

## Mindfulness and Cancer

### Benefits:

Relaxes tension in the body, heart and mind - calms the nervous system  
Reduces stress, overwhelming emotions, anxiety and depression  
Boosts the immune system  
Lowers blood pressure  
Transforms relationship to pain  
Improves memory  
Improves sleep, mood and quality of life, resilience  
Self care and kindness  
Helps us live and make decisions with perspective, wisdom and compassion

### Mindfulness:

Non-judgemental awareness of the present moment. It is about being, non-doing. Helps us move from dwelling on the past or projecting out into the future into the fullness of the present. This is especially helpful when we have life and health challenges that bring up difficult emotions and a concern with outcome. It also helps us wonder, question and have curiosity about the ways that we interpret life and what is happening. Formal mindfulness practice is called meditation. The Tibetan meaning for the word meditation is "habit". It is a way to train the mind so that we can continually return to this moment. Meditation also comes from the same sanskrit root word for medicine which means "to care for and to take measure of". Learning the consistent practice of quieting the mind is a form of self care, and increases our capacity to take in the fullness of our lives and experience. Informal practice is when we are paying attention to what we are doing when we are doing it. It can include simple daily activities, the way we engage in conversation, how we move through our work settings. When we move mindfully through the world, we are in touch with our breathing, we are quieting our minds, we are discerning about our feelings and how we communicate, and how we engage in relationships, at home and in the community. It can be attention to sensations, details, and is also used often in the same sense as being thoughtful and having open awareness. It is about noticing, and holding what we notice with intention, attention and relaxed curiosity.

### Simple meditation:

Body scan with posture: feet on the ground, feeling supported by the chair, feeling the connection the earth, straight and relaxed spine, head suspended from above, relaxed facial muscles and jaw, shoulders relaxed. Now, follow the breath in and out of the nostrils, notice how the belly expands with breathing in and relaxes with breathing out, quiet the mind and continue to return your attention to the breath and the body, gently inviting your mind back again and again when it wanders.

Another simple meditation: Breathing in, go to the place in your body that you are holding on to any physical tension and with the out breath release it. Take a few breaths clearing this physical tension. Repeat this process with going to the place in your body where you are holding any mental tension and with the out breath, release it. Again, take a few breaths and release this mental tension. And next, go to the place where you are holding any emotional tension and with the out breath, release it. Now, taking a few breaths experiencing your body having released the tension, and rest in this awareness.

Resources: Books and talks by: Jon Kabat Zinn (mindfulness based stress reduction) Thich Nhat Hanh, Sylvia Boorstein, Sharon Salzberg, Pema Chodron, Jack Kornfield, Tara Brach and many others

insight timer app

multiple talks on mindfulness and meditation practices through [dharma.org](https://dharma.org) and Sounds True

The most important thing is picking a practice that you will do and that resonates with you. The main thing about mindfulness is about offering the gift of your attention to the present moment. Each practice has its own medicine and wisdom.