

# Meditation vs Mindfulness

Sara Williams May 24, 2016



**Meditation and Mindfulness are used to control negative thinking and reduce stress. Studies show that both appear to produce positive structural changes in the brain.**

([Newswire.net](http://Newswire.net) -- May 24, 2016) -- We all want to find a way to increase our power to control negative thinking, reduce stress and benefit from the host of physical and mental benefits which meditation and mindfulness appear to offer. Studies have shown that both practices appear to produce real positive structural changes in the brain. But where does

meditation end and mindfulness begin? Is there really a difference between the two? The general confusion between the two is not helped by the fact that wherever you look, you will find different explanations of each. There is also considerable overlap. Here are some thoughts which might help clarify, and hopefully won't add to the confusion!

## Meditation

**Meditation** can help develop feelings of positivity and inner peace, as well as acceptance of the world around us, of ourselves and of others.

The practice of meditation has been around for thousands of years. It has its origins largely in Eastern religious practices and is associated with Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. In this context the person meditating is trying to achieve a heightened state of spiritual awareness. You can access a wide variety of guided spiritual meditations – try [this guided meditation](#) link, for free meditations, aimed at helping those seeking the freedom to transcend the distractions of the physical world.

In a wider context, the term meditation is often used simply to describe the practice of setting aside time to develop your mind's ability to focus and achieve clarity of thought. Not all meditation has a spiritual element.

You do not necessarily have to sit in a cross-legged position to meditate. For a beginner it does however help to sit in an upright position, one in which you will stay awake. It's a good idea to sit on a soft mat or cushion to prevent physical discomfort from distracting you. You do not need to burn candles or chant in order to meditate. Meditation often involves the practitioner focusing on one particular thing such as the breath or repetition of a mantra. Some meditative practices involve no focus on any particular thing but allow the mind to freely move from one thought to the next.

Meditation can last a matter of seconds. Anybody who has ever deliberately focused on their breathing to help control emotions or pain has practiced the art of meditation.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness, as most people know it, is a rather more modern construct, although like meditation, it also has its origins in ancient Eastern religious practices, particularly the Buddhist practice of *vippasana*.

Mindfulness can be defined as a way of living, so that the practitioner is fully aware of what they are experiencing in any precise moment. The ability to live more mindfully can be developed by practicing meditation.

One person who has achieved a great deal in bringing the practice of mindfulness into the mainstream is Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Stress Reduction Clinic and Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. As a result of his work and of the many clinical studies showing the positive health benefits which mindfulness can bring, mindfulness is now practiced around the world in schools, prisons, hospitals and in the workplace and is being used not just to reduce stress but also to combat depression, eating disorders and substance abuse.

You can download mindfulness meditations from Professor Kabat-Zinn at <http://www.mindfulnesscds.com/collections/mp3s>. If you just want a taste of a guided mindfulness meditation for free, try the 10-day free trial at [www.headspace.com/](http://www.headspace.com/).

Once you have become a regular practitioner of mindful meditation, you will find that you start to develop the ability to

become more focused on whatever you are doing, whether its eating a piece of fruit, chairing a work meeting or simply walking to the shops.

#### Similarities and Differences

To conclude, meditation is the practice of a discipline which can help develop a greater sense of awareness, acceptance and compassion. Regular practice of meditation helps to train your mind to detach from distractions and to focus.

Mindfulness is the ability to live fully in each moment-focusing fully on what the person is experiencing at any moment in time and accepting the way things are. The ability to live more mindfully will be developed by practicing meditation.

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