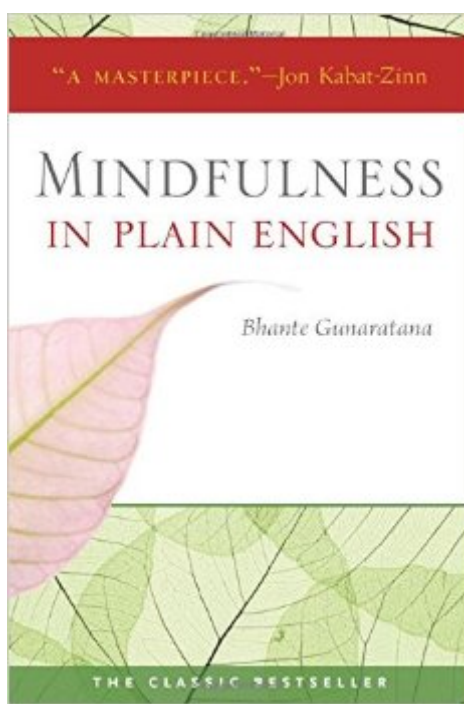


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# Mindfulness In Plain English



## Synopsis

With over a quarter of a million copies sold, *Mindfulness in Plain English* is one of the most influential books in the burgeoning field of mindfulness and a timeless classic introduction to meditation. This is a book that people read, love, and share - a book that people talk about, write about, reflect on, and return to over and over again. Bhante Gunaratana is also the author of *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*, *Beyond Mindfulness in Plain English*, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English*, and his memoir *Journey to Mindfulness*.

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## Customer Reviews

Ever start reading a really cool looking meditation book only to find that the picture on the cover is the only thing that makes any sense? Have you ever wondered why the author or translator never bothers to tell you what those weird words mean, "Samahadi...", "Vipassana...", "Dukka..." Have you finished a meditation book and understood about half of what was talked about and figured that half is better than none? (a very 'enlightened' but often frustrating outcome especially when these books aren't cheap) This little known book seems to have addressed and solved all those problems and more. It is a book written for people who have no clue how to start meditating and for those who have started, but don't know where to look for the answers to questions that come up during their practice. The best thing about this book is in its title, 'plain English'. It seems to gently lead one by the hand through the mystery and confusion of meditation with a sense of humor and patience rarely given to the subject. I have been meditating for nine years now and have built up a small library of

books on the subject. When friends ask me about meditation I dig around in all the books with great covers and reach for "Mindfulness In Plain English" every time.

Sometimes when I pick up titles on meditation, yoga, or other practices associated with Eastern philosophy, mysticism or religion, I am overcome with the author's inability to say what they mean in language that is useful to the rest of us. My relief was enormous, therefore, when a friend gave me this book by Venerable Henepola Gunaratana! This book is exactly what the title implies...easy to read and understand because it is not written in mystic hokum, rather it is written in plain English. The result is a manual for the beginning student of meditation that is sufficient to get you well on your way to benefitting from the practice of Insight Meditation. In "Mindfulness" you will gain an understanding of what mindfulness is, how to cultivate it both during sitting practice and the rest of the time, tips on how to sit and how to overcome some of the most common distractions (including your feet going to sleep and your back hurting), and what to look for and what to avoid. I have not been practicing meditation for long, and this book was of enormous value in helping me identify the things I was doing that served as barriers to effective insight meditation, as well as giving me ideas on how to enhance the effectiveness of my meditation. This is an extremely practical book for the western practitioner. It draws heavily upon the Buddhist paradigm, but the techniques for effective meditation cross all sect boundaries, and the beginning practitioner of any faith will find this book of enormous benefit. I would strongly encourage the reader to supplement this book with "The Miracle of Mindfulness" by Thich Nhat Hahn. The two together are a delightfully easy to read but complete and well rounded introduction to the practices of Insight Meditation. If you want to know how but don't want to hire a Yogi to translate, this book is the place to start.

Mindfulness is not an easy concept to explain in words yet H. Gunaratana does a nice job of doing just that. First and foremost, this book is a beginner's guide to the practice of Vipassana (or Insight) meditation. Having its roots in the Gutama Buddha's life over 2500 years ago, Vipassana meditation is a skill that takes only a short while to learn but a lifetime of dedication to master. The introduction gives a brief look at the roots of the practice and tells the reader that meditation is intrinsically experiential so the best way to get started is to just sit and try it. In the following chapters, Gunaratana helps the reader to understand exactly what meditation is and what it isn't. From there he goes into more detailed instructions as to what your mind and body should be doing while you meditate. This is accompanied with useful tips on dealing with problems that may arise in your practice, including the 5 major hindrances that nearly all meditators face. The book wraps up

with a more in depth look at exactly what "mindfulness" is and how to "take it from the cushion" and integrate it into our daily lives. I found this book very easy to read and understand and feel it would be an excellent guide for people just getting into Buddhism and meditation. Already being the owner of a collection of books on Buddhism, this book didn't offer any new revelations but I was extremely pleased with the sections on mindfulness and have already used some of the author's suggestions on integrating it into daily life. The main reason I did not give the book 5 stars is because it offers much more for the new reader than it does for one with more experience. If you buy this book and still feel like you could use more detailed instructions on meditation, I recommend you also purchase "Change Your Mind: A Practical Guide to Buddhist Meditation" by Paramananda (ISBN: 0904766810).

I love this book. It is straightforward, thorough, and easy to read. I don't know who Gunaratana is, but he does a great job with this book. Even the layout of the book is clean and simple and pleasant. If you are interested in vipassana or mindfulness meditation, or even zazen, this book is worth reading. It tells you how to do this kind of meditation, and what to do with the problems that come up. It is a practical handbook and it's also fun to read. I'm the author of the book, Self-Help Stuff That Works, and I can tell you with some authority that the techniques Gunaratana describes in this book work, and they are worth applying, even if you don't sit still. You can do your work with mindfulness. You can talk to your child with mindfulness. Anything can be a meditation. Mindfulness in Plain English will show you how. I recommend this book.

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