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Peace in the moment

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What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is being present to what is happening in the moment with non judgmental awareness. It is not analyzing or thinking about what is happening, it is being present with what is happening. Meditation that cultivates *mindfulness* is effective in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and other “negative emotions”. Rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, mindfulness switches the focus to what’s happening right now. It allows us to step out of automatic habitual ways of reacting and offers way to respond rather than react to what is happening. As you learn to be more accepting of what arises with mindfulness, the capacity to accept and be flexible extends into other areas of life.

Some benefits from Mindfulness Practice

- Improves ability to effectively deal with symptoms of stress
- Improves focus and concentration
- Improves ability to think clearly
- Supports making and sustaining healthier lifestyle choices
- Increases resilience to deal with change.

Basic Meditation Instruction

- Find a comfortable place, where you will not be disturbed.
- Sit in a comfortable position with the spine straight but not rigid. As an alternative, you can be lying down, but resist the impulse to fall asleep.
- If comfortable close your eyes or have a soft gaze. Take a few deep breaths and invite the body and mind to come into a relaxed and alert position. Notice your breath as it enters and leaves the body. Inhale and exhale through the nose. You may wish to quietly say to yourself’ breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.” Or simply “In. Out’. The goal is not to think about the breath or to alter it in any way---just to observe it as it is.
- When thoughts arise there is not need to suppress or stop them. Notice they are there, relax and gently bring your attention back to focus on your breath. When you notice your attention has wandered, gently let go of the thought that pulled you away, and bring your attention back to the breath. As one meditation teacher has said, “Thoughts will arise, just don’t take them to tea.”

- The next time you notice that your attention wandered, notice it, relax and let the thought go and gently return the attention to the breath. During sitting meditation, you may do this countless times. This is perfectly normal and natural, even for experienced meditators. If you feel impatient with your mind for thinking so much, just observe the impatience as just another thought, and let it go as well.
- You may notice thoughts that may register some agitation such as an outside noise like a barking dog or a physical discomfort. No need to shut them out, accept them as best you can into your awareness. Notice them and your reaction to them. You can use them as “mindfulness bells” reminding you to return your attention to the breath. In the case of discomfort such as a back pain, you may wish to observe the discomfort and then with awareness slowly shift your position to be more comfortable.
- Continue observing the breath for 10 minutes. If you wish to extend it, by all means do so. 20 minutes per day is a good length of time to work up to in the beginning.