



PART 3

Read the text below and answer questions 27–40.

MINDFULNESS AND ITS SECULAR APPLICATIONS

A

Mindfulness is commonly defined as paying attention to present-moment experience with openness and without automatic judgement. In contemporary public life, this definition is usually presented as neutral and portable, as if it were a psychological skill detachable from any worldview. Yet historically the practice emerged within contemplative traditions that linked attention training to ethics, community obligations, and a theory of suffering. The modern version therefore raises a philosophical question as well as a clinical one: when a practice is secularised and decontextualised, what is preserved, what is lost, and what new purposes does it begin to serve?

B

Part of mindfulness's rapid diffusion lies in its apparent simplicity. Standard programmes rely on guided exercises, brief home practice, and structured discussion of mental habits such as rumination and emotional avoidance. This makes mindfulness teachable in relatively brief formats across diverse settings, from hospitals to schools to corporate training rooms, without requiring participants to adopt a comprehensive spiritual identity. Advocates emphasise a plausible cognitive mechanism: repeated attentional redirection cultivates metacognitive awareness, allowing participants to perceive thoughts and emotions as passing events rather than objective facts. In classrooms and clinics, this is framed as a pragmatic skill: notice what is happening, then choose a response.

C

Clinical applications are among the most researched, particularly for stress, anxiety, and relapse prevention. In many trials, mindfulness-based approaches are offered alongside other therapies, or as part of broader treatment plans, rather than as a stand-alone cure. Overall, the evidence points to modest average benefits, not dramatic transformations. Outcomes are also variable: results can depend on instructor quality, on how faithfully a protocol is delivered, and on whether participants practise consistently between sessions rather than treating the course as a passive experience. This variability has fuelled methodological disputes about therapeutic efficacy, publication bias, and the temptation to generalise from enthusiastic subgroups to entire populations.

D

In education, mindfulness has been promoted as a remedy for distraction and emotional volatility, promising calmer classrooms and improved self-regulation. Teachers and



administrators often report subjective improvements, but research findings remain mixed, and any benefits can be small. Programmes appear more credible when integrated into broader social-emotional learning rather than delivered as isolated exercises that sit awkwardly beside academic priorities. Even when schools insist the content is secular, practical barriers persist: timetabling constraints, uneven staff training, and parental concerns about religious associations. These frictions reveal a central tension of secularisation: the practice is marketed as universal, yet its reception depends on local culture and institutional trust.

E

Workplaces have embraced mindfulness for reasons that extend beyond wellbeing. In competitive environments, attention becomes a productivity asset, and mindfulness is often sold as a way to reduce burnout while maintaining performance. Critics argue that this can produce a neoliberal critique in which stress is treated as an individual failure of coping rather than an organisational failure of design. In that framing, mindfulness becomes a “stress vaccine”: employees are trained to endure pressure without questioning whether workloads are reasonable. Some organisations respond by pairing mindfulness training with structural changes—greater autonomy, supportive management, and clearer boundaries—acknowledging that individual techniques should not substitute for prevention.

F

Digital delivery has expanded access and accelerated commodification. Apps offer short sessions, reminders, streaks, and personalised recommendations, lowering the barrier to entry for people who cannot attend in person. However, digital products vary widely in quality, and commercial incentives may favour engagement metrics over depth, encouraging frequent clicks rather than sustained practice. Privacy is also a concern, since apps may collect sensitive information about mood, sleep, attention, and daily habits. Even when data are anonymised, the very act of quantifying inner states can reshape the user’s relationship to the practice, nudging mindfulness toward self-tracking rather than self-understanding.

G

A further controversy involves adverse effects and the ethics of promotion. For a minority of participants, intensive practice can increase distress, trigger unwanted memories, or worsen anxiety, especially when undertaken without adequate preparation or support. Responsible programmes therefore emphasise screening, informed consent, instructor competence, and the option to stop. This challenges the reassuring public narrative that mindfulness is harmless for everyone. It also complicates the way mindfulness is



advertised: when a practice is packaged as universally beneficial, the small but real risk of negative outcomes can be minimised, leaving vulnerable participants feeling personally defective if they struggle.

H

The sharpest cultural critique is captured by the term McMindfulness, used by scholars who argue that mindfulness has been stripped of its ethical framework and repurposed as a consumer product. In this view, the practice fits neatly into a market logic: calm is promised without requiring social change, and suffering is reframed as a private problem to be managed efficiently. Defenders reply that adaptation is legitimate if programmes are transparent about aims and limits and do not claim to replace political or institutional reform. A balanced conclusion is therefore pragmatic rather than evangelical: mindfulness can be helpful, but it is not a universal remedy. Its effects depend on context, delivery, and sustained practice, and it works best when supportive environments reduce avoidable stressors. The most credible stance treats mindfulness as one tool among many.

Questions 27–31

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

27 The passage states that mindfulness has been adapted into secular programmes used in a wide range of institutions.

28 Clinical research has shown that mindfulness is more effective for anxiety than for stress.

29 The passage suggests that the benefits of mindfulness are consistently large across different settings.

30 The passage suggests that outcomes in clinical studies can depend on instructor quality and whether participants practise between sessions.

31 The passage indicates that privacy may be a concern because mindfulness apps can collect sensitive information.

Questions 32–36

Select the correct answer.

32 According to the passage, one reason mindfulness programmes spread quickly is that they



- A** were designed primarily for use in medical settings
- B** can be taught in relatively brief formats
- C** produce immediate effects without sustained practice
- D** require little guidance from an instructor

33 What does the writer suggest about evidence for mindfulness in clinical contexts?

- A** It shows strong effects for most participants regardless of symptoms
- B** It is reliable only when mindfulness is used without other therapies
- C** Results are variable and influenced by delivery and continued practice
- D** Findings are too inconsistent to support any clinical use

34 What point is made about mindfulness in schools?

- A** Reported benefits may be limited, and evidence is not uniformly strong
- B** Programmes are most effective when taught as stand-alone exercises
- C** Practical barriers are minimal once a programme is presented as secular
- D** Outcomes are mainly determined by the age of the pupils rather than implementation

35 What concern does the passage raise about digital mindfulness products?

- A** They reduce access because they require in-person attendance
- B** They tend to prioritise depth because commercial incentives are weak
- C** They are generally more effective than teacher-led courses
- D** They differ in quality, and data collection may create privacy risks

36 What does the passage suggest about negative outcomes from mindfulness practice?

- A** They are so common that mindfulness should be avoided in most settings
- B** They may affect a minority of participants, so safeguards are important
- C** They occur mainly when programmes are combined with structural workplace changes
- D** They are limited to people with no prior experience of stress or anxiety

Questions 37–40

Complete the sentences below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

37 Participants learn to view thoughts and emotions as rather than objective facts.

38 In schools, programmes may be more effective when included within broader social-emotional

39 Some scholars criticise a consumer-friendly version of mindfulness as



40 The writer concludes that mindfulness should be treated as one tool among

Answer Key

27. TRUE

28. NOT GIVEN

29. FALSE

30. TRUE

31. TRUE

32. B

33. C

34. A

35. D

36. B

37. events

38. learning

39. McMindfulness

40. many