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Mindfulness Exercises

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is *“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally”* ~John Kabat-Zinn.

Becoming more mindful entails attending to our own inner experience (that is our thoughts and feelings) with full awareness and without judgment. Mentally we take a step back from the endless stream of thoughts that go through our minds (and the associated sensations they produce), to gain a wider perspective of our thinking.

What are the benefits of practicing mindfulness?

Practicing mindfulness strengthens our ability to stop and pause. It also teaches us that a thought is just thought, and that even negative thoughts have no power over us unless we give them power.

In doing so, mindfulness can help us improve our impulse control and provide us with an opportunity to make purposeful decisions about how best to respond to a situation. It also provides us with an opportunity to sever the link between negative thoughts and negative emotions, or to amplify positive emotions that make us feel good.

Below are just a couple of basic mindfulness activities you can experiment with.

Mindful breathing techniques

- Close your eyes and take three slow deep breaths. On each exhale pause and wait until you really need to breathe before taking another breath. Then open your eyes.
- Close your eyes and take three slow deep breaths. On each exhale sigh loudly and empty your lungs. Then open your eyes.

Meditation

Close your eyes. Let your body relax..... Now inhale, then exhale thinking “relax”... inhale, then exhale thinking “relax”..... inhale, then exhale thinking “relax”..... continue.....

Close your eyes. Let your body relax..... Now inhale thinking “rise”, then exhale thinking “fall”... inhale thinking “rise”,, then exhale thinking “fall”..... continue.....

(If you find your mind wandering, very gently bring it back to your breathing and the focus word/s)..... Continue for a few minutes then bring your awareness back to the room. Aim to meditate for a little longer each time you practice.

Creative Visualisation

Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.

Imagine you are down by a river walking along a jetty. Walk slowly around the jetty and notice the colours and textures around you.

Spend some time exploring each of your senses. See the sun setting over the water. Hear the birds singing. Smell the pine trees. Feel the cool water on your bare feet. Taste the fresh, clean air.

Enjoy the feeling of deep relaxation that envelops you as you slowly explore your restful place.

When you are ready open your eyes and come back to the present moment.

Ways to tap into your intuition

- After meditating, write down whatever comes to mind without filtering your thoughts. This is called stream of consciousness writing. At first you may only write down conscious level thoughts, however eventually you may tap into more intuitive thoughts, ideas and insights.
- If you have a decision to make, sit quietly after meditating and tap into what you are experiencing, sensing, hearing, seeing, feeling, etc. about the situation. This may give you insight into which is the best course of action for you to take. (Note: Please don't rely on your intuition alone when making a decision).