

WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

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INSPIRE TO MOVE - Mindfulness and Meditation

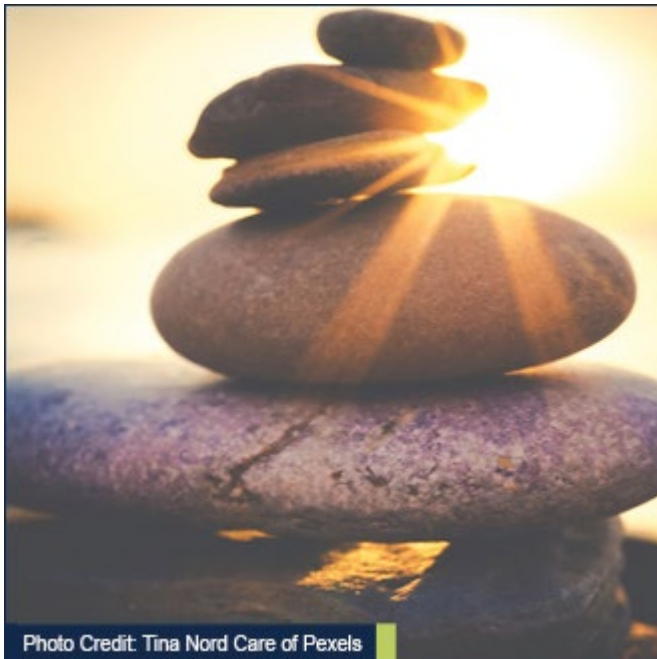


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By Lydia Schillinger

Mindfulness, meditation, mental focus, yoga. What pops into your mind when you hear these words? I hope they bring a feeling of calm. Everyone craves a certain amount of calm from time to time and wants to have their best mental focus when completing a task at work or at home. To be your best self, try increasing your quality of mindfulness by practicing meditation. Meditation will help give you a sense of calm, peace, and balance that may improve your overall health, emotional well-being, sleep, and mental focus. Studies on [meditation](#) have shown to increase self-awareness, alleviate or manage chronic pain, increase patience,

reduce negative emotions, manage stress, bring focus to the present, and even spark a physical change in the cortical thickness of the hippocampus in your brain, which governs learning and memory.

Have you ever been in a meeting and your mind started to wander? It happens to the best of us. I find it helpful to practice meditation to improve my focus and concentration, and I can tell you from experience that it works! There are several [types of meditation](#):

- Mindfulness meditation - paying attention to your thoughts
- Spiritual meditation - reflecting in silence to seek a deeper connection with your God or Universe

- Focused meditation - concentrating on one of your five senses
- Movement meditation - practicing a form of motion (e.g. yoga, walking, gardening)
- Mantra meditation - repeating a sound or word to clear the mind
- Transcendental meditation - using a mantra or series of words "I am grateful for ..."
- Progressive relaxation meditation - completing a body scan; relaxing one muscle group at a time throughout your whole body
- Loving-kindness meditation - opening your mind to receive love and sending well wishes to others
- Visualization meditation - picturing positive scenes or images

How do you meditate? What I love about meditation is that you can use mindfulness anywhere. Here is a simple way to start: find a comfortable location at the office, at home, or anywhere. Try sitting or lying in that comfortable place and take five to 20 minutes for yourself. Start with a short amount of time and increase the time you give to yourself each day. Focus your attention on a single object, mantra, a feeling, intention, or your breath, and free your mind of distractions. Relax your breathing. Let the feeling of calm consume you. Be mindful of your breathing and inhale to fill the stomach and next the lungs, then feel your chest and ribs expand, hold your breath for four seconds and then let it out for a count of eight seconds, then repeat. If you are doing yoga, take every movement as an intention and focus on each muscle as it stretches and moves. If you are going for a walk or a run, concentrate on your footsteps and listen to your feet hitting the ground. The repetitive sound can be calming.

There are many helpful apps to use for mindfulness and meditation. Two apps I found to be helpful in my practice are the Calm app and the Hannah Barrett Yoga app. The [CALM app](#) has a free trial, offers sleep stories, meditation stories, and music meant to relax you. The [Hannah Barrett yoga app](#) has a monthly fee, offers different yoga flows for relaxation, balance, strength, meditation and more. Mindfulness and meditation will be very beneficial if you give it some time.

"You should sit in meditation for 20 minutes every day – unless you are too busy. Then you should sit for an hour." - Dr. Sukhraj Dhillon