

Strategies to redirect your thoughts

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Do you feel that your emotions are intense and difficult to control?

The following techniques can help you break the flow of negative thoughts, reduce the intensity of your feelings and give you a real sense of control:

1. Focusing on external objects

Describe objects in detail in terms of their shape, colour, size or other characteristics.



2. Emotional awareness

Awareness of those sensations that are related to the current environmental stimuli. For instance, you can focus on the sounds you hear in your surroundings and try to describe them.



3. The STOP technique

The Stop Technique can help you stop distracting thoughts and negative feelings. You should create a positive thought and write it on your coping card. For example, you can write down »I will make it« or »I can do it« or »I can handle it«, »I've been through this«. When an unpleasant thought enters your mind or when you notice mood changes, say »STOP« in your mind, you can also clap your hands, then take a breath and read the coping card or think of a pleasant situation (e.g. a scene from a nice day you had while on holidays).



4. Watchfulness exercises

Through watchfulness exercises we learn to focus our attention on the here and now, without evaluating our thoughts and emotions or events occurring in our surroundings. Watchfulness teaches us how to be patient with oneself and others, and how to respond to situations on the basis of our conscious decisions (we think about a certain situation and decide how we will assess that situation and respond to it).



Watchfulness emphasizes deliberate use of focused attention. This means that we deliberately pay attention to something specific (breathing, walking, etc.). Thus, **in a given present moment, we abandon any thoughts of the past or the future and focus on the present moment.** And being free from prejudice means not comparing ourselves to others and not condemning ourselves for the thoughts that may cross our mind.

[What are some of the things we can pay attention to while performing watchfulness practice?](#)

We can pay attention to our breathing, our surroundings, driving, eating, our walking, to washing the dishes, showering, our thoughts, emotions, our body, parents or to our friend.

[How can we stay alert?](#)

We can direct our attention by keeping our eyes closed, or by looking at our surroundings, by listening, tasting, smelling and touching. We use our senses to direct our attention.

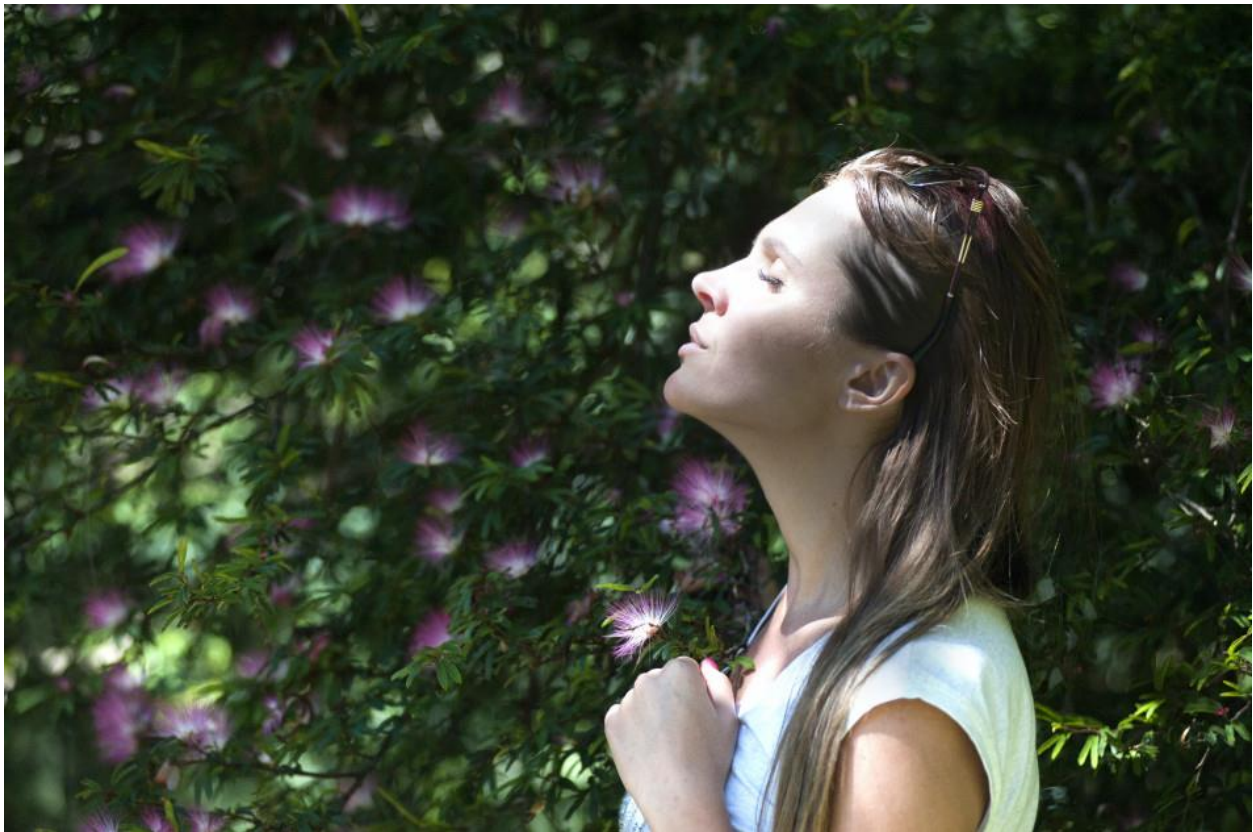
[The opposite of mindfulness is the state of autopilot.](#)

You may have noticed that adults often drive without consciously paying attention to what they are doing, and it can happen that they drive for many kilometres without even being aware of the fact that they are driving. Similar things happen to all of us in other daily activities when we are not truly present in the given moment.

In which activities have you found yourself acting as an »autopilot«?

- Maybe you brush your teeth without even being aware of how you brush them?
- Do you sometimes have a hard time remembering what you have just been eating?
- Does it often happen to you that you have no idea what the teacher has just said?

By living a watchful life, you will be able to deal with depression better



By focusing on the here and now and by consciously performing different activities (including those mentioned above), we shall be able to manage depression better. **You can start by trying to focus on your breathing, since breathing is something that we always have at our disposal.** You should examine how your breathing changes in accordance with your thoughts, mood and movement.

You can incorporate mindfulness into your day by selecting at least one daily routine activity, trying to perform it in a way that you are fully aware of it. Try to embrace this activity with all your senses and be fully present in every moment of its implementation. Some tips and ideas: waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, wiping your body, getting dressed, washing the dishes. Whatever activity you choose, try to focus on it and carry out only that single activity.

By means of watchfulness, you can learn techniques that can help transform depression, sadness, despair and negative thoughts into a more pleasant mood and overall well-being. If you do this repeatedly, some connections will be created and strengthened in your brain, which will lead to the creation of more pleasant thoughts.