

What Is Mindfulness?

We practice mindfulness in order to realize liberation, peace, and joy in our everyday lives. Liberation and happiness are linked to each other; if there is liberation, there is happiness, and greater liberation brings greater happiness. If there is liberation, peace and joy exist in the present moment. We don't need to wait ten or fifteen years to realize them. They're available as soon as we begin the practice. However modest these elements may be, they form the basis for greater liberation, peace, and joy in the future.

To practice meditation is to look deeply in order to see into the essence of things. With insight and understanding we can realize liberation, peace, and joy. Our anger, anxiety, and fear are the ropes that bind us to suffering. If we want to be liberated from them, we need to observe their nature, which is ignorance, the lack of clear understanding. When we misunderstand a friend, we may become angry at him, and because of that, we may suffer. But when we look deeply into what has happened, we can end the misunderstanding. When we understand the other person and his situation, our suffering will disappear and peace and joy will arise. The first step is awareness of the object, and the second step is looking deeply at the object to shed light on it. Therefore, mindfulness means awareness and it also means looking deeply.

— Thich Nhat Hanh, excerpted from *Transformation and Healing*