

## MINDFUL LIVING

### MINDFULNESS

How does mindfulness work?

- Mindfulness allows us to spend less time in our minds, worrying about the future or the past, and more time in the present, actually living and experiencing our lives.
- We learn to accept our experiences, including painful emotions, rather than react to them with aversion and avoidance; recognizing the positive behind each experience and not burdening the mind with unnecessary thoughts or feelings.
- Mindfulness is waking up to life moment to moment to moment, allowing us the ability to be aware of our thoughts, emotions, actions, and physical sensations; without judging or criticizing ourselves for our experience.

### USEFUL TOOLS

- **Meditation.**  
You can sit still for just one minute a day (work up to 3-5 minutes after a week) turning your attention to your body and then your breath. Notice when your thoughts wander and gently return to conscious breathing.
- **Be Awake.**  
Being awake is being conscious, which is not being in the dream state (mind wandering into a train of thought, getting lost in the online world, thinking about past offenses, stressing about the future, etc.)
- **Watch Urges.**  
Recognize that you are not your urges, that you don't have to act on your urges, and this will help you to change all other habits. You can watch the urge rise and fall, until it is gone, without acting on it. Urges will come and go, and you don't have to act on them.
- **Watch Ideals.**  
Ideally our day will go perfectly, people will be kind and respectful, we will be perfect, we'll ace an exam or important meeting, we'll never fail. We know from experience ideals don't always come true, they aren't realistic. But we still have them, and they cause our stress and fears and grief over something/someone we've lost.
- **Accept People & Life As They Are.**  
Acceptance has the same effect for anything you do, accepting a co-worker, a spouse, a "bad" situation, an unpleasant feeling, or an annoying sound. When we stop trying to fight the way things are, we become more at peace.
- **Let Go of Expectations.**  
Watch your expectations with an upcoming situation and recognize if its causing you stress and disappointment. By letting go of expectations we can relieve ourselves of emotional distress.
- **Become OK with Discomfort.**  
The fear of discomfort causes us to be stuck in old bad habits, sticking to the known and comfortable rather than try something unknown and uncomfortable. Trying something new promotes change, in many cases positive growth.
- **Watch Your Resistance.**  
When you try to do something uncomfortable you'll find resistance. You can watch the resistance and be curious about it. Watch your resistance to annoying things, such as a loud sound, being too hot or too cold, even food we don't like. The problem isn't the sensation, it's our resistance to them.

- **Be Curious.**  
Too often we are stuck in our ways. Learn to be OK with not knowing. If you feel the fear of failure, instead of thinking, “Oh no, I’m going to fail” or “Oh no, I don’t know how this will turn out”, try thinking, “Let’s see. Let’s find out.”
- **Be Grateful.**  
Life is amazing. Find something to be grateful in everything you do. Be grateful when you’re doing a new habit, and you’ll stick to it longer. Be grateful when you’re with someone, and you’ll be happier with them.
- **Let Go of Control.**  
Life is uncontrollable, and just when we think we have things under control, something unexpected comes up to disrupt everything. Then we become frustrated because things didn’t go the way we wanted. Learn to flow and let go of control.
- **Be Compassionate.**  
Compassion for yourself and others can change the way you feel about the world. Mindful living is about remembering to be compassionate even after you forget.

## **WHERE TO BEGIN**

- **Cultivate Mindfulness Informally/Learn to Stay in the Present.**  
Practice single-tasking, doing one thing at a time with full attention. Whether you are eating, walking, petting a dog, or brushing your teeth, slow down the process and be fully present.
- **Cultivate Mindfulness Informally/Learn to Stay in the Present.**  
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- **Practice Acceptance.**  
Mindful living involves accepting whatever arises in your awareness at each moment. It involves being kind and forgiving toward yourself.
- **Gently Redirect.**  
If your mind wanders into planning, daydreaming, or criticism, notice where it has gone and gently redirect it to sensations in the present.
- **Try and Try Again.**  
If you wander astray from your intentions, remember that mindful living is a lifestyle. It will take practice so stay with it.

We live in a fast paced culture, constantly distracted from things that are truly important in life. Mindful living keeps us from autopilot, teaching us to tap into our well-being and connect with what is most valued.