

Mindfulness Background

The following are frequently asked questions and answers about mindfulness:

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means awareness or attentiveness in the present moment. You are present with your experience. You direct your attention with curiosity, kindness and non-judgment to what is occurring in your body (your breathing, your bodily sensations), your mind (your emotions and your thoughts) and to the external environment. You are conscious of what is happening. You are not forgetful. You listen. You attend. You are here. You are not on autopilot. You pay attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.

How can I develop mindfulness?

You develop mindfulness through the following practices:

- *Mindful Breathing* – being aware of your breath, feeling the sensations associated with it and paying attention to its changing qualities
- *Body Scan* - focusing your attention systematically on different regions of your body to feel more aware, relaxed and at home in your body
- *Mindful Sitting* – sitting with awareness and paying attention to your breathing, your feelings, thoughts, sounds
- *Mindful Walking* - focusing on the lifting, movement and placement of your feet and legs and feeling the sensations associated with walking
- *Mindful Movements* – practicing gentle stretching and strengthening exercises while being aware of your breathing
- *Mindful Eating*: being aware of what you are eating, eating slowly, chewing each mouthful thoroughly and focusing on tasting the food.

How will mindfulness help me?

Mindfulness will help you to develop a quieter mind, increase your awareness and concentration, your ability to cope with stressful situations, your ability to relax and your ability to develop self-compassion and compassion for others.

By sitting silently on a daily basis, focusing on your breathing, sensations, sounds, thoughts, prayers, or by walking silently, focusing on your steps or on the beauty of nature, you will nurture a calm and peaceful mind. You will be more present in each moment.

How can I apply mindfulness in my daily life?

In everyday life, you can practice being mindful by:

- Doing one thing at a time and giving it your full attention.
- Scheduling some brief breath breaks into the day. A few minutes of mindful breathing each hour will add to the enjoyment of the day.

- Listening carefully to focus your attention and to refine your awareness
- Practicing sustained mindful breathing. Sitting for 10 to 20 minutes, with your back straight and your head erect.
- Paying attention to what you are eating and really enjoying the food
- Organizing a quiet period during the day. Close the door, sit down in a chair, practice breathing and remain quiet with no phones, internet, e-mail, texts.
- Calming any anger by mindful breathing and mindful walking. Accepting your anger. Not doing anything until you are calm. Determining the source of your anger. Then examining how you could respond to the situation.

Where do we find mindfulness in society?

Mindfulness programs are offered in the fields of government, health, schools, colleges and universities, private industry and in the criminal justice system.

How is mindfulness a universal skill?

Mindfulness is a fundamental human capacity, a present moment awareness, which we develop by paying attention to physical sensations, thoughts, emotions and to the environment on purpose, with an attitude of kindness to ourselves and others. It involves compassionate and intentional awareness which has benefits for all of us.