



## **What is mindfulness? | Rebecca's Mental Health Story**

### **Video transcription**

Hello. My name is Rebecca Stambridge and I teach mindfulness at Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind. This vlog aims to explain why I think mindfulness is good for your mental health. Mindfulness has really taken the health world by storm over the last few years, and I've not come across many people working in the field today who don't think it has at least some value to people with mental health problems.

The wider world however does seem to be broadly divided into enthusiasts on one hand, and then people who just seem to be totally turned off by it. And I'm not surprised to be honest, I think it's because mindfulness originates from Buddhism and therefore has strong religious connotations which will put some people off. And the fact that it's based on meditation can also make it sound like something a bit New Age and faddy, and that just isn't going to be for everybody.

However, I think that mindfulness isn't really about that, you can be into those things and mindfulness, but really, at its simplest, mindfulness is just a technique that can help you have more control over how thoughts are making you feel. Think of it as mind training if you like. Buddha just happened to be a really clever guy who just had a lot of useful things to say about what makes us unhappy in the modern world. But you don't really have to follow the rest of Buddhism to, you know, benefit from mindfulness. You can do it on your own, in your bedroom, no robes, chanting or incense are necessary you really can do it in your own way. And on our courses, for example, we have such a wide variety of people that really benefit from mindfulness. People like ex-war veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, to retired grannies, who all are able to use these techniques.



So, why does it work? Well, there's loads of different ways that you can describe mindfulness and there's loads of reasons why people think it works. But I would say that it's kind of based on the ideas that the reason why we're stressed or unhappy is not because of what's actually going on in the present moment, it's usually because of what is going on in our heads. A lot of the stories that we tell ourselves, usually to do with things that have happened to us in the past and how those stories make us feel. By practising mindfulness, we can develop ways that we can connect to the present moment more, and then when we do that, the calmer and happier we can be.

And also with mindfulness, you really just become more aware of your thoughts and aware of how those thoughts are affecting you and you become more objective about them. So you can see the thoughts as they arise and choose how you respond. Also, by switching off the automatic pilot mode, which a lot of us tend to exist in, we can have a much richer, and ultimately happier relationship with the world around us.

So for me, I use mindfulness to help manage depression because I have a tendency to interpret certain events in negative way, and then I might ruminate over those events so obsessively and the thoughts just take over my life. Whenever something like that happens now, I feel like I've got a lot more techniques to help keep me grounded in the present, and I'm a bit more rational about what's going on. It is a work in progress, but I feel I'm learning how I can be in control of my thoughts, rather than my thoughts controlling me.

So how can you do this? Well, there are hundreds of different ways to practise mindfulness and so on our courses for example, we may teach people formal meditation where you sit down and focus on your breath, for example. But we also teach people how to be mindful just by paying a bit more attention when you're doing the washing up or perhaps being a bit more aware of your surroundings when you're walking down the



street. So what's great is that let's say you've tried mindfulness, and you've tried sitting down for long periods of time and you've concluded it's not for you, actually there's loads of ways to be mindful. You can just learn to be mindful in your day-to-day life. And another bonus, I think, is that if you do have mental health problems and you do need more than medication, but you just don't like the idea of sharing your emotions with a stranger, then you don't have to talk to anyone. This is something that you can do right now, on your own, when it suits you, it's free and there are no waiting lists, so what is stopping you giving it a try?

If you want to find out more about mindfulness, then you have to click on this button below or contact your local Mind, who may have some local courses or could tell you where it's going on. And watch out for more videos about mindfulness on the Mind YouTube channel this week, all in celebration of Mental Health Awareness Week. Thanks for listening.