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Daily 10-minute bursts of mindfulness fight anxiety

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Short bursts of mindfulness every day can boost wellbeing, combat depression and anxiety, and inspire healthier lifestyle choices, research has found.



I have to admit, I'm not surprised. For as long as I can remember we've been encouraged to stop and smell the roses – to practise mindfulness.

Scientists from the universities of Bath, Bournemouth and Southampton revealed just 10 minutes of daily mindfulness helps motivate people to improve their lifestyle, including exercising more and embracing healthier eating and sleeping habits.

The research, encompassing 1,247 adults from 91 countries, demonstrates even brief daily mindfulness moments can have profound benefits.

Participants were randomly allocated to a month-long mindfulness routine or a control regime – listening to excerpts from Alice in Wonderland.

Daily mindfulness sessions included relaxation exercises, breath-focused exercises, body scans – where you pay attention and check in with your body, from head to toe – and self-reflection.

Participants completed surveys on their mental health before the 30 days of mindfulness training and upon completing it. The results are striking. Depression was reduced by 19.2% more than the control group and wellbeing by more than 6.9%. Anxiety decreased by 12.6% more.

Attitudes to health got more positive by 7.1% compared to the control group, while intentions to look after health increased by 6.5% beyond the control group. In survey follow-ups, one month later, the mindfulness group showed sustained improvements in their wellbeing, depression and attitudes, even reporting better sleep quality.

In their feedback, participants highlighted numerous benefits.

“Awareness, self-control, gratitude, I am more patient, and I take more joy from the present moment,” one reported back. Another said: “Clear mind. Feeling like everything's under control and I'll be able to do what I set my mind to.” Furthermore, it seems mindfulness has the potential for promoting healthier living, such as exercising regularly, which is what the team are eager to research next. Masha Remskar, Bath University psychologist, explains: “This study highlights that even short, daily practices of mindfulness can offer benefits, making it a simple yet powerful tool for enhancing your mental health.

“It’s exciting to see the benefits of mindfulness extending beyond depression, wellbeing and anxiety and into other health behaviours such as sleeping better and building stronger intentions to live a healthy lifestyle.

“Mindfulness builds psychological skills you need to build healthy habits – we hope to show in future work that once you’ve got those skills you can use them to improve several health behaviours from exercising regularly to stopping smoking.”

It’s particularly exciting that benefits were sustained after the mindfulness sessions ended, suggesting it can help build sustainable habits.

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Study participants said they had a clear mind and felt more in control