
Slide 1

The logo for Managed Health Network (MHN) is displayed in white, bold, uppercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background. The letters are spaced out, and the 'H' has a small gap between its two vertical bars.

Mindfulness for Beginners: A Practical Approach

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Participant Handbook

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the definition of mindfulness
- Identify and experience practices that can be used to develop mindfulness
- Discuss benefits of practicing mindfulness

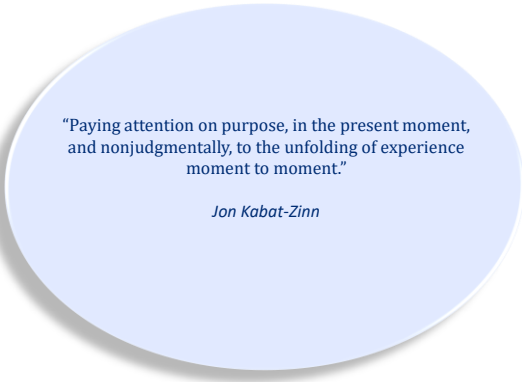
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What is Mindfulness?



“Paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

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How Is Your Mind Right Now?

Bring your attention to your own mind and body

What do you notice?

Silently observe

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A Taste of Mindfulness

- Easy Way
 - Bring gentle and consistent attention to your breath for two minutes. *That's it!*
 - Start by becoming aware that you are breathing, and then pay attention to the process of breathing. Every time your attention wanders away, just bring it back very gently.
- Easier Way (*focusing on the breath is not necessary*)
 - Sit without agenda for two minutes. Shift from “doing” to “being,” what ever that means to you.
- Even Easier Way
 - Switch between the Easy Way and the Easier Way anytime.

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Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindfulness Meditation is a very popular and effective way of practicing mindfulness. It includes:
 - Centering awareness on a specific object of attention **or** observing where your attention goes in the present moment
 - Training yourself mentally, developing attention & meta-attention
 - attention – the ability to focus
 - meta-attention - the ability to know that your attention has wandered away
 - Relaxing your mind

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The How-To's of Mindfulness Meditation

- Where should I meditate? Find a quiet place where you are not likely to be disturbed.
- How should I meditate? (*This approach centers on the breath*)
 - Sit in a position that enables you to be relaxed and alert
 - Start by setting an intention
 - Follow your breath
 - When you realize that your attention has wandered away, regain focus by bringing your attention back to the process of breathing
 - Be aware of your attitude towards yourself
- How often should I meditate? Daily, or as often as you can.
- For how long? When starting out try meditating for 10 to 15 minutes. You can increase it to 20, 30+ minutes over time.

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Why Practice Mindfulness?

“Being mindful makes it easier to savor the pleasures in life as they occur, helps you become fully engaged in activities, and creates a greater capacity to deal with adverse events.”

“By focusing on the here and now, many people who practice mindfulness find that they are less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets over the past, are less preoccupied with concerns about success and self-esteem, and are better able to form deep connections with others.”

From: [Positive Psychology: Harnessing the Power of Happiness, Personal Strength, and Mindfulness](#), a special health report published by Harvard Health Publications.

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Mindfulness is Good for Our Bodies

It can:

- help relieve stress
- treat heart disease
- lower blood pressure
- reduce chronic pain
- improve sleep
- help alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties
- boost our immune system
- dull pain

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Mindfulness is Good for Our Mental Health

It can serve as an important element in the treatment of a number of problems, including:

- substance abuse
- eating disorders
- couples' conflicts
- anxiety disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder

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Mindfulness Is Good For Our Minds

Mindfulness can:

- increase ability to focus
- strengthen productivity
- increase positive emotions while reducing negative emotions
- help problem solving
- change our brains
- decrease emotional reactivity (outbursts)
- foster compassion and altruism
- enhance relationships

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Mindfulness Exercises

- Mindfulness meditation
- Body scan
- Raisin exercise
- Walking meditation
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Yoga, tai chi and qigong

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How to Cultivate Mindfulness - Day to Day

- Be creative. Try different practices.
- Try these tips for practicing mindfulness:
 - Pay close attention to your breathing, especially when you're feeling intense emotions
 - Notice—really notice—what you're sensing in a given moment, the sights, sounds, and smells that ordinarily slip by without reaching your conscious awareness
 - Recognize that your thoughts and emotions are fleeting and do not define you, an insight that can free you from negative thought patterns
 - Tune into your body's physical sensations, from the water hitting your skin in the shower to the way your body rests in your office chair

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Summary

- Easy
- Free
- Fun
- Can do it anywhere
- Healthy way of managing stress
- Not competitive
- Your way vs the “right” way

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Resources

Books

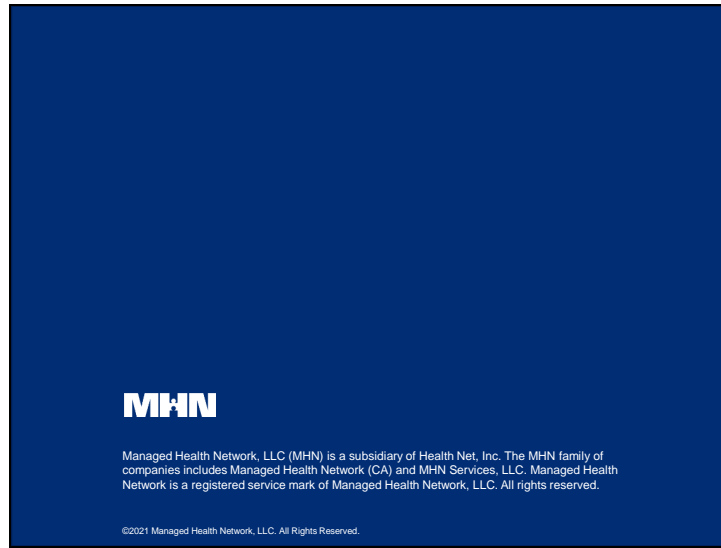
- Tan, Chade-Meng. *Search Inside Yourself*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012
- Kabat-Zinn Jon. *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation In Everyday Life*. New York: Hyperion Books, 1984.

Online

- Getting started with meditation & mindfulness practices: www.mindful.org
- Resource listing of mindfulness centers in U.S.: American Mindfulness Research Association: <https://goamra.org/resources/find-program>
- Video on refreshing your mind for 10 minutes per day: http://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes.html
- Videos and a guide to practicing yoga: <http://www.yogajournal.com/category/yoga-101/>
- Guide to practicing qigong: <http://www.qigonginstitute.org/html/GettingStarted.php>
- Steps to practicing tai chi, see: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/379454-how-to-do-tai-chi-for-beginners>

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Handout A: A Taste of Mindfulness (a two-minute exercise)

This simple exercise is mindfulness practice. If practiced enough, it deepens the inherent calmness and clarity in the mind. It opens up the possibility of fully appreciating each moment in life, every one of which is precious.

Easy Way

- Bring gentle and consistent attention to your breath for two minutes. Start by becoming aware that you are breathing, and then pay attention to the process of breathing. Simply observe each breath as it happens, whether you focus on the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen, or on the sensation of the breath at the nostrils. Really feel what it is like to breathe, without feeling the need to alter your breath, just observing it as it happens.
- Every time your attention wanders away, just bring it back very gently. When your mind wanders, just notice... without judging it as something negative. Think of the wandering as part of the exercise in that every time you bring a wandering attention back, you are giving your muscles of attention an opportunity for growth.

Easier Way (no need to focus on the breath)

- Sit without an agenda for two minutes. Shift from “doing” to “being,” whatever that means to you, for just two minutes.

Even Easier Way

- To make it even easier, you’re free to switch between the Easy Way and the Easier Way anytime during those two minutes. Any time you feel like you want to bring awareness to breathing, just switch to Easy. Any time you decide you’d rather just sit without agenda, just switch to Easier.

Source: Tan, Chade-Meng. *Search Inside Yourself*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012

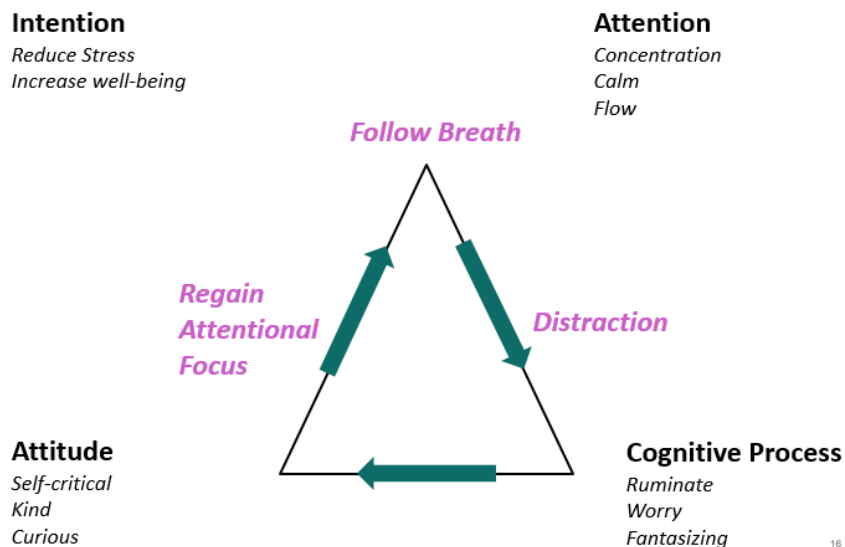
Handout B: The How-To's of Mindfulness Meditation

Where should I meditate? Find a quiet place where you are not likely to be disturbed.

How should I meditate?* (*this approach centers around the breath*)

1. Sit in a position that enables you to be both relaxed and alert at the same time, whatever that means to you (for detailed information on how to sit for meditation, see: <http://www.chopra.com/ccl/whats-the-right-way-to-sit-for-meditation>).
2. Start by setting an intention. Perhaps my intention is to reduce stress, or to feel more calm. *Note:* Every time you create an intention, you are subtly forming or reinforcing a mental habit.
3. Follow your breath. Bring a gentle attention to the process of breathing
 - i. At this point, your attention may gather. You may be in a flow with your breath or you may be in a state where your mind is calm and concentrated
 - ii. Or you may, fall into distraction
 - iii. Or you may ruminate, worry, or fantasize.
4. When you realize that your attention has wandered away, regain focus by bringing your attention back to the process of breathing.
5. Be aware of your attitude towards yourself. See how you treat yourself. If it's self-critical, shift the attitude toward self-directed kindness and curiosity (if possible).

Process Model of Mindfulness Meditation



* Adapted from: Tan, Chade-Meng. *Search Inside Yourself*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012

How often should I meditate? Daily if possible. If not, as often as you can.

For how long? When starting out try meditating for 10 to 15 minutes. You can increase it to 20, 30+ minutes over time.

Handout C: Mindfulness Exercises

To develop mindfulness skills in everyday life, you can try different exercises and see which ones you like. Or create your own!

Body Scan

Where you focus your attention along your body, from the toes to the top of your head, trying to be aware and accepting of whatever you sense in these body parts, without controlling or changing those feelings.

Settling Attention

Begin by sitting comfortably for 2 minutes. Sit in a position that enables you to be both relaxed and alert at the same time, whatever that means to you.

Breathe naturally and bring very gentle attention to the breath. You can either bring attention to the nostrils, the abdomen, or the entire body of breath, whatever that means to you. Become aware of in breath, out breath, and space in between.

Scan Body

Head

Now bring your attention to the top of your head, ears, and back of your head. Notice sensations, or lack of sensations, for 1 minute.

Face

Now move your attention to your face. Your forehead, eyes, cheeks, nose, lips, mouth, and inside of your mouth (gums, tongue) for 1 minute.

Necks and Shoulders

Move your attention to your neck, the inside of your throat, and your shoulders for 1 minute.

Back

Move your attention to your lower back, mid back, and upper back for 1 minute. The back carries a lot of our load and stores a lot of our tension. Give your back the kind and loving attention it so deserves.

Front

Now move your attention to the chest and stomach for 1 minute. If it is possible for you, try to bring attention to your internal organs, whatever that means to you.

Entire Body at Once

And now, bring your attention to your entire body all at once for 1 minute.

Scan for Emotion

Did you find any emotion in your body? If there is any, just notice its presence in the body. If not, just notice the absence of emotions, and catch one if it arises in the next 2 minutes.

Positive Emotion

Try to experience a positive emotion in the body.

Bring to mind a memory of a happy, joyous event or a time when you were optimal and productive or a time when you felt confident.

Experience the feeling of positive emotion. Now, bring your attention to your body. What does that positive emotion feel like in the body? In the face? Neck, chest, back? How are you breathing? Any difference in the level of tension? Let yourself experience it for 3 minutes.

Returning to Grounding

Now return to the present. If you find an emotionally charged thought, just let it go.

Bring your attention to either your body or your breath, whichever your mind finds more stability in. And let's just settle the mind there for 2 minutes.

Adapted from: Tan, Chade-Meng. *Search Inside Yourself*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012

Eating One Raisin: A First Taste of Mindfulness

Slowly using all of your senses, one after another, to observe a raisin in great detail, from the way it feels in your hand to the way its taste bursts on your tongue. This exercise is intended to help you focus on the present moment, and can be tried with different foods.

Holding

First, take a raisin and hold it in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb. Focusing on it, imagine that you've just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life.

Seeing

Take time to really see it; gaze at the raisin with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any asymmetries or unique features.

Touching

Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture, maybe with your eyes closed if that enhances your sense of touch.

Smelling

Holding the raisin beneath your nose, with each inhalation drink in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise, noticing as you do this anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or stomach.

Placing

Now slowly bring the raisin up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the object in the mouth, without chewing, noticing how it gets into the mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments exploring the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.

Tasting

When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously, take one or two bites of and notice what happens in the aftermath, experiencing any waves of taste that emanate from it as you continue chewing. Without swallowing yet, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in the mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment, as well as any changes in the object itself.

Swallowing

When you feel ready to swallow the raisin, see if you can first detect the intention to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow the raisin.

Following

Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how the body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise in mindful eating.¹

This exercise, if practiced regularly, is a great way to increase mindfulness. Vary the food choices and have some fun with it! Five minutes daily for at least a week is recommended. Evidence suggests that mindfulness increases the more you practice it.

¹ Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2007). *The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness*. New York: Guilford Press.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation, where you focus on the movement of your body as you take step after step, your feet touching and leaving the ground—an everyday activity we usually take for granted.

Walking meditation brings a number of benefits in addition to the cultivation of mindfulness. It can be a helpful way of building concentration, perhaps in support of sitting practice. When we are tired or sluggish, walking can be invigorating. The sensations of walking can be more compelling than the more subtle sensations of breathing while sitting. Walking can be quite helpful after a meal, upon waking from sleep, or after a long period of sitting meditation. At times of strong emotions or stress, walking meditation may be more relaxing than sitting. An added

benefit is that, when done for extended times, walking meditation can build strength and stamina.

People have a variety of attitudes toward walking meditation. Some take to it easily and find it a delight. For many others, an appreciation of this form of meditation takes some time; it is an “acquired taste.” Yet others see its benefits and do walking meditation even though they don’t have much taste for it.

To do formal walking meditation, find a pathway about 30 to 40 feet long, and simply walk back and forth. When you come to the end of your path, come to a full stop, turn around, stop again, and then start again. Keep your eyes cast down without looking at anything in particular. Some people find it useful to keep the eyelids half closed.

We stress walking back and forth on a single path instead of wandering about because otherwise part of the mind would have to negotiate the path. A certain mental effort is required to, say, avoid a chair or step over a rock. When you walk back and forth, pretty soon you know the route and the problem-solving part of the mind can be put to rest.

Walking in a circle is a technique that is sometimes used, but the disadvantage is that the continuity of a circle can conceal a wandering mind. Walking back and forth, the little interruption when you stop at the end of your path can help to catch your attention if it has wandered.

As you walk back and forth, find a pace that gives you a sense of ease. I generally advise walking more slowly than normal, but the pace can vary. Fast walking may bring a greater sense of ease when you are agitated. Or fast walking might be appropriate when you are sleepy. When the mind is calm and alert, slow walking may feel more natural. Your speed might change during a period of walking meditation. See if you can sense the pace that keeps you most intimate with and attentive to the physical experience of walking.

After you’ve found a pace of ease, let your attention settle into the body. I sometimes find it restful to think of letting my body take me for a walk.

Once you feel connected to the body, let your attention settle into your feet and lower legs. In sitting meditation, it is common to use the alternating sensations of breathing in and out as an “anchor” keeping us in the present. In walking meditation, the focus is on the alternating stepping of the feet.

With your attention in the legs and feet, feel the sensations of each step. Feel the legs and feet tense as you lift the leg. Feel the movement of the leg as it swings through the air. Feel the contact of the foot with the ground. There is no “right” experience. Just see how the experience feels to you. Whenever you notice that the mind has wandered, bring it back to the sensations of the feet walking. Getting a sense of the rhythm of the steps may help maintain a continuity of awareness.

As an aid to staying present, you can use a quiet mental label for your steps as you walk. The label might be “stepping, stepping” or “left, right.” Labeling occupies the thinking mind with a rudimentary form of thought, so the mind is less likely to wander off. The labeling also points the mind towards what you want to observe. Noting “stepping” helps you to notice the feet. If after a while you notice that you are saying “right” for the left foot and “left” for the right foot, you know that your attention has wandered.

When walking more slowly, you might try breaking each step into phases and using the traditional labels “lifting, placing.” For very slow walking, you can use the labels “lifting, moving, placing.”

Try to dedicate your attention to the sensations of walking and let go of everything else. If powerful emotions or thoughts arise and call your attention away from the sensations of walking, it is often helpful to stop walking and attend to them. When they are no longer compelling, you can return to the walking meditation. You also might find that something beautiful or interesting catches your eye while walking. If you can't let go of it, stop walking and do "looking" meditation. Continue walking when you have finished looking.

Some people find that their minds are more active or distractible during walking than during sitting meditation. This may be because walking is more active and the eyes are open. If so, don't be discouraged and don't think that walking is thus less useful. It may in fact be more useful to learn to practice with your more everyday mind.

You can train your mind to be present any time you walk. Some people choose specific activities in their daily routines to practice walking meditation, such as walking down a hallway at home or at work, or from their car to their place of work.

In our daily lives, we spend more time walking than sitting quietly with our eyes closed. Walking meditation can serve as a powerful bridge between meditation practice and daily life, helping us be more present, mindful and concentrated in ordinary activities. It can reconnect us to a simplicity of being and the wakefulness that comes from it.

Adapted from: <http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/instructions-for-walking-meditation>

Loving-Kindness Meditation

The following is a basic set of instructions from the book "[The Issue at Hand](#)" by [Gil Fronsdal](#) written as a gift to the community. It is freely given.

To practice loving-kindness meditation, sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner. Take two or three deep breaths with slow, long and complete exhalations. Let go of any concerns or preoccupations. For a few minutes, feel or imagine the breath moving through the center of your chest - in the area of your heart.

Metta is first practiced toward oneself, since we often have difficulty loving others without first loving ourselves. Sitting quietly, mentally repeat, slowly and steadily, the following or similar phrases:

May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be peaceful and at ease.

While you say these phrases, allow yourself to sink into the intentions they express. Loving-kindness meditation consists primarily of connecting to the intention of wishing ourselves or others happiness. However, if feelings of warmth, friendliness, or love arise in the body or mind, connect to them, allowing them to grow as you repeat the phrases. As an aid to the meditation, you might hold an image of yourself in your mind's eye. This helps reinforce the intentions expressed in the phrases.

After a period of directing loving-kindness toward yourself, bring to mind a friend or someone in your life who has deeply cared for you. Then slowly repeat phrases of loving-kindness toward them:

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful and at ease.

As you say these phrases, again sink into their intention or heartfelt meaning. And, if any feelings of loving-kindness arise, connect the feelings with the phrases so that the feelings may become stronger as you repeat the words.

As you continue the meditation, you can bring to mind other friends, neighbors, acquaintances, strangers, animals, and finally people with whom you have difficulty. You can either use the same phrases, repeating them again and again, or make up phrases that better represent the loving-kindness you feel toward these beings. In addition to simple and perhaps personal and creative forms of metta practice, there is a classic and systematic approach to metta as an intensive meditation practice. Because the classic meditation is fairly elaborate, it is usually undertaken during periods of intensive metta practice on retreat.

Sometimes during loving-kindness meditation, seemingly opposite feelings such as anger, grief, or sadness may arise. Take these to be signs that your heart is softening, revealing what is held there. You can either shift to mindfulness practice or you can—with whatever patience, acceptance, and kindness you can muster for such feelings—direct loving-kindness toward them. Above all, remember that there is no need to judge yourself for having these feelings.

Yoga

Yoga, deepens the mind-body connection with mindful breathing, physical postures and meditation or relaxation, leading practitioners to feel calm, invigorated and clear-headed.

Hatha yoga, the most commonly practiced in the United States and Europe, emphasizes postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama). Some of the major styles of hatha yoga are Iyengar, Ashtanga, Vini, Kundalini, and Bikram yoga.

For videos and a guide to practicing yoga, see: <http://www.yogajournal.com/category/yoga-101/>

Qigong (“chee-gong”)

Qigong is a Chinese health method that combines slow graceful movements with mental concentration and breathing to increase and balance a person’s vital energy. It has been popularly referred to as Chinese yoga. Literally millions of people practice Qigong in China and around the world each day to successfully treat diseases ranging from osteoarthritis to cancer, to improve their overall health.

For a guide to practicing qigong, see: <http://www.qigonginstitute.org/html/GettingStarted.php>

Tai Chi

Originally developed for self-defense, tai chi has evolved into a graceful form of exercise that's now used to reduce stress and anxiety and a variety of other health conditions. It also helps increase flexibility and balance. Often described as meditation in motion, tai chi promotes serenity through gentle, flowing movements.

For beginner steps to practicing Tai Chi, see: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/379454-how-to-do-tai-chi-for-beginners>