

Smartfoundations

Stress Management And Relaxation Techniques

Practices for Developing Mindfulness:

Focus on the Mind, Consciousness and Mental States

It's best not to be too rigid when considering mindfulness as the totality of it's nature lends to the overlap in all of the distinct parts. When we involve the awareness of our thoughts (**reflecting, opinions, beliefs, ideas, opinions, remembering, thinking and planning**) we can also recognise each of these mental states become the receptacle for feelings e.g. fear/love; sadness/hope; confusion/clarity; anger/harmony; or separation/unity.

By watching the thoughts we also get to become aware of how we can get caught up in thoughts (**which may not be facts**) which can hold us back and are unsupportive and then thoughts which are supportive or soothing and create a heightened sense of well-being.

In practice, we are simply holding in our awareness that 'which is' e.g. if I can hold it awareness and accept '**it is what it is**' I can surrender to my current experience with acceptance – here there is no need for mental gymnastics just simply **be aware of our thoughts**. However, once we have awareness with gentleness and tenderness (not judgement) we can help transform them to be more supportive to our health and well-being.

Focus on the Feelings – Traditionally Mindfulness of the pleasant, unpleasant, or a neutral feeling tone of a physical or mental thought or emotion is useful. Try using a daily journal noting your pleasant/unpleasant or neutral feelings – it's a great way to check in on your sense of well-being. It can also interrupt the 'auto-pilot' doing mode and help us re-route are thinking in awareness to 'being' or experiencing greater levels of contentment in our life.

Focus on the Body or physical aspect such as yoga, sitting, walking or lying just being aware of how the body is, hear we may body scan for sensations, feelings, warmth, tenseness etc., as with the body scan yoga practice.

Movements of the body in awareness can create a wonderful sense of connectedness, whether bending, stretching, reaching, stepping, holding an object, putting on clothes the physical sensations can create a lovely foundation for beginner mind – sensing, seeing, feeling, hearing as though for the first time.

The miracle of the body can flow naturally to the miracle of the breath: being aware its nature (in or out, long or short, the motion, pressure, warmth, sound

and sensation as it touches the nostrils or throat etc...) and the fact we are always breathing and always have been since birth is quite awesome.

Focus on Nature – We see a rose, cat, child, sunset - as though seeing for the first time – we bring the light of our awareness to the texture, sensations, sounds, visual constructs and sheer magical beauty of nature. Here we cease to label “oh that’s a flower or that’s a dog” instead we take time to be with the flower, and see it as though for the first time; giving ourselves the gift of wonder and experiencing. We see the magnificence of its structure, the delicate and smooth petals, the strong and smooth stem, the light and shade of colour etc... Looking out at nature and all its’ awesomeness inevitably leads back to looking within and the glorious intricate nature of the human being.