

## Mindfulness in Everyday Life

*If you let cloudy water settle, it will become clear. If you let your upset mind settle, your course will also become clear.* Jack Kornfield

Mindfulness is a form of self-awareness training to reduce stress, pain, anxiety and depression. It is defined as a state of being in the present, observing, being aware, accepting things for what they are, i.e. non-judgmentally.

We all have the natural ability to be mindful; that is to pay attention in the here and now, allowing us to disengage from unhelpful thinking and to have a clear mind. It makes it possible for us to respond rather than react to situations, explore different perspectives and thus improving our decision-making and potential for physical and mental relaxation.

No matter how stressful or chaotic our day is, whether we are standing in the kitchen or sitting at our desks or waiting in line, we have the opportunity to choose to pause, to become present, to be aware.

As we become aware in the moment we can choose to be kinder to ourselves and others, we can choose to relax and slow down, to refocus, to gain more perspective even it is only for a minute or two.

### Here are some practices in mindfulness you can use anywhere

#### One Minute Exercise

Focus your entire attention on your breathing for one minute, following the breath as you breathe in: air enters at your nostril, then chest and belly expanding and contracting as you breathe out and air leaves at your nostril. Just being aware of this breath... one breath at the time. If your mind wanders, that is very normal, just gently bring it back to the awareness of the breath. Being conscious, present rather than being on auto-pilot.

#### Mindful Eating

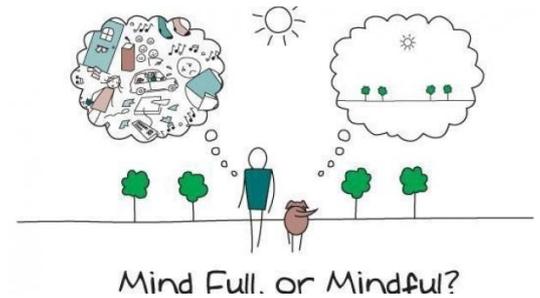
This involves sitting down at a table and eating a meal without doing any other activities - no phone, music, or talking. The aim is to eat a meal while engaging with your five senses. That is using your senses such as smell, sight, touch, hearing, taste while you eat your meal. That is selecting a piece of food and noticing how it looks, smells, how you cut the food, the muscles you use to raise it to your mouth, the texture, the sound and taste of the food as you chew it slowly, being aware of when you swallow and so on. The food tastes much more when we take the time to appreciate it. We feel more satisfied when we eat slowly and mindfully. In this way, we feel the need to eat less. It is also very good for digestion.

#### Mindful Walking

Beginning walking with the intention to be aware, to notice the movement and sensations in your foot, leg and whole body. Making a step forward noticing the muscles involved and the change in balance while you move from one foot to the other. With each step become aware of the sensations under your feet, sensing the ground under your foot, these sensations becoming your anchor. That is bringing your mind again and again to the sensations under your feet as you are walking along. If your mind wanders and it will just become aware that your mind has wandered, congratulate yourself for noticing and bring your attention back again to the sensations under your feet. If you wish also observe what is around you as you walk, staying in the here and now. Let your thoughts come and go, just look at the sky, the sights, other people, feel the breeze, the temperature on your skin; enjoy the moment and then come back to the awareness of your feet touching the ground with each step, one step at the time, over and over again. Bringing your mind back in the present very gently when it wanders. Finishing with some loving kindness wishes for your self and others, being grateful for the mindful moments.

#### Un-stressing Exercise

Bring yourself intentionally into the present by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture, pausing



and breathing out a long exhale. Notice the next breath.

Then ask yourself: "What is going on with me at the moment?" Notice the thoughts, the feelings and the sensations in your body. You simply observe whatever happens as it is. Label any thoughts or feelings that you have without holding on to them, postponing judgments.

Attend to your breathing

Notice your surroundings, engaging with your senses of hearing, sight, smell, touch asking

If you find yourself constantly judging, overthinking, rather than labelling, return to the neutral, observe your breathing.

When you ruminate over painful events or worry about the future unduly, see if you can come back to the experience of this moment; what do you see, hear, smell, feel on your body, sensing your feet touching the ground, being aware of your breath asking yourself: "what is the task at hand?" Returning that what is important in your life. Being grateful for the good in your life. Appreciating others and yourself.

You can label the feelings such as "this is sadness", "this is anger", letting the feeling come and go.

Intrusive thoughts, memories and feelings will gradually decrease in intensity and frequency as you engage with them less.

Over time it will become easier for you to be aware that you are more than your experience, thoughts or feelings and that you are not defined by them.

### **Short Calming Breathing Exercise**

When overwhelmed or stressed remember to just breathe out one long exhale as a way to quickly reduce the stress reaction.

Paying attention to each breath in and out, belly breathing and breathing out longer than you are breathing in for a few breaths. The breath helps us to ground us in the present and helps us to move into a state of awareness and calmness.

Practice of calming, soothing belly breathing, by placing hands over the belly and noticing belly rising as you are breathing in and belly contracting as you are breathing out.... Pacing the breath: counting 4-5 as you are breathing in, holding the breath gently to the count of 2 and then exhale to the count of 7. Doing this for 3 breaths or so and then breathing at your own pace, noticing how the belly rises and fall with each breath...

You can listen to our free mindfulness audio on

<https://www.bloomfieldpsychology.com.au/resources/free-mindfulness-meditations>

and

<https://www.mindfulpath.com.au/free-resources/meditations/>

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