We're trying to fit so much into our lives these days: our friends' Instagram posts, the latest Netflix must-see, all of Oprah's book club picks. Is taking the time to be mindful worth your time, too?

Because mindful meditation—the practice of spending quiet time in thought—can improve your health, both mental and physical, we're saying yes. Here are 8 reasons, shown in scientific studies, on why meditation is important:

Benefit #1: It may lessen anxiety and depression.

A 2014 meta-analysis on the effects of meditation programs in JAMA Internal Medicine found moderate evidence of a lessening of anxiety and depression in clinical trials involving 3,515 participants. According to Jeffrey B. Rubin, PhD, a psychotherapist, meditation teacher, and author of The Art of Flourishing: A Guide to Mindfulness, Self-Care, and Love in a Chaotic World, meditation provides heightened affect tolerance, which he explains as "a greater capacity to live with and through a fuller range of feelings without judging them, internalizing them, or projecting them onto other people." In other words, it gives you more equanimity, or an even-mindedness both during and outside of meditation.
Benefit #2: It may reduce your blood pressure, especially if it’s too high already.

One type of meditation, transcendental, was found to lower blood pressure for participants in a 2009 study, particularly those at risk of developing high blood pressure. The findings were published in the American Journal of Hypertension. Because of this study and others, the American Heart Association released a scientific statement in 2013 saying that meditation modestly lowers blood pressure.

Benefit #3: It improves your focus and concentration.

Mindful meditation changes “the way you experience your moment-to-moment life,” says Amishi Jha, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Miami who studies the effects of meditation on high-stress populations. Because of its positive effect on attention, she speculates that meditation may make it easier to stick to diet and exercise goals. “To track, you have to notice what’s happening and then actually log what you’re doing. Doing that for a long period of time could actually deplete your attention because you’re taxing it. Mindfulness practices may bolster it and help keep it strong so you can stay better on track.”

Benefit #4: It may minimize the disruption stress causes in your life.

Mindfulness practices may give you the extra dose of resilience you need to get through a rough patch. Jha’s research on meditation involves people with defined periods of stress, such as students or military members. Because the rest of us don’t always know when we’re going to face a high-stress situation, she says daily meditation is essential. “If we do it regularly,” Jha says, “we’re best prepared for anything that comes our way.”

Benefit #5: It could help you feel less pain.

In a 2016 study published in the Journal of Neuroscience, researchers found that meditation can help mitigate pain, and interestingly, that it uses a mechanism that is separate from the natural opiates in the body. While that study involved simulated pain with healthy volunteers in a laboratory, other researchers have studied the effect of meditation in real patients with specific pain-causing conditions. A 2016 study published in JAMA of patients with chronic lower-back pain indicated that meditation may lead to greater improvement than with usual care. Yet another, smaller study in 2014 published in the journal Headache found that meditation may reduce the length and severity of migraines.

Benefit #6: It could help you bounce back more quickly from a slip-up.

Bumps in the road are inevitable no matter what your life or wellness goals are. Mindfulness practice can lessen how hard you are on yourself when you hit one. Bringing patience and self-compassion to your efforts, Rubin says, will allow you to move on from the lapse and get back on track.

Benefit #7: It might make you a better partner.

It was this benefit, Jha says, that drew her to meditation—first as a personal pursuit, then as a research subject. Around the time Jha attained her first faculty position, she had a husband and two-year-old, and was pregnant with her second child. Understandably, she was under tremendous stress. Jha tried meditation to help her succeed both as a family member and in her career, and it made a world of difference. She suggests that because meditation improves attention in general, in the context of a marriage or relationship, it can improve attention to your partner.

Benefit #8: Finally, the time commitment is relatively small.

“The more you do, the more you benefit, but even as little as 12 minutes a day can help,” according to Jha.