

Untold Story Counseling Services

Jennifer Russell Baker, LPC, CPC, LMHC

Understanding Mindfulness

Mindfulness

"You cannot always choose your circumstances, but you can choose how you meet the present moment."

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of intentionally paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgment.

Our minds naturally spend time replaying the past or worrying about the future. While this is a normal part of being human, it can also increase stress, anxiety, sadness, and emotional overwhelm.

Mindfulness helps you notice your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations without immediately reacting to them. Instead of becoming caught up in your experiences, you learn to observe them with greater awareness and compassion.

Mindfulness is not about "emptying your mind" or forcing yourself to relax. It is about learning to be present with whatever is happening, even when it is difficult.

What Can Mindfulness Help With?

Mindfulness has been extensively researched and is often incorporated into many evidence-based therapies.

It may help improve:

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| • Anxiety | • Anger management | • Burnout |
| • Depression | • Chronic pain | • Grief and loss |
| • Chronic stress | • Insomnia | • Overall emotional well-being |
| • Trauma recovery | • ADHD | |
| • Emotional regulation | • Relationship conflict | |

Your therapist may integrate mindfulness with other therapeutic approaches to best support your goals.

How Does Mindfulness Work?

Mindfulness strengthens your ability to pause before reacting.

When difficult thoughts or emotions arise, it is easy to become overwhelmed or act automatically.

Mindfulness creates space between an experience and your response.

Instead of immediately reacting, you learn to:

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| • Notice what you are thinking | • Respond intentionally rather than automatically |
| • Observe what you are feeling | |
| • Recognize physical sensations in your body | |

Over time, this increased awareness helps reduce emotional reactivity and supports healthier decision-making.

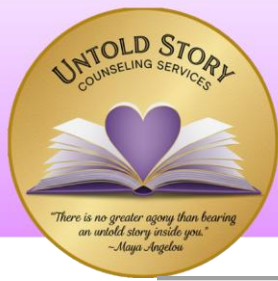
What Happens During Mindfulness Practice?

Mindfulness can be practiced in many different ways.

During therapy, your therapist may guide you through exercises such as:

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| • Focused breathing | • Mindful observation | • Mindful movement |
| • Body scan meditation | • Guided imagery | • Five-senses awareness |
| • Grounding exercises | • Loving-kindness meditation | • Self-compassion practices |

There is no "perfect" way to practice mindfulness. The goal is simply to notice your present experience with curiosity and kindness.



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Common Mindfulness Skills

Depending on your goals, your therapist may teach skills such as:

- Observing thoughts without judging them
- Naming emotions
- Breathing techniques
- Grounding through the five senses
- Body awareness
- Self-compassion
- Acceptance of difficult emotions
- Returning attention to the present moment
- Letting thoughts come and go without becoming attached to them

These skills become stronger with regular practice.

What Might I Experience?

As you practice mindfulness, you may notice:

- ✓ Feeling calmer during stressful situations
- ✓ Greater awareness of your emotions
- ✓ Improved concentration
- ✓ Better emotional regulation
- ✓ Reduced anxiety
- ✓ Increased self-compassion
- ✓ Greater appreciation for everyday moments

Some people also notice that difficult emotions become easier to tolerate because they no longer feel the need to immediately escape or avoid them.

Common Misconceptions

"Mindfulness means stopping my thoughts."

No.

Our minds naturally produce thoughts throughout the day.

Mindfulness is not about eliminating thoughts but learning to notice them without becoming controlled by them.

"Mindfulness is only meditation."

No.

Meditation is one way to practice mindfulness, but mindfulness can also be practiced while walking, eating, listening, driving, washing dishes, or talking with another person.

Any activity can become mindful when you intentionally bring your attention to the present moment.

"Mindfulness means I have to stay calm all the time."

No.

Mindfulness does not eliminate difficult emotions.

Instead, it helps you respond to emotions with greater awareness and compassion rather than reacting automatically.

Is Mindfulness Right for Everyone?

Mindfulness can benefit many people, but it is not always the first approach used in therapy.

For some individuals, especially those with significant trauma histories, mindfulness exercises may initially feel uncomfortable or overwhelming. Your therapist will work with you to find practices that feel safe and appropriate for your needs.



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Mindfulness is often integrated with approaches such as:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Narrative Therapy

Your treatment will be tailored to your individual goals and comfort level.

How You Can Begin Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness does not require special equipment or long periods of meditation. You can begin with just a few minutes each day.

Try these simple practices:

- Take three slow, intentional breaths before beginning a task.
- Notice five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste.
- Pay close attention to your breathing for one minute.
- Eat one meal or snack without distractions.
- Pause several times throughout the day and ask yourself, "What am I noticing right now?"

Consistency is more important than duration. Even brief moments of mindfulness can make a difference over time.

The Goal of Mindfulness

The goal of mindfulness is not to eliminate stress or always feel peaceful.

Instead, mindfulness helps you develop greater awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and experiences so you can respond with intention rather than react automatically.

Over time, many people experience greater emotional balance, improved resilience, increased self-compassion, healthier relationships, and a deeper sense of connection with themselves and the present moment.

Questions?

If you have questions about mindfulness or how it may fit into your treatment, please bring them to your next session. Your therapist is happy to explain different mindfulness practices, answer your questions, and help you discover techniques that best support your goals.

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Helping you become the main character in your story, not the experiences that have shaped it.