

Harvard Medical tells us that mindfulness bolsters the brain's capacity to reduce stress and anxiety. It also promotes self-regulation, empathy, a better sense of self, and better regulation of emotion.

Mindfulness sharpens our attention because in order to be mindful, we need to be able to pay attention. Remember we discussed being AWARE but not caught up; noticing but not complaining?

Mindfulness cools the inflammatory response (FEAR) of the amygdala, increasing the connections to the prefrontal cortex. This helps us to be less reactive, calmer, and to recover more easily from stress.

Meditation fast-tracks these connections. It helps to increase empathy and we become mindful that it's not all about us. Studies show that we become less prejudiced, especially towards the homeless, elderly, and people of color.

Meditation also buffers the inflammatory response. Increased telomerase leads to longer cell life and better longevity.

Body Scan Meditation helps to bring awareness to each part of the body for two reasons:

- to become mindful of every inch of your fearfully and wonderfully made self.
- to reconnect to your body.

There are many benefits of this including improved sleep and reduced insomnia, stress reduction, increased self-compassion, reduced pain, and helping us to become more mindful.

So how do you meditate?

1. Sit - choose your space wisely.
2. Breathe. Feel the air entering your nose, filling your lungs, and moving out through your mouth.
3. Notice. How do you feel? Pay attention to your senses.
4. Bubble your thoughts and/or write them down. If you think of something important, jot it down and let the thought go.
5. Set a time limit. Start with 5 minutes and increase as desired.
6. End as you started - breathe.
7. YouTube is helpful - try a guided meditation or relaxing music.