

# Meditation in VA -Fact Sheet

Integrative Health Coordinating Center-  
VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation

## Definitions

**Meditation** is a defined practice or technique, often arising from a contemplative tradition, that primarily focuses on training attention regulation processes, with the intent of cultivating general mental well-being and/or specific capacities such as concentration, compassion or insight. To differentiate from hypnosis, guided imagery, psychotherapies, the focus is on training attentional processes, rather than specifically targeting a change in mental contents.

**Mindfulness** is an intentional and non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. It is a type of meditation based on the concept of being mindful, or having increased awareness, of the present. It may include formal meditation practices such as focusing on the breath or sensations in the body, and informal practices such as washing the dishes all intended to cultivate awareness of the present moment with a quality of acceptance and kindness.

**Mindfulness Based Interventions** are structured mindfulness classes that include instruction in a sequence of specific mindfulness practices, group discussions, exercises and theory and include:

- Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT)
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)
- Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP)
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE)
- Mindfulness Self-Compassion (MSC)
- VA CALM protocol (Clinician's Guide to Teaching Mindfulness)

## Background and Policy on in VA

Meditation is one of the complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches within the VHA Whole Health System of care included in the Veteran's medical benefits package when deemed clinically necessary by their care team per VHA Directive 1137 – Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health, published in May 2017. Based on literature review these approaches were found to be safe and have sufficient evidence of benefit to be recommended as appropriate components of care for the Veteran population.

## Meditation Safety and Effectiveness

An evidence map for meditation and mindfulness was developed by the U.S Department of Veteran's Affairs Health Services Research & Development. This systematic review provides a visual map of the evidence of Meditation. Conditions with evidence of potentially positive effect include anxiety, depression, psychological distress, pain, quality of life.

[HRSD Research-Evidence Map of Meditation and Mindfulness](#)

## Occupational Guidance

Meditation that is NOT a Mindfulness Based Intervention does NOT need to be offered by a licensed provider.

For those widely recognized meditative practices with a clear certification/credential, the provider must have the outlined certification/credential for that type of meditation (e.g., iRest certification, Transcendental Meditation, etc.)

Note: for other meditative practices with less clearly defined training/credentials, VHA is continuing to develop guidelines.

If licensed or qualified health care professional with appropriate training and scope of practice—can provide meditation for wellbeing OR for treatment, depending on the context.

Mindfulness Based Interventions should be provided by a licensed provider with scope of practice that includes meditation. Must have proper certification/credentials for type of approach (eg. MBSR, MBCT, VA CALM). Since these approaches are delivered by licensed providers they can be provided for well-being OR treatment depending on the context.

## TeleWholeHealth

Meditation and mindfulness-based interventions may be offered through telehealth as a part of the larger TeleWholeHealth initiative.

## Online Resources

Online tools and resources that have been reviewed by the IHCC for meditation can be found here:

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-resources/MobileApps-OnlineTools.asp>

<https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/meditation/default.asp>

Whole Health Library <https://www.wholehealth.wisc.edu/overviews/power-of-the-mind/>

VHA Directive 1137: Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health:

[https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=5401](https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=5401)