

# Mindfulness Tips for Teens

If practicing mindfulness makes you think of yoga mats and stretchy pants, you're probably not alone. But mindfulness is a tool for everyone.

You don't need to be anywhere special or have the right stuff to do it.

Being mindful just means being in the moment and paying attention.

It can help you calm your mind, relax your body, and manage your stress.

Here are some simple ways to practice mindfulness.

Eat your lunch, and do nothing else. Set your phone aside. Don't read your English assignment. Turn off the TV. Don't multitask like we're all so used to doing.

Just sit somewhere you feel comfortable, and eat slowly.

Notice the texture of your sandwich.

Is the bread soft or firm? Are the contents crisp or creamy? Listen to the crunch of a carrot. Take slow sips of your drink, and feel it travel down your throat until it sloshes into your stomach.

A little odd? Maybe. Mindful? Definitely.

Listen to music. *\*Really\** listen.

Think about your favorite song. You know it inside and out, right? Every lyric, every pause, every second. But try listening differently. If you love the lyrics, focus instead on listening to the music *\*behind\** the lyrics. Can you pick out which instruments are being used? Does the beat affect your body? Can you feel it in your chest? Does it make you want to move?

Also, get outside.

Just going for a walk can be a way to practice mindfulness. You don't have to walk a long distance or through a golden wheat field at sunset. You just have to try to stay in the moment and pay attention to how things look, sound, smell, and feel. If your mind wanders off, that's okay. Just refocus. The more you practice mindfulness, the easier it gets to be present for longer.

Try petting a dog or scratching a cat. Or snuggle a lizard, or hold a hamster. If you or a friend have a pet of some kind, you can practice mindfulness by simply showing it affection.

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Notice the temperature of the animal's body and its weight against you. Try to hear the pace of its breath. Can you feel its heart beating against your hand? As you do this, take deep, steady breaths. This can help calm and relax you.

Even spending a little time being mindful can have benefits. These tips are just a starting point. As you get more comfortable with practicing mindfulness, you'll probably be able to find new ways to make it a regular part of your day.

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