



GBS HEALTH & WELLNESS

# *Mindless or Mindful?*

When it comes to movement, there are benefits from both. Mindful movement allows us to check in with our bodies and get moving in a way that helps us lower stress, release stagnant energy and strengthen our mind-body connection. It's a great way to practice self-care by incorporating both mental and physical well-being. Mindless movement refers to incorporating automatic movement into the day. Move naturally by incorporating activities that you don't need to allot separate time for and can conveniently fit into your daily tasks.

Ikarians excel at making mindless movement part of their lifestyle. Rather than planning thirty minutes at the gym for exercise, they consistently move and remain active throughout the day by gardening, yard work and walking to different areas of the village. It is believed that this factor contributes to the high percentage of centenarians, (individuals who live to be 100 or older) making Ikaria, Greece a "blue zone".

Engineering more mindless movement into your life helps you improve sleep, increase productivity and enhance mental health. Consider taking the stairs, walking during your lunch break or increase the number of steps you take daily. Planning more purposeful activities into your day can be as equally rejuvenating. An evening bike ride to visit a neighbor or walking to a nearby park with your family are great places to start. Find activities that you enjoy but also serve a purpose by providing consistent, low intensity movement.

Mindful movement is listening to your body to create awareness. It helps nourish the body by stretching, strengthening and toning, or even just by paying attention and bringing awareness to how our body feels. The main objective of mindful movement is to notice the sensations of the body in motion. Active mindfulness practice brings the mind and body in union which regulates the nervous system. When we stop exercising to make our bodies look a certain way, we can start to enjoy simply moving. Intentional movement or exercise means emphasizing the self-care aspect of a regular movement practice, whether that's Pilates, running, or yoga, and it's possible with a simple mindset shift.

When you prioritize moving with the idea of taking care of yourself, rather than punishing your body, exercise is not only more enjoyable, but calms the nervous system, improves your intuition, and can help heal negative body image.

Bring mindfulness principles to any movement. Most of the research on the benefits of mindful movement examines slower-paced and more intentional movement practices like walking or yoga. However, that doesn't mean you can't bring mindfulness principles to other forms of movement like weightlifting or HIIT routines. When you are doing a certain movement, bring a sense of curiosity and nonjudgmental awareness to the movement. For example, as you are doing a weighted squat, rather than tuning out and gritting your teeth to get through the lift, notice how the squat feels throughout your entire body. No matter how it feels (easy, hard, neutral), suspend your judgment and honor that feeling for what it is today. Not only will this teach you mindfulness skills, but it will also likely help you realize when to push and when to back off, as you will be more tuned into your body's cues.

#### Resource

[Mindful: Getting Started with Mindful Movement](#)

