

Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose in the present moment, nonjudgmentally with kindness and curiosity. The mind has difficulty paying attention and has been likened to a monkey that swings from branch to branch - feeding on sorrow, regret and guilt of the past and dreams, expectations and anxieties of the future. Trying to keep this monkey mind in the present moment is a challenge that needs practice.

What are the benefits of mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a secular practice has been shown to help manage stress, anxiety, low mood, sleep difficulties, chronic pain and chronic health problems. It is life-enhancing and improves well-being. There is vast amount of good quality evidence to support this practice.

What causes stress?

Stress is the imbalance between demands placed on us and our ability to meet them. It is reinforced by our patterns of thinking. When we are stressed, we tend to react and this reactive thinking increases our stress rather than reduces it.

How does mindfulness help reduce stress and other problems?

Mindfulness helps develop present moment awareness which reduces mind wandering (into the past and the future) and the endless thoughts that can fuel and worsen the feeling of stress, anxiety, low mood, sleep problems and chronic pain. Through mindfulness, you can separate yourself from your thoughts and watch them come and go without getting entangled in the story line. It helps us respond rather than react to stressful situations.

How can I cultivate mindfulness?

Mindfulness can be cultivated through meditation practices which help to bring awareness to the breath and the body. Meditation is a skill that needs practising. The continuity and regularity of the practice is extremely important. You can incorporate mindfulness in your daily life by noticing small things and staying present.

With continued practice you will begin to notice the patterns of your mind, your stress reactivity and constant judgements. You will also find that turning to face and acknowledge difficulties is in the long run the most effective way to reduce unhappiness. You can develop a sense of calmness, peace and compassion towards yourself and others.

You can learn more about mindfulness with the help of following resources and others which you may find -

Introductory / Drop in classes and /or an 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course:

You may find information about these locally or by searching online

Online courses:

Bemindfulonline.com

Apps:

Headspace

Calm

Insight timer(free)

Meditations:

Audio tracks on the Bangor University Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice website(<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en>).

Self-help books:

Hennessey G. The Little Mindfulness Workbook: Everyday techniques to help you combat stress and enhance your life, Crimson, 2016

Williams M, Penman D. Mindfulness: A Practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world, London, 2011

Mindfulness for dummies: Shamash Alidina: Publisher: John Wiley & Sons; 2nd Edition; Dec 2014

Websites:

Mindfulnet.org

Actionforhappiness.org