

MINDFULNESS

Learning to live the moment

Instructions:

Review this handout. Then, answer the reflection questions that follow.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a state of mind in which you are fully present in the moment and not thinking about other issues in your life. It is being fully aware of what is occurring right-here right-now in a nonjudgmental way. Mindfulness allows you to clear your mind of distractions and clutter while increasing clarity and focus. It can help you pay full attention to experiences, surroundings, or the task at hand even when experiencing difficult emotions such as anxiety, fear, and frustration. So learn, practice, and apply this skill and enjoy the journey of living the moment!

Mindful of your breath:

- Slow down. Then stop for a moment.
- Sit, get comfortable, close your eyes (or keep a soft gaze), and become aware of your breathing.
- Let go of everything, focus your full attention on your breathing in this very moment, and accept this moment just as it is.
- Don't try to change or alter your breathing, but instead just follow your breath into and out of your body as you inhale and exhale. Notice the sensations in your body, the temperature of the air, and the movement through your nose, throat, stomach, and into your chest. Notice how your body shifts in your clothes and on the chair as you breathe.
- Spend a few minutes focusing your attention on the full experience of breathing. Immerse yourself completely in this experience.
- For several minutes, don't try to change anything, just let go and breathe. Breathe and be still. Give yourself permission to allow these moments to be as they are. Just let go and fully accept the present moment.

[Variation]. Take five minutes, close your eyes, and breathe

Mindful of sounds:

- Slow down. Then stop for a moment.
- Sit, get comfortable, close your eyes (or keep a soft gaze), and shift your awareness to your ears. Become aware of and open to all sounds in your environment.
- Practice simply being open to all sounds where ever they arise. Do not go searching for sounds or holding on to the experience of certain sounds. Instead, just practice having an expansive awareness of all the sounds around you – sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, sounds that are soft, and sounds that are loud.
- Anytime that you notice that you are getting distracted by a thought, which is completely normal, gently bring your attention back to the sounds in your environment.

Adapted from: Goleman, D. (2013). *Cultivating focus: Techniques for excellence* [CD]. New York, NY: More Than Sound. & Tull, M. (2016). Mindfulness Exercises. Retrieved from <http://ptsd.about.com/od/selfhelp/tp/mindfulexercises.htm>

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[Variation]. Walk outside, close your eyes, and listen to the sounds of nature

Mindful of thoughts:

- Slow down. Then stop for a moment.
- Sit, get comfortable, close your eyes (or keep a soft gaze), and shift your attention to your thoughts. Bring awareness to whatever thoughts enter your mind.
- Try to view your thoughts as simply thoughts -- only objects in your mind. It may be useful to imagine your thoughts as simply clouds passing through the sky, leaves passing down a stream, or bubbles drifting away. Notice thoughts enter your consciousness and then float away.
- There is no need to seek out, hold onto, or follow your thoughts. Just let them arise and disappear on their own.
- Let your thoughts just come and go. Don't judge them, strive to change them, link them to any emotions, or look for new ones.
- Just be. Be here now; fully and totally in this very moment.
- Anytime that you notice that you are getting immersed in a thought (this is completely normal), just gently bring your attention back to having awareness of your thoughts.

Mindful eating:

- Choose a time and place for eating that promotes mindful eating. Try eating in a quiet, distraction-free environment. This means no eating in front of the television, computer, or device.
- Before you begin eating, look down at your food. Take in what it looks like, how it smells, and think about where it came from. See if you can notice the urge to eat (e.g., your mouth watering, the feeling of hunger), before you take a bite.
- Put a bite in your mouth. Notice textures, how the food feels in your mouth, and what it tastes like. Before you swallow, notice the things that happen in your mouth when you put food in. Notice how you salivate, notice the urge to swallow, notice the sensation of chewing.
- As you swallow your food, notice what that feels like. How does your stomach feel now that it is one bite fuller?
- Savor the moment. Savor your meal.
- Repeat your mindful eating for each bite until your meal is finished. Try to decide when the meal is finished based on the sensations in your body (e.g., the feeling of fullness in your belly, no more sensation of hunger) rather than on whether your plate is clean.

Mindful of this moment:

- Take a moment each day to stop what you are doing and pay attention to this very moment. Notice your surroundings like you have perhaps never seen them before; free

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your mind of clutter, judgment, and the desire to change anything. Simply let go, accept, and observe. Bring your total awareness to this experience; right here, right now.

[Variation] Wherever you are, look around with fresh eyes and a beginner's mind, even if it is a place you know well. Keep looking until you discover something you haven't noticed before.

[Variation]. Stop a moment to simply observe several things you can SEE, TOUCH, HEAR, SMELL, and even TASTE.

[Variation] Pick out an object and focus your attention on it for several minutes. Immerse yourself completely in that object as you look at it as if for the first time. Notice color, texture, scent, weight, temperature...

Don't get caught up right way in having a special experience or in making huge progress. You will slowly notice a difference in your awareness over time.

Reflection questions:

1. How might your life be improved if you become more mindful? _____
2. In what specific situations do you think mindfulness could be helpful to you? _____

3. Given what you have read here, what is one mindfulness strategy you are willing to practice regularly? _____



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