

# Mindfulness

## What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state awareness where by you are focusing your attention on the present, being fully aware and accepting of what you are doing and where you are. More specifically, It allows you to be aware of the feelings, thoughts, surrounding environment and bodily sensations without judging them to be negative or positive.

Mindfulness can come in various forms including mindful walking/movement, mindful listening, mindful observation, mindful eating, mindful breathing, mindfulness of thoughts or feelings, etc.

Mindfulness has received increasing attention in clinical and scientific circles. It has been found to have positive effects on both our physical health and psychological wellbeing, including:

- Improves how well people function
- Changes the body physiologically and metabolically
- Enhances relationships and compassion
- Improves the way people cope with challenges
- Enhances enjoyment of life.

## The Health Benefits

- Mental health – e.g. depression relapse prevention, emotion regulation, sleep
- Neuroscience – e.g. structural and functional changes in the brain, generation of new brain cells, dementia prevention
- Clinical – e.g. pain management, symptom control, coping with major illnesses such as cancer
- Improved performance – e.g. sport, academic, leadership
- Spiritual – e.g. deep peace, insight.

## Guided Meditation

### “The Full Stop” - Dr Craig Hassed

Sit in a chair so the body is upright and balanced, as well as relaxed and symmetrical. Allow the eyes to close gently.

Now move the attention gently through each step. Be conscious of the body and its connection with the chair. Feel the feet on the floor. Notice if the feet are tense. If so allow them to relax if they wish. Similarly, be aware of the legs and allow them to relax if they want to. Then gently move up through each part of the body: the stomach, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and face. If tension or discomfort remains, just notice the presence of tension or discomfort without judgment.

Now take in a slow deep breath. Then slowly and gently let the breath out. Repeat this two more times. Then just allow the breathing to settle into its own natural rhythm without having to control it in any way. If you observe a tendency to try and control the breath, just notice that without judgement. Simply be conscious of the breath as the air flows in and out of the nose. If thoughts come to your awareness, allow them to come and go without judgement and let the attention return to the breathing. There is no need to struggle with the activity of the mind, nor even wish it wasn't there. Like “trains of thought”, just let the thoughts come and go.

After a time, let the attention move to the listening. Hear whatever sounds there are to hear without having to analyse the sounds. Once again, if thoughts come, let them pass. If the mind becomes distracted, for example by listening to some mental commentary or chatter, simply notice and return to the sounds as a gently way of returning to the present moment.

At the end of this mindfulness exercise, simply be aware of the body again and then slowly allow the eyes to open. After a few moments, quietly move into whatever activities await you.