



**COVID-19**

**Mindfulness  
for Staying at Home  
and After**

## Staying at Home

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These are unprecedented times for all of us. Something we have never witnessed before in our lifetime.

Most of us will feel stressed and anxious for at least some of the time. Some of us will experience deep change and challenges such as

- money worries;
- the loss of our jobs or homes;
- worries about food, medicine or the care we need;
- relationship strains;
- loneliness;
- fears and concern for people we love;
- fears for our own safety and survival;
- the tragic loss of people we love.

If we have already experienced mental ill health this may be retriggered or made worse.

The Government has issued [Guidance for the Public](#) on the Mental Health and Wellbeing aspects of COVID-19. This includes [Mindfulness Guidance](#). The NHS [Every Mind Matters](#) site has many useful links.

[Action for Happiness](#) has many tips and resources for coping at this time, including [bringing mindfulness into your day](#).

Many people find mindfulness practices, short or long, help them to deal with events that challenge their mental wellbeing. Please share freely with anyone who might benefit.

This paper and our paper with [Resources for Health and Care Staff during COVID-19](#) will be updated as new resources become available. Please check on our [website](#) for updates.

## Why Mindfulness can help

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Mindfulness practices [can help](#) people in many ways. They can help improve self-compassion, the quality of sleep and improve relaxation.

When circumstances place people under stress, mindfulness practices can help with stress, anxiety, distress, emotional exhaustion, depression and other problems.

Official NICE guidelines recommend using Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) to prevent depression from coming back. Many people have taken formal training courses in MBCT or in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to help them improve their mental wellbeing when they experience health problems. Often local IAPT mental health services, usually available through your GP, offer mindfulness courses.

Many more people have tried mindfulness practices that they found through work, community groups, from friends, books or online and in apps. These can be brief practices to help with particularly stressful moments, regular informal practice or longer meditations. There are thousands of research papers that investigate mindfulness. The greatest benefits come from practising regularly. So, even if you can start with a few minutes a day, it can build into a habit for your wellbeing for now and the future.

*"It didn't matter what practice I did on a daily basis as long as I did one. I think this can be classed as the emergency approach – the breathing exercise as an anchor, the mantra that we STOP, BREATHE, REFLECT and CHOOSE as part of our daily life. Time will allow us then to focus on the deeper practices – for instance the ability to fall asleep when we need is often linked to the Body Scan, the ability to fight anxiety or panic attacks, to the Breathing Meditation. In short it is about being in the present and not focussing on the past which we cannot change nor the future which we cannot predict."* Tim Boughton, Advisor to the Army on Mental Health, after 20 years in the military serving many of those on operations around the world

*"In times of uncertainty, our internal threat/protection system becomes more activate, especially when we focus on the caring of others. Unless we take care of ourselves, our energy is depleted. By taking the time to PAUSE, BREATHE and ask 'WHAT DO I NEED IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT?' we can be more present and respond rather than react. This is an act of kindness to ourselves."* Dougie McPhail, Mindfulness Teacher to Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS and police personnel

*"We have to figure out what the new normal is and have to face the fact that things are still changing... If you haven't already, start setting good mental habits that you can take with you, no matter how much things change."* Dr Jud Brewer, Brown University, USA

The resources here may not be right for everyone. Prioritise self care and what feels right for you. Step back if things feel too intense for you. These are not suggested to be therapeutic for significant mental health problems or trauma. If you have particular concerns please speak to your doctor.

## Mindfulness Resources

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### Short Practices

- 1 minute [Breathing Space](#) (Breathworks)
- 90 Second [Mini meditation](#) ([Finding Peace in a Frantic World](#))
- 3 Minute Breathing Space [audio](#) or [video](#) (MiSP/Oxford Mindfulness Centre)
- 3 Minute [Coping with Difficulties](#) ([Bangor Centre for Mindfulness Research & Practice](#))
- 4 Minute [Breathing Practice](#) ([Oxford Mindfulness Centre](#))
- 4 Minutes [Feeling as Safe as You Reasonably Can](#) (Dr Rick Hanson)
- 5 Minute [Tension Release](#) & other meditations ([Breathworks](#))
- 5 Minute [Chocolate Meditation](#) ([BBC Mind Set Meditations](#))
- 9 Minute [Befriending](#) and Compassion for Self and Others ([Finding Peace in a Frantic World](#))
- [7 Minute Mountain Meditation](#) ([Padraig O'Morain](#)),
- [15 Minute Body Scan](#) ([Vidyamala Burch](#)) & other meditations ([Free Mindfulness](#))

### Specific Resources for Troubling Times

[Professor Mark Williams' new meditations](#) are focused on the body for times when focus on the breath may not feel right.

[Mindful Self Care for Troubling Times](#) is a free course created by Breathworks to support people living in isolation or lockdown

[Dr Jud Brewer's daily videos](#) on Corona Virus Anxiety, how to break anxiety habit loops & why short mindfulness practices create our mental health hygiene. His [Office Hours](#) live chats at 5pm BST are open to all.

[Tips and practices for Lockdown, Physical Distancing and Anxiety](#) from the Greater Good Science Center at Berkeley, University of California

[Mindful Nation Ireland](#) has developed short practices for the Pandemic including [A loving kindness practice for loved ones at a distance during COVID-19](#) ([Video](#) on Facebook) and a [2 minute pause](#).

[Meditations and talks for Pandemic Care from Tara Brach](#)

Practising in a Pandemic from the Buddhist magazine Tricycle offers various teachings including [meditation practices focused on the hands](#)

[Andy Phee](#) has devised everyday mindfulness practices for the period of self isolation. His video will be found on his [website](#). These practices will be presented at an Oxford Mindfulness Centre online session and then found at [Podcast #4](#).

## The Short Pause (with thanks to NHS Fife Going Beyond Gold)

- Breathe

Take a few deeper breaths than normal – a long slow in breath and a long slow out breath - pay attention to your in-breath, all the way in – and your out-breath, all the way out. Feel a sense of letting go on the out-breath.

- Ground yourself

Feel your feet on the ground – notice any sensations like tingling or heat or cold. Paying attention to your feet takes your attention away from thoughts and difficult emotions.

- Smile

You may not feel like smiling, but doing it will automatically relax tension in your body – and it may light up someone else's day if they see you.

- Notice

Take notice of one thing you can be grateful for, right now in this moment, e.g. help from others, comfy bed, taste of tea or coffee, message from a friend, daffodils, etc.

## Online Sessions

Oxford Mindfulness Centre is offering [Free Weekly Online Mindfulness Sessions](#) via Zoom. Each session is available as [a podcast](#) afterwards

The Mindfulness Association is offering a [Free Daily Online Meditation](#) via Zoom at 7pm

Vidyamala Burch, Founder of Breathworks is offering a weekly [Facebook Livestream talk, meditation](#) & Q&A on Tuesdays at 7 pm

The [Mindfulness Network for People of Colour](#) offers online mindfulness sessions on Sunday evenings from 6pm to 8pm (link on home page)

[Mindfulness Sussex](#) offers free open weekly guided mindfulness sessions via Zoom with Ed Halliwell on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6pm ([register here](#))

[Gaia House](#) is offering online practice sessions on different weekdays and at different times

The [Urban Mindfulness Foundation](#) offers [daily online meditations](#) via Zoom Monday to Friday at 8am and 2 hours meditation and discussion on Saturday mornings 10-12.

[A Mindful Leader](#) is work focused & offers [free online weekday meditations](#) , support & [resources](#)

[Wisdom 2.0](#) offers a range of free online mindfulness sessions, including some led by Jon Kabat-Zinn, via Zoom and YouTube

## For Families, Children and Young People

Children may well be anxious at this time, particularly if they feel anxious for working parents, for grandparents, or friends and family members they can't meet

[Mindfulness in Schools](#) is offering a Sit Together every weekday at 11am for children & young people accompanied by an adult and at 7.30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays

[Bubbles and Flashlights](#) is offering Mindfulness sessions by zoom for children and for young people

[Mindful Nation Ireland](#) has created a [Sos 2 min pause for children - led by 11 year old Nina](#), which will be broadcast on their national children's radio station

[Learnful](#) has created a compassion [meditation for Planet Earth and](#) a [family toolbox](#) for children and families during lockdown

## Apps

The popular [Headspace](#) App is offering extended free content including Weathering the Storm meditations during the COVID-19 crisis and meditations for children

[Calm](#), another very popular app, has many [free resources](#) for this crisis period, including help for sleep and resources to help children

[Insight Timer](#) has thousands of free meditations of many types freely available as well as calming music recordings

The [Healthy Minds App](#) is now free for individuals

[Liberate](#) is a free meditation app made by and for the Black and African Diaspora

[MindPilot](#) is a free app with a mindfulness course by experienced mindfulness teachers Tessa Watt and Vishvapani Blomfield

[The Mindfulness Association](#) has a free [Mindfulness Based Living App](#)

[I Am Present](#) is a complimentary US-based Mindfulness App for Families, offering daily 5-10 minute practices

[Mindfulness Daily](#) is a 40 day course in a free app created by leading US mindfulness teachers Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach

## Connecting with Nature

[Finding Nature](#) has many tips about connecting with Nature at this time. There is a 10-minute audio meditation on [this page](#) at point 3

Mark Coleman offers videos from a range of [Nature Focused Mindfulness Practices](#) during the Pandemic

[The Woodland Trust](#) will be offering nature-focused mindfulness recordings so keep an eye on their website

[Learning Mindfully Wales](#) is preparing a set of mindfulness in nature meditations so keep an eye open for their new website

[Meditation for the Earth](#) was created for Earth Day by Elisha Goldstein

## Compassion for yourself and others

[Mindful Self-Compassion UK](#) offers a range of [downloadable guided meditations](#) from different teachers, including self-compassion and compassion for loved ones and friends

[Mindfulness Hampshire](#) also has a range of [compassion focused meditations](#)

The US-based Center for Mindful Self-Compassion offers a [range of guided meditations](#). It has [10 Self-Compassion Practices for COVID-19](#) and related audio meditations by [Chris Germer](#)

Many people self isolated alone are likely to be missing human touch. The Center for Mindful Psychotherapy has some [guidance on mindful self massage](#) to create kindness for the body

## Sites with many free resources

[Free Mindfulness Project COVID-19](#) links you up to talks and online practice offered during the crisis by many leading mindfulness teachers

[Free Mindfulness Project Resources](#) links to free downloadable meditations of different lengths

[Bangor University Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice](#) offers many mindfulness meditations of varying lengths, including some in Welsh Language, plus some yoga tutorials

The Mental Health Foundation has a range of [podcasts](#), including meditations, relaxation techniques and breathing space, to help manage stress

The [Mindfulness Network for People of Colour](#) has links to free resources and online events and weekly group online meditations

## Online Courses

[Breathworks](#) is a longstanding provider of mindfulness training courses, including online. They have introduced a [free online course](#) for people isolating at home during the COVID-19 crisis. [The Quiet Place](#) is a special area for health staff.

[Monash University](#) has been providing mindfulness and wellbeing training for students for many years, starting with medical students. Its two online courses run for free, but materials are available long-term for a paid upgrade. Monash/FutureLearn [Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance](#) is currently open. [Maintaining a Mindful Life](#) extends this but it not currently open.

[BeMindfulOnline](#) is a well established online mindfulness course with a good evidence base, recommended by the [NHS Apps library](#). It has a £30 charge, unless you live in London where it is free via the [Good Thinking](#) website.

## Online Summit

For people developing a deeper interest in mindfulness the [Mindfulness and Compassion Global Summit](#) from 4-6 June will now be online. It is free to register to attend until 22 May.

## Books

There are many excellent books about mindfulness. Here are just a few that focus on teaching mindfulness practice:

Mindfulness: A practical guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Book & CD) Mark Williams & Danny Penman

Mindfulness for Health: A practical guide to relieving pain, reducing stress & restoring wellbeing (Book & CD) Vidyamala Burch & Danny Penman

A Mindfulness Guide for the Frazzled, Ruby Wax

Mindfulness for Women (Book & CD) Vidyamala Burch & Claire Irvin

## Health and Mindfulness

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Mindfulness affects many bodily aspects of health and also how we think about our response to health.

Mindfulness training [helps us cope](#) with distress and disability in everyday life, as well as under serious stress.

Many qualities strengthened by mindfulness practice help our own health self-management:

- Compassion & self-compassion - important for preventing, recovering or reducing depression or suicidal thoughts
- Observing the transience of thoughts - reducing stress-induced intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, emotional reactivity, anxiety, suicidal thoughts
- Breathing space practices - reduce intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, emotional reactions, anxiety, blood pressure, panic attacks

- Sense of wider connection - helps cope with loss, life events, diagnoses, trauma, loneliness
- Being in the present moment - reduces fear of the future or anger & regret for the past
- Attention practice— witnesses our emotional responses, helping us managing pain or fears
- Stronger mind-body connection – increases awareness of the body, how we treat it and its changes

More information is available in our [Health, Wellbeing and Mindfulness](#) Report

Hearings for the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group cover:

[Mindfulness and Armed Forces & Blue Light Services](#)  
[Mindfulness, Ageing Well and Older People](#)  
[Mindfulness for Children & Young People](#)

*"You are not alone in feeling the way you do and we shouldn't be frightened to ask for help"*

*"I owe myself some time and compassion"*

*Scottish Ambulance Service Emergency Ambulance Personnel*

## About The Mindfulness Initiative

The Mindfulness Initiative grew out of a programme of mindfulness teaching for politicians in the UK Parliament. It provides the secretariat to the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group.

We work with legislators around the world who practice mindfulness and help them to make capacities of heart and mind serious considerations of public policy. We investigate the benefits, limitations, opportunities and challenges in accessing and implementing mindfulness training and educate leaders, service-commissioners and the general public based on these findings.

Visit [www.themindfulnessinitiative.org](http://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org) to find out more.

## Getting in touch

If you have any questions, suggestions or other feedback on this document please get in touch by emailing [info@mindfulnessinitiative.org.uk](mailto:info@mindfulnessinitiative.org.uk).

## Supporting our work

The Mindfulness Initiative doesn't receive any public funding and in order to retain its neutral and trusted advisory position in the sector cannot generate revenue from competitive products or services. As such, we are entirely dependent on charitable gifts for sustaining our work. If you found this briefing paper helpful, please consider making a contribution. Visit [www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/appeal/donate](http://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/appeal/donate) to make a one-time or recurring donation.

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