

Printed copies of this text are not controlled. Always check the CIT website - cit.edu.au to ensure this information is correct.

Tips for Wellbeing Series No 3

Mindfulness

How to be in the present moment

What is mindfulness?

Our mind is by nature busy and gets easily carried away by various stimuli. They can be *external*, like sounds and visual images, or *internal* like our own thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

Mindfulness involves deliberate awareness of the present moment, without judgment. Derived from the Buddhist philosophy, mindfulness is today used in the management of depression, stress, anxiety, emotional regulation and chronic pain.

Mindfulness requires a gentle effort to be continuously present with the current experience. It takes some practice; the moment we recognise that our mind is in the past or the future, instead of in the present, we become mindful again.

When we are mindful we choose how we respond to a situation, rather than react to it impulsively. Some examples of how you might do this are:

- > As you are walking, notice what you see around you. What do the leaves look like, what are the clouds doing today?
- > Count things you notice. Counting also relaxes the brain.
- > If you are eating, notice how the food tastes in your mouth. What aromas can you smell? What is the texture of the food?

One of the ways to increase our mindfulness skills is through practising meditation, as it makes us more aware of our thoughts.

Meditation practice

- > Assess your current level of stress on a scale of 10, where 0 means no stress at all and 10 extreme stress.
- > Sit upright and straight with both feet fully on the floor, hands resting in the lap or on thighs, shoulders relaxed, chin slightly tucked down, mouth and eyes lightly closed. Then decide not to move the body for the duration of the meditation practice, unless a strong discomfort is experienced, in which case re-adjust the position.
- > Start observing your natural breathing, while focusing on the breath in the nostrils. Notice a cooler and dryer air moving in, warmer and more moist air moving out of the nostrils. Notice which nostril flows more freely. Also notice when your mind engages with some other thoughts and gently bring it back to observe the flow of the breath through the nostrils. Continue for 5 – 10 mins, then let go of the breath awareness and become aware of the external environment again.
- > Assess the level of stress again. Has it changed?

Applying mindfulness

We can apply similar technique to reduce the impact of negative emotions on our life. By doing this, we can start to see such feelings as sensations which will eventually pass away. This may free us up from fearing or avoiding certain emotions.

We can choose to observe emotions mindfully, just as we observed our breath in the above meditation practice. We can watch them with curiosity, give them a name, visualise them as clouds in the sky, which change, come and go.

For further reference

Websites:

- > *Mindfulness in Everyday Life* - blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/10.mindfulnessineverydaylife.pdf
- > *Mindfulness exercises* - livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/

Books:

- > *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- > *Calming Your Anxious Mind - How Mindfulness and Compassion Can Free You from Anxiety, Fear and Panic* by Jeffrey Brantley:

Want to make an appointment with CIT Student Support staff? Call our reception on **(02) 6207 3290**.

Find more helpful CIT Student Support information on **eLearn** :

Click **Student Links** tab then **Student Services and Support** option at the top of any eLearn page.

Studiosity – 24/7, 365 days a year, online help with assignments and written work:

Click the **Study HELP** tab at the top of any eLearn page.