

When we practice mindfulness we enter a “meta” state, meaning we pay attention to the way we pay attention. Below are five types of attention we might notice we are using during sitting meditation or during any moment of the day. Other types of attention not listed here include playful, serious, trusting, distrusting, focused and unfocused.

Judgmental – This type of attention involves making judgments about what enters your awareness. For example, if you hear a truck drive by during your sitting meditation you might be dissatisfied with the sound and prefer it not be part of your experience. As another example, if you notice a thought about a task you need to complete, you might be dissatisfied with the thought and prefer you were not thinking it. Instead it is best to be neutral towards stimuli, thoughts and emotions.

Non-judgmental – This type of attention involves being neither dissatisfied nor overly satisfied about what enters your awareness. For example, if you become conscious of a dog barking outdoors or a thought about an argument, you acknowledge these stimuli with neutrality. If you do notice dissatisfaction, you might say, *I'm noticing I am dissatisfied with my thought, that's interesting.*

Equanimous (Equanimity) – This type of attention is defined as mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper. This non-emotional attention is sometimes helpful and sometimes not. In some circumstances it can be healing to lean into your emotions and surrender to your physical response, such as tears or physical collapse. In other situations, it is helpful to be even and calm.

Emotional – This type of attention involves experiencing stimuli through the lens of an emotion such as joy, anger, or sadness. For example, you might feel a physical ache during your sitting meditation while you are angry about something else. Due to your emotional state, you become angry about the ache. If you notice you are paying attention with emotional attention, it is best to name the emotion and notice where and how the emotion feels in your body. It is also best to use TSD emotional mapping to become aware of the root of your emotion and move into healing.

Curious – This type of attention involves being inquisitive about of an aspect of your experience. You might be curious about a sound and ask, *What is the rhythm of this sound, what is the pitch and what is the texture?* Or you might be curious about an emotion and ask, *Where do I feel this emotion in my body? What are the deeper emotions behind this emotion?* Or you might be curious about a physical sensation in your gut area and ask, *Is this gut trigger instigating any thoughts?*

Task-oriented – This type of attention prioritizes task completion over inquiry or stillness. For example, you might become irritated with yourself for your lack of focus because you hope to complete your meditation “correctly”. Or you might place pressure on yourself to move through your mindfulness practice so you can experience a positive result. Instead, it is best to be gentle and forgiving with yourself, even when you struggle to focus. And it is best to not have a goal in mind aside from becoming aware of (a) losing and gaining attention, (b) emotions & thoughts that come up about your practice, and (c) other stimuli such as physical sensations and sounds.