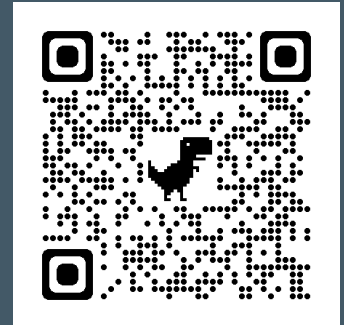
**For more strategies and tips, please email your assigned learning specialist.**

#### References

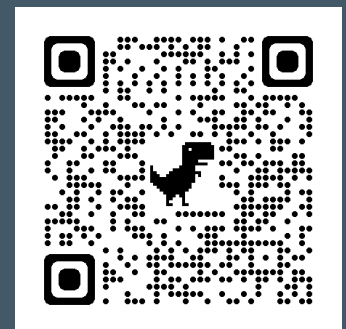
Docksai, R. (2013). A mindful approach to learning. *The futurist*, 47(5), 8.  
Leland, M. (2015). Mindfulness and student success. *Journal of Adult Education*, 44(1), 19-24.

## Free Scientifically Supported Mindfulness Resources

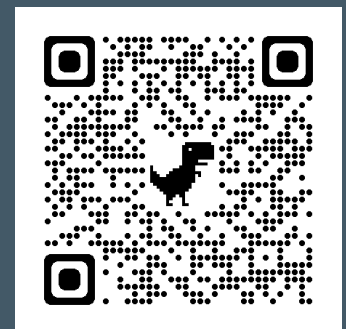
UCLA's Mindfulness Research Center



UW Madison's Center for Healthy  
Minds



Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction  
(MBSR) Course



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