



Mindfulness is best defined as **“ paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. ”**

Jon Kabat-Zinn

You can be mindful in two main ways by:

- doing simple practices (meditations) but also
- being completely in the moment enjoying something simple like eating your lunch so you really taste and appreciate it rather than just gulping it down.

Neuroscience is helping us understand how our brains work and the effect mindfulness can have upon it. Mindfulness can be used in two ways to help prepare for exams.

1. It can help keep you calm. Feeling some stress and anxiety around exams is natural and indeed can help boost performance. It's when it becomes too much that it becomes a problem. Mindfulness helps calm activity in the bit of your brain associated with worry.



2. Mindfulness can also help increase the neural connections in the front of your brain. This is part of the brain associated with memory, your ability to solve problems and helps to manage distraction.

One of the most simple mindfulness practices is focusing in on your breath. This helps both create a sense of calm which is great for reducing worry about exams and also helps increase your focus and memory.

Find a quiet place to sit where you won't be disturbed and switch your phone to silent.

- Choose a chair that is comfortable. Ensure your feet are touching the floor, hands resting on your knees, back supported by the chair. Keep your shoulders back so you're sitting upright with your head looking forwards.
- Close your eyes and allow your focus to come to your breath.
- Feel all the sensations of the breath coming in through the nostrils as the air passes down to your lungs. Feel your abdomen expand and then contract as the breath then passes back up and out through the nose or mouth. Repeat this focus for each breath you take.
- It's only natural your mind will wander. Each time it does, gently bring it back to the focus on your breath. It doesn't matter how many times you have to do this. You're simply training your mind to focus on one thing at one time. This is the essence of mindfulness.
- Try to practise this for 10 minutes every day. Find a regular time that works.
- Bit by bit you should start to notice yourself becoming calmer. It can work more quickly for some people and more slowly for others.
- The most important thing is to give it a go and explore with a sense of openness and curiosity.

