

CHANGES MODULE 17:

Learn to be more mindful



Mindfulness simply means being aware of the here and now. Often we operate on auto-pilot when carrying out routine tasks such as travelling to work, only to realise later that we have no recollection of the activity as our thoughts were elsewhere.

Mindfulness is about being in the present and taking pleasure in everyday moments, without being distracted by thoughts of the past or worrying about the future. This helps to calm and balance the mind and provides us with increased contentment and happiness. Being more mindful of the present will help you to appreciate the small joys in your day that may have previously gone unnoticed.

Here are a few techniques that might help us stay in the present:

Be mindful of everyday routines.

Pick an everyday routine where you think you could be more mindful. It could be walking to work, doing the dishes or eating your lunch. Spend as much time as you can focusing and engaging with that activity. For example, while walking, pay attention to how your body feels, the nature around you and the air on your skin.

Mindful listening.

Listen to some slow tempo music and notice its calming effects. Focus on the sounds and the way the music makes you feel. If other thoughts appear, refocus your attention on the sound of the music. Also mindfully listen when others are speaking to you, make the effort to stop what you are doing and what you are thinking and really pay attention to them.

Mindfulness while you wait.

Waiting is a perfect time to pause, observe and be mindful. You can practice mindfulness whilst stuck in traffic or waiting in a queue. Use this time to slow your breathing and just observe the things around you. If you feel tense or impatient just observe these thoughts and how they make you feel.

Mindfulness meditation.

Frequently practising meditation is a great way to be more mindful. With practice it can really help to minimise stress and anxiety and increase feelings of happiness and peace of mind. Look out for meditation courses, drop in classes at Buddhist centres or helpful books to learn more about meditation techniques.

60 second breathing.

If meditation is not for you, then paying attention to your breathing for just one minute can help with calming and focusing the mind. Concentrate on your breath and become aware of the rise and fall of your belly. Aim to breathe in for 7 and out for 11 seconds. If your mind wanders, do not judge or react to your thoughts, just refocus on your breathing.

Create your own!

Virtually any activity can be turned into a mindfulness exercise, and mindfulness can be introduced to anything and everything you do. So make up your own to incorporate into your daily routine, and just remember to stay in the moment!

Remember: Mindfulness can take practice, so be patient with yourself. Start with small steps, try some of the above techniques for just a few minutes every day to gradually increase the amount of time you spend in the present moment.

Discussion Options

When do you think you could be more mindful?

What helps you to stay in the present when it feels difficult to do so?

Further Resources

- www.bemindful.co.uk
- <http://www.mindfulnessbristol.co.uk>
- <http://bristol-buddhist-centre.org>
- *Mindfulness. A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World.* Danny Penman and J. Mark G. Williams
- The Headspace App.