

## Karen Abel Jepsen Bio

Karen Abel Jepsen is currently employed at StarkMHAR as the Health & Wellness Manager. She has spent over 20 years in Stark County as a prevention specialist teaching about family violence and substance abuse. Off the clock, you're likely to find her digging in the dirt to make things grow or involved with issues of social justice through her Unitarian Universalist commitments. She joined the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Canton two decades ago after moving to Ohio from Cape Cod. Karen considers herself a student of Mindfulness Meditation and has enjoyed leading workshops on the topic at regional UU retreats over the past several years.

## Benefits of Mindfulness

### Practices for Improving Emotional and Physical Well-Being



It's a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your day while listening to the radio and commuting to work, and then plan your weekend. But in the rush to accomplish necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment—missing out on what you're doing and how you're feeling. Did you notice whether you felt well-rested this morning or that forsythia is in bloom along your route to work?

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment—and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness is now being examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in happiness.

### Ancient roots, modern applications

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The cultivation of mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, but most religions include some type of prayer or meditation technique that helps shift your thoughts away from your usual preoccupations toward an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life.

Practicing mindfulness can bring improvements in both physical and psychological symptoms as well as positive changes in health attitudes and behaviors.

### **Mindfulness improves well being**

- Increasing your capacity for mindfulness supports many attitudes that contribute to a satisfied life.
- Being mindful makes it easier to savor the pleasures in life as they occur, helps you become fully engaged in activities, and creates a greater capacity to deal with adverse events.
- By focusing on the here and now, many people who practice mindfulness find that they are less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets over the past, are less preoccupied with concerns about success and self-esteem, and are better able to form deep connections with others.

### **Mindfulness improves physical health**

Mindfulness techniques help improve physical health in a number of ways:

- help relieve stress
- treat heart disease
- lower blood pressure
- reduce chronic pain
- improve sleep
- alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties

### **Mindfulness improves mental health**

In recent years, psychotherapists have turned to mindfulness meditation as an important element in the treatment of a number of problems, including:

- depression
- substance abuse
- eating disorders
- couples' conflicts
- anxiety disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder

Some experts believe that mindfulness works, in part, by helping people to accept their experiences—including painful emotions—rather than react to them with aversion and avoidance.

It's become increasingly common for mindfulness meditation to be combined with psychotherapy, especially cognitive behavioral therapy.

Source: <https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>