

YOGA WITH STEPH - MINDFULNESS



Understanding Yoga & Deepening Your Practice

This handout explores Mindfulness and how it can be integrated into our yoga practice.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment with awareness, acceptance, and without judgment. It involves observing our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment as they arise, without getting caught up in them or trying to change them.

BACKGROUND

While rooted in ancient wisdom, mindfulness was introduced to Western psychology and medicine in the 1970s by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This secular approach made mindfulness accessible to people of all backgrounds and has since been extensively researched and validated by modern science.

Both mindfulness and yoga emerge from the same philosophical tradition and share fundamental principles. The word "yoga" means "to unite" or "to join," referring to the integration of mind, body, and spirit – a goal that mindfulness supports.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF MINDFULNESS

Present-Moment Awareness

Mindfulness anchors us in the here and now, rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. This quality of presence allows us to fully experience life as it unfolds.

Non-Judgmental Observation

Rather than labelling experiences as "good" or "bad," mindfulness encourages us to observe with curiosity and acceptance. This creates space between ourselves and our reactions, allowing for more conscious responses.

Acceptance and Letting Go

Mindfulness teaches us to accept what is present without immediately trying to fix, change, or escape it. This doesn't mean passive resignation, but rather clear seeing that enables wise action.

Beginner's Mind

Approaching each moment with fresh eyes, as if experiencing it for the first time, cultivates wonder and prevents us from operating on autopilot.

INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

Mindful Movement

Bringing awareness to each movement, transition, and alignment creates a moving meditation. Notice how your body feels in each pose, where you hold tension, and how your breath responds.

Breath Awareness

The breath serves as an anchor for mindfulness. Observing the natural rhythm of breathing, or practicing specific pranayama techniques mindfully, cultivates present-moment awareness.

Body Scanning

During poses and relaxation, systematically bringing attention to different parts of the body develops the foundation of mindfulness – awareness of physical sensations.

Observing Mental Patterns

Yoga practice often brings up physical discomfort, emotional reactions, or mental resistance. Mindfulness allows us to observe these arising patterns without being overwhelmed by them.

Mindful Transitions

The spaces between poses offer opportunities to practice mindfulness. Notice the impulse to rush, the tendency to judge your practice, or the arising of expectations.