

Mindfulness is very simple

Mindfulness is very simple. You can either be caught up in what's happening, or you can take a step back. That way, you have choice about whether and how to react.

How do you do that? You become aware of your physical situation. What are you seeing and hearing, how does it feel to be standing or sitting?

And you become aware of your inner experience, your thoughts and feelings. What's going through your head, and what's going on in your body?

When you are aware of what's happening around and within you – when you are “present” to your outer and inner experience – you can accept whatever's happening without being identified with it. It's just stuff you're aware of. You're the awareness, not the stuff.

This frees you from feeling trapped and victimized by what's happening when it's not okay, when the outer and/or inner worlds are not friendly. Instead of them defining who you are, you're simply noticing them. They're the show, you're the watcher.

Sometimes the show is a comedy. Other times it's a tragedy. But when you're present and aware, at all times you realize it's just a show.

Again, you're the awareness, not what you're aware of. You are the constant experiencer, not the ever-changing experience.

And when you become aware of that – the fact that you're the watcher, not what's watched – you're a lot less troubled by what you're watching. You find that your awareness is always placid and always lucid. It's always the same. It's just pure noticing.

Sometimes what you're watching is stormy – difficult outer or inner experiences. But your awareness – you – is fine. You're the eye of the storm – the calm, clear center – not the wind and rain.

So, that's mindfulness. Just being aware of things without getting caught up in them. Sometimes you can change things, sometimes you can't. But you can always become aware of what you're experiencing and be released from its grip.

You're simply awareness, no matter what you're experiencing. You're aware of everything, but defined by nothing. Rain or shine, your inner "I" is ever unaltered, eternally high and dry.

What are you aware of at this moment? What's going on around you? What are you thinking and feeling? And, especially, what does being aware – being present to your experience – feel like? How is it to just watch?

“This is what I'm seeing. This is what I'm hearing. This is what I'm thinking. This is what I'm feeling. And this is how it feels to be aware of those things. This is how it feels to just notice.”

And this is how it feels to be mindful. Simple, isn't it?

Spencer Sherman, PhD
January 2025