

MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS

WayAhead
Mental Health Information Service
Level 5, 80 William St
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011

1300 794 991
info@wayahead.org.au
www.wayahead.org.au

Contents

What is mindfulness?

Why do we use
mindfulness?

How does mindfulness
benefit us?

Practicing Mindfulness

Tips to begin mindfulness
training

Where to learn mindfulness

**“If you want
to conquer
the anxiety
of life,
live in the
moment,
live in the
breath.”**

Amit Ray

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a training of our mind to be fully engaged with whatever we do, and not forgetting it. It can be applied to any activity we participate in through daily life. When we practice mindfulness we are in control of our concentration and are able to block any distractions that interfere with the present. It is used to assist us in becoming more focused and more aware of our present surroundings and thoughts in our mind that may be causing us discomfort, pain, or distraction.

When we use mindfulness correctly we are focusing on the present moment. We don't become caught in the past or future and this enables us to slow our thoughts, relax mentally and physically, be more aware of ourselves and our environment, engage with other people, and to find a sense of wellbeing because we are able to understand and manage what is occurring at the present time. We are experiencing life as it happens.

Why Do We Use Mindfulness?

There is evidence that mindfulness when practiced correctly, is effective in assisting with many problems in our daily lives.

- Relieve stress and anxiety
- Improvement of sleep patterns
- Become happier and calm
- Improve memory
- Assist in managing depression
- Improve overall wellbeing, including circulation, and reducing heart rate
- Assist in solving problems

How Does Mindfulness Benefit Us

When we are focused on our current surroundings we find that we will worry less because we are not thinking of other problems that cause stress or concern. Thinking of past or present situations causes us to remove ourselves from what we are doing at present. We may think of something that occurred already and feel regret or dream of being there again. We may imagine the future and become caught in events that haven't yet happened, worrying about outcomes that may or may not eventuate.

Mindfulness helps us to lose the “if only” or “what if” and to focus on what we are currently involved in, the present.

Mindfulness teaches us to be alert and aware. This in turn reduces our stress by not trying to control things that we’re not able to, past or future. It improves our relationships because we are more engaged with other people by listening and focusing. We are aware of our surroundings and appreciate those things we may have missed by allowing our mind to drift elsewhere. We become happier and content because we are not wishing things to be other than what they currently are.

Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become more popular amongst professionals to treat many illnesses including depression, anxiety, chronic pain, insomnia, and as a part of palliative care. Although there has been a recent interest in using mindfulness as part of psychological treatments, it has been effectively practiced and used for thousands of years in Buddhism, Taoism, other Eastern philosophies, and practices such as yoga.

Mindfulness can be used in daily life and does not have to be practiced only in meditation. It is an ongoing awareness and training that we learn to apply in all activities of life. It can be used as part of a psychological treatment plan but should not be viewed as a cure or sole management option for mental disorders, and should not be substituted for medication.

It is recommended that when you begin a mindfulness practice that you do so with guidance from a trained professional in mindfulness. Many psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors are trained in mindfulness and it is important to make sure that they have studied the proper techniques to apply it and have a good understanding of mindfulness practice.

It must be practiced on a regular basis so that it becomes a comfortable and natural way of thinking. It involves changes of habit and thinking in order to achieve beneficial results. It is recommended that eight consecutive weeks of regular practice be allotted to implement a successful mindfulness practice.

Tips to Begin Mindfulness Training

- Try to spend at least five minutes each day initially to practice mindfulness by sitting quietly and becoming aware of your thoughts and your body.

- You may realise how busy your mind is with thoughts and how difficult it is to slow them down.
- Use a breathing exercise to focus and concentrate and to still your mind. Breathing in and out through your nostrils. Return to the breath each time your mind is distracted by thoughts, sounds, worries.
- Increase your practice to 10 minutes, and so on as you find you are able to concentrate for longer periods.
- Use mindfulness in every activity. Keep your mind focused on what you are doing and nothing else, whether cooking, washing dishes, washing the car, walking or driving. When you notice your mind drifting elsewhere bring it back to the activity at hand.
- Set goals for yourself and be patient. Don't become discouraged or angry with yourself if you find that it is taking longer than you expected, or if some days it is more difficult to concentrate than others.
- Notice the difference in your thinking, your actions and your responses as your practice progresses and you are more familiar with your own thoughts.
- Don't be afraid to discover who you truly are and learn to appreciate and accept yourself. There is always room for change but be patient and kind to yourself as you continue this path of mindfulness.

Where to Learn Mindfulness

- A trained professional can help you to learn and effectively use mindfulness practice
- Meditation courses are a good source to learn and understand how mindfulness works and is applied in daily life.
- Many recordings and websites are dedicated to mindfulness. Research to make sure that you are following a reputable and reliable source. Many are free so it is not necessary to pay for instructions. Downloads are available free of charge through many websites.

Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

WayAhead Mental Health
Information Line

1300 794 991

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Men's Line

1300 789 978

www.mensline.org.au

Kids Helpline (children 5-25 years)

1800 551 800

www.kidshelp.com.au

Useful Websites

ReachOut

http://au.reachout.com/Wellbeing/Mental-Fitness/Relaxation?gclid=CPWK_OC58NACFZcSvQodhYoE4A

Here to Help

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/wellness-vol7/whats-the-buzz-about-mindfulness>

Effects of Mindfulness on
Psychological Health

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3679190/>



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health Information Line through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Free to Australian citizens or permanent residents.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2017

**“ I found people
who understood
exactly what
I was going
through ”**



