



Chi Kung (Qigong) focus for the Winter Semester 2026

This semester we will explore the differences and similarities between mindfulness and meditation.

The following is AI generated from a Google search.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of paying deliberate, non-judgmental attention to the present moment, focusing on your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surroundings, which helps reduce stress, manage emotions, and improve overall mental well-being by training you to respond thoughtfully rather than react automatically. It's cultivated through techniques like focused breathing, body scans, and meditation, rooted in Buddhist traditions but widely used secularly for benefits like managing anxiety, pain, and improving focus.

How it works

- **Awareness without judgment:**

You observe experiences as they are, without labeling them "good" or "bad," creating mental space.

- **Present-moment focus:**

It pulls your attention from dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

- **Non-reactivity:**

It helps you pause before reacting, allowing for more considered responses to situations.

Common techniques & practices

- **Mindful Breathing:** Focus on the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.
- **Body Scan:** Systematically bring awareness to different parts of your body, noticing sensations and releasing tension.
- **Guided Meditation:** Follow audio instructions to guide your attention.

- **Mindful Walking:** Pay attention to the feeling of your feet on the ground, your body's movement, and your surroundings.
- **Mindful Activities:** Applying awareness to daily tasks like eating, washing dishes, or listening.

Key benefits

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression.
- Improves focus and concentration.
- Enhances emotional regulation and self-awareness.
- Increases appreciation for everyday life.

Key takeaway

Mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind or achieving a blissful state; it's about training your attention to be more present and less reactive, fostering a calmer and more grounded way of experiencing life.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice of training focus and awareness to achieve mental clarity, emotional calm, and relaxation, involving techniques like focusing on breath or mantras, and observing thoughts without judgment to reduce stress, improve focus, manage emotions, and boost overall well-being, with various types like mindfulness, mantra, and loving-kindness available to suit different needs.

How it works

Training attention:

It's like training a puppy; you gently redirect your wandering mind back to your focus (like your breath) when it strays, which builds focus muscles.

Shifting brain states:

Meditation can calm the brain's "fight or flight" response (amygdala) and activate the relaxation response (parasympathetic system).

Observing thoughts: Instead of stopping thoughts, you learn to notice them without getting carried away, letting them pass like clouds, fostering perspective.

Common types

Mindfulness Meditation: Focuses on present-moment awareness, noticing sensations, thoughts, and sounds without judgment.

Mantra Meditation: Involves repeating a word or phrase (mantra) to help focus the mind.

Focused Meditation: Concentrating on a single point, such as breath, a candle flame, or a sound.

Loving-Kindness Meditation (Metta): Cultivating feelings of compassion and kindness towards oneself and others.

Benefits

- **Mental:** Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms; improves focus, memory, and emotional regulation.
- **Physical:** Can help with chronic pain, improve sleep, and promote deep relaxation.
- **Emotional:** Increases self-esteem, contentment, and overall well-being.

Getting started

- **Start small:** Begin with just a few minutes daily.
- **Find a comfortable spot:** Sit on a cushion, chair, or even lie down.
- **Focus on breath:** Gently pay attention to the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your body.
- **Notice wandering thoughts:** When your mind wanders (it will!), gently guide your focus back to your anchor.
- **Be non-judgmental:** Don't get frustrated when you get distracted; that noticing is the practice.

