

Mindfulness

A component of Ancient Buddhist Meditation Practice

Mindfulness skills can improve:

- Deep emotional problems
- depression
- anxiety
- bipolar disorder
- chronic pain
- grief.

Observing your mind without judgement

- Pure Curiosity: unattached to any preconceived notions
- Consider becoming the scientist that discovers your own mind.

Exercise:

1. Close eyes and imagine a clearing in a field.
2. When a thought comes, notice it. Do not judge it, criticize it or try to change it.
3. It is likely in the beginning that you will follow the thought and forget about the clearing altogether.
4. That OK. When you realize it, just gently turn your attention back to the clearing. Your only task is to observe without judgement.

Present Moment Escapes

- Memories and imagination are wonderful human abilities
- However, sometime they pull us from the present moment and send us time traveling.
- Anxiety: the fight or flight response that makes you sweat, shake and pant many times is a reaction to a 'perceived' threat in the mind.
- These thoughts, we can call 'imaginary lions' in the field and are usually a sign that you are time traveling.
- Daily 'imaginary lions' can leave you stressed to the point of exhaustion. Your body experiences every one of those thought as a threat: DANGER
- Notice that in reality, your life is not in immediate danger and even perhaps, you are physically comfortable.
- Time to breathe...and acknowledge that you are in fact safe and all is well.

Practicing Mindfulness

- STOP Time Traveling
- Connect with the present moment
- PRACTICE: Present Moment Awareness and Decrease Stress

Imagine the Space Five minutes only

1. Sit quietly in a room with no distractions
2. Examine the space in this room.
3. Focus on space: above, under, over, in between cracks, the flow of space
4. Focus on the space around your body and within your body. The air flowing in and out of your body. The connections between spaces in the room and to your body.
5. Feeling this connection will help you feel grounded and remain present.

Practicing Mindfulness II

- **Study an Object**

1. Choose any object and examine it as if you have never seen it before.
2. Utilize all your senses and observe the limitations of one sense compared to another.

- **Count the Sounds** (five minutes)

1. Sitting in a chair, close your eyes and pay attention to the sounds and count each sound that you hear. If your mind wanders, just bring it back to this moment without judgement.

This practice is NOT about never getting distracted by your thoughts. It's about bringing your attention back once distraction occurs.

Practicing Mindfulness III

- **Be Focused and Fascinated**

1. Notice commonplace activities as if for the first time and experience the present moment.

Take a shower: Notice the temperature, the pressure, the splashing sounds

Wash the Dishes: One dish at a time. Notice the stance of your body. Everything

Work in the Garden: Feel the soil in your hands. Texture , temperature, wetness.

- **Be in Your Body** (five minutes only)

“The body has a gift of mindfulness because it is incapable of time travel.”

1. Notice all your body parts, your breathing , calmness, tension, energy temperature, balance, gravity. Notice all of you.

2. Experiencing your body will help you return to the moment and add a sense of calm to your day.

Mindfulness Breathing

- The breath of life is restorative
- Breathing in and out through the diaphragm and NOT the chest
- If you are frequently stressed or anxious, it's likely that you are breathing through your chest: breathing is shallow and thin limiting the power and healing of breath.
- Sitting in a chair, place one hand on your heart and the other on your belly.
Breathe 'slow and low': the air oozes in through your nose and down low into your belly. Start one minute daily until OK with five minutes.
- When you feel stressed or anxious check your breathing. Chances are you have automatically responded with chest breathing.

Radical Acceptance

- Concept borrowed from Zen Buddhism
- Skills: Not judging others, yourself, your feelings or any part of your present moment **‘It is what it is’**: practice first when not feeling intense anger or frustration..... just minor irritations
- Ability to tolerate ‘what is’ in a kind and sympathetic way.
- Pause during moments of agitation and accept current situation as being ‘just what it needs to be’.... To accept and endure
- Regular practice can teach us to accept minor frustrations of daily life and can also help us to accept painful losses.
- Accept experience as part of life’s journey, not one to be judged or struggled against but simply as another experience to walk through with serenity and grace.

Exercise: IT IS WHAT IT IS

- It may not be what I would choose, but **This is what it is.**
- I can tolerate what is.
- I will accept that this situation is exactly as it needs to be even if I don't understand the purpose or the meaning of it.
- Practice this when feeling a rush of strong emotions.
- This exercise teaches you to catch yourself before you automatically race down a path that is hot with emotion.
- It is nonsense to deny, to battle or argue with 'the present moment'.
- Something inside us decides that to push against what is , to decide that there is something wrong with the present moment and that we have to change it.
- We will exert energy to the point of exhaustion just to be right.
- We can leave the situation, change the situation or accept the situation:

Serenity Prayer