ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is about observation without criticism; being compassionate with yourself. When unhappiness or stress hover overhead, rather than taking it all personally, you learn to treat them as if they were black clouds in the sky, and to observe them with friendly curiosity as they drift past. In essence, mindfulness allows you to catch negative thought patterns before they tip you into a downward spiral. It begins the process of putting you back in control of your life.”


To summarize, mindfulness practice involves paying attention to the present moment by using simple meditation and breathing techniques that enable awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations so that you can learn how to respond wisely to things happening to you rather than just acting blindly.

What are the benefits of practicing mindfulness?

- Reduction of anxiety level, stress level, depression level and exhaustion.
- Improves working memory, creativity, attention span and reaction speeds.
- Enhanced brain function.
- Improves the immune system, heart and circulatory health.
- Improves sleep quality.
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How does mindfulness work?
Our brain is constantly growing and developing to adapt in everyday experiences, not just life changing ones. Mindfulness exercises brings positive changes to different brain regions that are related to memory, emotion regulation and cognition through awareness. Through practicing mindfulness techniques regularly, we can train the brain to change unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviours to respond to events rather than reacting to it.

To understand the neuroscience behind mindfulness, click and watch the videos below:

![Mindfulness Video](image1)
![Mind the Bump Video](image2)

How to practice mindfulness?
There are a few ways to practice mindfulness, some but not all are listed as below.

1) **Meditation**: There are many excellent apps, audio files and videos online that you can use to guide you in your meditation – have a listen to a number as it is important to find the right voice in order for you to relax and feel comfortable listening. Below are some videos of guided meditation that you may use to practice mindfulness.

![5-Minute Meditation Video](image3)
![10 Minute Guided Meditation Video](image4)
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How to practice mindfulness?

2) The Three Minute Breathing Space Technique:

Step 1. Sit in a comfortable position
- Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.
- Try to be aware of what’s going on with you right now.
- Be conscious of your thought and take note of them.
- See if there are any unpleasant thoughts or feelings within you at this present moment without pushing them away.
- Instead, acknowledge their presence and just notice them as they are.

Step 2. Focus on the movement of your breath
- Breathing is helpful to collect our awareness.
- As you breath, pay attention to the movements of your abdomen.
- Notice the rise and fall of your belly as you breath.
- Spend a minute or two on your breathing motion to notice your breath at the present moment. Which is the NOW.

Step 3. Allow your awareness to expand to your entire body
- Bring your attention to your entire body.
- Notice any tightness or sensations of holding in or bracing.
- At this moment, while holding to your awareness, breath in and out for some time.
- When you are ready, you may open your eyes to continue with the rest of your day.

3) Pay attention to everyday activities:- another way to practice mindfulness is to pay attention to everyday activities such as brushing your teeth, doing the washing up or eating. For example, how often do you eat a bar of chocolate or packet of crisps and get almost to the end without feeling satiated, or that you couldn’t remember having eating it all? Paying attention to each mouthful can help not only increase your enjoyment of your food, but also by eating mindfully, you might also find that you are less inclined to ‘mindless’ grazing. You may like to try out “The Chocolate Meditation” as instructed on the next page.
Mindfulness

How to practice mindfulness?

3) Pay attention to everyday activities:

**The Chocolate Meditation**

The chocolate meditation method to mindfulness is one of the most palatable form of meditation and could be used as a start for beginners. Below are the steps on how you could practice mindfulness with one small piece of chocolate.

1. Pick a small piece of chocolate
   - Hold the chocolate on your hand gently

2. Notice the shape, weight and the texture of the chocolate
   - Is it warm, cool, soft or hard?
   - Do you experience any urge to just gobble it up?

3. Smell the chocolate
   - Notice how the chocolaty scent travels up to your nose
   - Sit for a moment to appreciate the aroma

4. Take a small nibble
   - Bring your attention to your mouth
   - Notice the flavours of first chocolate bite

5. Place the rest of the chocolate in your mouth
   - Hold the chocolate in your mouth for as long as possible
   - Enjoy the full flavours and textures of chocolate melting in your mouth

6. When our mind wanders off
   - It is possible in the process to notice your mind wanders off.
   - Simple notice where your minds went, then gently escort it back to the present moment.
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Additional resources on mindfulness

• www.mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk
• www.franticworld.com
• www.bemindful.co.uk

• UoRM Counselling Service: Email: ruok@reading.edu.my or telephone: 0162084012