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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute English

### Mindfulness



*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**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!