

# Mindfulness can help you work better in the cold and wet

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Mindfulness can be used by people who work in extremely cold and wet environments to tolerate low temperatures better and so carry out tasks that require motor skills more effectively, according to research

published in the *International Journal of Human Factors and Ergonomics*.

Commonly, sudden exposure to [extreme cold](#), particularly in wet conditions or following submersion in water, can lead to a cold-shock response. This affects the person's cardiovascular system, metabolism, and leads to changes in breathing and subsequently hypothermia, which is a serious risk to life. Finding ways to inhibit the cold-shock response could be a lifesaver and so methods for improving cold tolerance and endurance to exposure to [cold water](#) are important for workers who need to spend time in cold, wet environments or underwater.

Mindfulness can be described as the practice of deliberately focusing one's attention on the present moment without evaluation. It is an important component of many spiritual and philosophical approaches to life allowing practitioners. It allows people to concentrate on a particular experience or task in a positive way avoiding the distractions of their natural emotional responses and thought processes that normally arise in a given situation and which can interfere with the experience or task in negative ways. Mindfulness is not just another word for meditation rather it is an approach to focus and concentration that can help people cope or work better in many situations. It can also allow them to enjoy and appreciate their life's experiences in a clearer way than if they do not focus on the given situation. There is growing [clinical evidence](#) that [mindfulness](#) can have physical and mental health benefits.

Kaitlin Mugford Heather Barry, Michael King, and Heather Carnahan of Memorial University in St. John's NL, Canada, and Gal Ziv of The Academic College at Wingate, Netanya, Israel, investigated whether listening to a mindful passage being read could improve a person's motor performance and cold tolerance in a low-temperature environment. Cold exposure for the participants involved holding their hand in water at a temperature of 2 degrees Celsius while they listened to a mindfulness

passage being read. The [control group](#) did not have the reading.

After this training period, the team then tested each group of participants for their ability to ensure a cold exposure. They were also tested with a grooved pegboard and knot untying. Both groups performed similarly in the motor tests. However, members of the mindfulness group were able to tolerate exposure to cold much longer than the other participants.

**More information:** Kaitlin Mugford et al, The effects of mindfulness and repeated cold exposure on cold tolerance and motor skill performance, *International Journal of Human Factors and Ergonomics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHFE.2021.119051](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJHFE.2021.119051)

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