
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Mindfulness

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

OK, I want you to close your eyes. Focus... on your breathing.

Catherine

Er, Neil? Can we do this later? We've only got six minutes.

Neil

Ok, Catherine. Welcome to a **mindful** edition of 6 Minute English, where we're exploring the rise of **mindfulness** – particularly in schools.

Catherine

And we'll be teaching six items of vocabulary along the way. So I think we should start with **mindfulness** itself.

Neil

Being **mindful**, as an adjective, means 'being calmly aware of everything in your body and mind'. You only focus on 'now'.

Catherine

People practise **mindfulness**, the noun, by focusing only on their breath, and not allowing themselves to be distracted by passing thoughts.

Neil

Indeed. It's traditionally associated with Buddhism, and has become incredibly popular in the **secular** world – in workplaces, in private classes and even in schools.

Catherine

Secular means 'non-religious' by the way.

Neil

OK, I just mentioned schools: how many teachers in the UK are trained to teach **mindfulness**? Is it...

a) 500,

- b) 5,000 or
- c) 50,000?

Catherine

Let me focus really hard – I think it's 5,000.

Neil

A very **mindful** answer, Catherine. But I'll reveal the real answer later. Now let's hear from one teacher who's been practising **mindfulness** with students for many years. Alison Mayo, Head of Early Years at Dharma Primary School, thinks it's particularly suited to young children. Why?

INSERT

Alison Mayo, Head of Early Years, Dharma Primary School

That's very natural for children - to be **in the present**. And we really kind of celebrate that because that is a place where they are learning. So, if they feel **grounded**, then they can really develop their concentration and their focus, and relax. Learning happens so much more easily if you're relaxed and happy.

Neil

Alison said it was natural for children to be **in the present**.

Catherine

The present – means 'now'. You'll know it from the 'present tense' in grammar. And people who practise **mindfulness** use this phrase a lot – to be **in the present**, or **in the present moment**.

Neil

It sounds simple, but actually it's very hard to achieve.

Catherine

Well, Neil, it might be for an old chap like you, but for young people, Miss Mayo thinks it's very natural.

Neil

Fair enough. Being **grounded**, as she says, helps students concentrate and learn in a relaxed way.

Catherine

Grounded is another good adjective there – it means 'rational, sensible, clear thinking'.

Neil

So, she's a fan of **mindfulness**. And there's growing evidence behind its benefits.

Catherine

Yes. The UK's national health advisory body has recommended it to help treat conditions like depression and anxiety.

Neil

Studies have shown it reduces levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.

Catherine

And a new study has claimed that eating **mindfully** can actually help people to lose weight.

Neil

You mean eating slowly?

Catherine

Yeah, slowly and really experiencing and tasting the food. Not being distracted and not eating too much too fast! Anyway, Neil, is **mindfulness** taking over the world?

Neil

Well, not quite yet. There still aren't many detailed studies on it – and some critics say the studies we have show a publication **bias**. In other words, only the positive results are published.

Catherine

A **bias** is when you support something or someone in an unfair way, because of your preferences or beliefs.

Neil

What seems certain is that **mindfulness** has entered into many aspects of modern life, at least here in the UK. Now, let's look back at our question. I asked how many teachers in the UK have been trained in **mindfulness**.

Catherine

And I said 5,000.

Neil

Well, it was actually 5,000. Well done! According to the **Mindfulness** Initiative. And it keeps on growing.

Catherine

So before we finish up, here's another question that might be useful for our listeners – what's the difference between **mindfulness** and **meditation**?

Neil

Aha – that's not so easy to define. **Meditation** is the broader term. When you **meditate** you spend time quietly – focusing your mind - often for relaxation or spiritual purposes.

Mindfulness is a particular a kind of **meditation** – when you try to empty your mind of thought. Does that make sense?

Catherine

Yeah, more or less. So we'll let our listeners **meditate** on that answer. And before we empty our minds, let's look back at today's words. We had **mindfulness**, **mindful** and **mindfully** – they all relate to the particular practice of being only focused of what's happening now.

Neil

What's happening now, or we could say – what's happening **in the present**. People often focus on the past – thinking back about mistakes or happy memories...

Catherine

Or on the future – which can be full of worries. But by being **in the present** – you overcome these thoughts and fears. Next, we have **secular**. It contrasts with 'religious'. So, while a church is a religious building, we also have **secular** buildings – like factories and shops and hospitals...

Neil

All non-religious buildings, in other words!

Catherine

Exactly. Now, tell me Neil, are you feeling **grounded** right now?

Neil

You're asking if I'm thinking clearly and feeling connected to the world? Do you even have to ask, Catherine – I'm a very **grounded** person.

Catherine

You are, most of the time. Most of the time you're naturally **grounded**, every now and again you get a bit panicked, but ... some of us need to remember to slow down, chill out and **meditate** once in a while.

Neil

Yes, that would be **meditate** meaning to take quiet time to focus deeply on something.

Catherine

Exactly. Now for more ways to improve your English I suggest you **mindfully** visit our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages.

Neil

Yes, focus only on our pages. Don't be distracted by anything else!



Both
Bye!