



FACT SHEET: What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a form of self awareness training adapted from Buddhist meditation. It is defined as a non judgemental, moment to moment awareness. Kabat Zinn (2004)

Mindfulness is about cultivating our ability to ***pay attention intentionally, without judgement, in the present moment*** and ***sustaining*** this attention over time. It involves staying in the present moment, slowing down your thoughts and reactions.

Mindfulness involves developing a greater awareness and ***ability to consciously choose*** our emotional and physical reactions. Rather than allowing emotions to overwhelm and control you. Thus, it involves cultivating greater self regulation skills.

Mindfulness encourages a person to become more in touch with the current moment and surroundings ***as it is unfolding and evolving*** rather than living on “automatic pilot”. For example, stopping to observe your physical state, breath, where tension is in the body etc.

Being present in the moment means we will develop greater ***compassion and clarity*** – and can give us greater space to ask ourselves “what is truly important here”? By doing this we will get more out of each moment and be less distracted.

Living mindfully means ***remembering*** to bring this kind of attention and openness to our living.

Tools for becoming more Mindful

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Formal mindfulness practice occurs by setting aside time to consciously to do exercise such as the following:

- Paying attention to your posture – what does your posture convey to yourself and others? Right now become aware of your body in the chair, how your shoulders feels, where tension is.
- Body scan exercise - Spending 20 minutes bringing attention to a different part of the body in order to focus awareness on one thing.
- Pay attention to your breath – Notice your breath notice it has a beginning, middle and end, the feel of it on your upper lip, your chest rising and falling.
- MBSR is often run as an 8 week course. See openground.com.au

See: The Mindful Way Workbook, Teasdale, Williams and Segal Guilford Press 2014

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

Other approaches to cultivating self regulation skills have been developed by Linehan (1993). Dialectical Behaviour Therapy model. This approach considers the three states of mind a person experiences (emotion mind, reasonable mind and “wise mind”).

Emotion mind – The feeling side of the brain, autonomic arousal, reactive, emotional, responses.

Reasonable mind– logical, rational, thinking part, planning, getting things done, practical tasks

Wise mind – putting the 2 together, awareness of self in balanced, calm, peaceful way.

DBT covers the following areas:

- Learning to observe oneself and participate fully (“one mindfully”).
- Being engaged in an activity fully eg music, sport, singing, practicing doing one thing at a time, our mind is totally focussed and absorbed in that one activity.
- Learning to be less judgemental about thoughts and reactions eg guilt – notice it as a feeling that will pass and not feel guilty about feeling guilty.
- Learning to tolerate short term pain and suffering rather than trying to change it – accept “what is”, lower expectations and learn to live life as it is in this moment.
- Increasing positive experiences in the short and long term eg setting goals, repairing important relationships, stop avoiding, scheduling pleasant events.
- Boosting ourselves against negative emotions – remember the mind/body link - exercise, eating well and avoiding harmful substances all contribute to a healthy body.

Further information:

- Brantly, J (2003) **Calming Your Anxious Mind: How Mindfulness and Compassion Can Free You From Anxiety, Fear and Panic** Oakland New Harbinger Publications
- Hanh, Thich Nhat (1992) **Touching Peace: Practising the Art of Mindful Living** Parallax Press
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2005) **Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, Pain and Illness**
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2004) **Wherever you Go, There you are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life**
- www.meditation.org.au
- The Mindful Way Workbook, Teasdale, Williams and Segal Guilford Press 2014
- openground.com.au