

STOP: take a short mindfulness practice. By stopping often throughout our day we can become more present, living one moment at the time avoiding knee-jerk reactions. STOP (acronym) is a key practice in mindfulness to enable us to re-focus on what we are doing in the moment, to break out of auto-pilot, to re-energise and widen our perspectives. We can live our days more consciously in directing our thinking and actions to what is important in our lives, doing what works, moment by moment. We can become the observer to what is really happening rather than what we think is happening. The STOP practice can change our day a moment at the time, rewiring our brain for more well-being, resilience and positive relationships. The following mindfulness practice is a modified practice presented by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein in *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*(1998).



STOP.

Take a breath, breathing out, long exhale then take one moment to be aware of the breath and feel your feet touch the ground.

Observe your surroundings through your senses, what do you see, hear, taste or smell? How does your body feel? Tight? Loose? Observe your mind: is it busy or calm? What are you thinking about? What is the inner self-talks or stories you are telling yourself? How do you feel now?

Proceed to what is most important right now, being aware of your intention, doing what works. Maybe also thinking about how can I make this moment happier with gratitude or savouring.

This practice can take a moment or a few minutes. Sprinkle this practice throughout your day; on the hour, or before meals or in between tasks or as you walk from one room to another. This is a practice of being aware, or falling awake one moment at the time, to be in the here and now, observing, in an accepting, non-judgmental way for a moment and directing your attention intentionally.

When you notice a moment of stress, struggle or suffering, remind yourselves that life is made of difficult moments as well as joyful moments. See if you can bring a little more perspective and kindness to yourself in that moment. You are like other human beings: happy at times and struggling at other times. Remembering that you are not alone to feel this way, recalling your common humanity and then asking yourself: how can I talk to myself as a friend now?

Let's start now with the practice.

Stop! You can keep your eyes open or close them, starting to pay attention now.

Taking a breath out, observing how you are breathing now? Are you breathing in the upper chest or is it belly/diaphragm breathing? Becoming aware of your breath?

Observe, pay attention to your surroundings: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching.

First become aware of your body: is it tense or at ease? Not to judge anything as right or wrong, good or bad, simply noticing, being aware, accepting what is for a moment, experiencing life directly.

Secondly, explore what is in your mind: What are you thinking? What is the story I am telling myself? Is it helpful? Thirdly, how are you feeling? Frustrated, stressed, annoyed, bored, excited, curious, focus... just observing being aware of yourself in this moment. Is there a sense of confusion, rush, dissatisfaction, seeking or a sense of clarity, calm, peace, contentment?

Fourthly, you can ask yourself: "what is most important for me right now? What is my core value here? What is my intention? What would work right now?" or "how can I make this moment happier with appreciation, gratitude and savouring? And how can I attend to myself now as a good friend?"

For more informal mindfulness audio practices visit:

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

Here are some good books on mindfulness:

A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook by Stahl B. and Goldstein E.,

Finding peace in a frantic world by Williams and Penman

Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook by Kristin Neff and Chris Germer

-This handout was written by Marie Bloomfield, Clinical Psychologist, M. Psychol., MAPS. July 2019.

Website: www.bloomfieldpsychology.com.au Or www.mindfulpath.com.au

For more information please email marie@bloomfieldpsychology.com.au