

# I Was A Skeptic Of Mindfulness ... Until I Tried To Make My Case

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Sometime around, oh, my 60th panic attack last year,<sup>1</sup> I figured it was time to see a therapist. On top of weekly cognitive-behavioral therapy, she mentioned that I should really try this mindfulness thing people keep talking about. It sounded simple — you sit, you concentrate on your breathing, and you try to find some solace in the modern world. My therapist told me that meditation could make me feel better and that it had been shown to change the physiology of the brain.

*Hmmmm*, I thought.

Skepticism is a FiveThirtyEight staffer's currency. The only mantras we chant around the office are: Wait for the evidence; wonder if the evidence has something wrong with it; trust the good evidence only until better evidence comes along.<sup>2</sup> I was especially distrustful because mindfulness and meditation have been having a moment — meditation apps [occupy some of the top spots](#) on the App Store's rankings of most popular health and fitness apps; Anderson Cooper has profiled [the merits of mindfulness on "60 Minutes"](#); mindfulness is [being used in schools](#) as a way to help manage classrooms. Given the hype and this publication's [natural aversion to health trends](#), I figured I was safe disregarding my therapist's big claims.