

Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice which is very relevant for our lives today. It is a very simple concept – it means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.

You do not need to be a Buddhist to practice Mindfulness – it is simply a practical way to notice thoughts, physical sensation, sights, sounds and smells, which anyone can try. Mindfulness can simply be noticing what we don't normally notice, because often, our heads are too busy worrying about the future or the past – thinking about what we need to do or what we have done. We don't always take notice of the present. We are often spend much of our lives in **Automatic Pilot** mode such as when we are driving a car we might travel for miles without really noticing where we are or how we got there. Mindfulness encourages us to become aware of the present, our feelings, thoughts and sensations.

“You cannot stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” (Kabat-Zinn 2004)

How to do Mindful Breathing

The primary goal in Mindfulness is a calm, non-judging awareness allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. This creates calmness and acceptance.

- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine straight – try and relax your shoulders
- Direct your attention to your breathing
- Try not to control your breathing but to focus on the sensation of breathing, the in and out of the breath
- Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in breath and fall or recede on the out breath

- When thoughts, emotions, physical feelings or external sounds occur, simply accept them, giving them space to come and go without judging or getting involved with them
- When you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted then gently bring the attention back to the breathing
- If your mind wanders away from breath a thousand times, then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time