**Why mindfulness is important to self-regulation | PATHS Self-Regulation Series**

Estimated time: 12-15 minutes

**Learning Outcomes:**

* Describe what mindfulness is in learning setting.
* Describe what mindfulness qualities look like in a learning setting.
* Recognize why mindfulness is important to self-regulated learning.

### **The challenge**

We may find ourselves spending a lot of our time in the past focused on past failures or mistakes, or maybe in the future worrying about possible failures or the outcome of a future event; rather than in the present, where we have control and are doing what shapes our lives. This applies to our own learning as well, and can prevent us from achieving important tasks and making progress.

### **How mindfulness can help**

Mindfulness can help you unhook from unpleasant thoughts ("I can't do this") and feelings (e.g., fear, anxiety, boredom) that would otherwise cause you to avoid and/or distract yourself from certain activities that are important and require focus.

Mindfulness can also help you pause and better respond to challenging situations and your feelings and thoughts, rather than just reacting to them.

### **So, what is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness dates back thousands of years and originated from different spiritual and religious practices, including various schools of Buddhism and in places like India and Japan, for example. In more recent decades, Western psychologists have adapted and secularized mindfulness practices to study its benefits to learning and wellbeing, including developing self-regulation.

1. Mindfulness is a practice that allows you to develop **present-time awareness** (focusing on what is happening in the present) of thoughts and feelings, and accept thoughts and feelings as natural products of your mind that you can observe and let pass without becoming entangled, distracted and off track.
2. Mindfulness practice also helps us **skillfully respond** to situations rather than react automatically in ways that might not work very well for us.

### **Distraction is an inherent part of life**

Apart from thoughts and worries about the next due date or major deadline, paying the rent, being constantly plugged in, social media, multi-tasking interferes with our ability to alert ourselves to important information and direct and maintain our attention on that information.

But mindfulness can help us learn how to be aware in the moment and focus our attention on the present.

**Check your learning:** Identify if the statement below is true or false.

Mindfulness can help us be aware of the present, skillfully respond to situations rather than react, and unhook from unpleasant thoughts and feelings that would otherwise cause us to avoid and/or distract ourselves from certain activities that are important and require focus.

**Answer:** True

### **Mindfulness helps us become self-regulated learners**

In order to develop self-regulation and achieve self-regulated learning, practicing mindfulness is important.

Developing mindfulness will help you be aware of your thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards your learning so you can loosen the control that thoughts and feelings have over your behaviour and get out of automatic ways of responding that lead you away from your learning goals.

### **The Mindful Learner**

The mindful learner has three qualities essential to self-regulated learning:

1. Maintains awareness in the present moment
2. Knows their thoughts and feelings relating to learning
3. Not overpowered by emotions or thoughts in directing their actions

**Let's reflect:** What did you already know about mindfulness and what did you learn from this activity? How can mindfulness help you approach course materials and learning tasks?

**Sources:**

Adapted by PATHS, York University from: [Growth & Goals: a module for any context, designed to develop learning skills](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/growthandgoalsindependent) by Alison Flynn; Elizabeth Campbell Brown; Emily O'Connor; Ellyssa Walsh; Fergal O'Hagan; Gisèle Richard; and Kevin Roy is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.



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