

Mindfulness



Is this you...

- Too much to do?
- Mind butterflying around?
- Don't know what to do first?
- Feeling overwhelmed?
- Neglecting your personal wellbeing?
- Can't sleep?
- Can't switch off?
- Tense and irritable?
- Making mistakes?
- Feeling stressed?
- Worrying about the future?
- Fretting about things in the past?



Mindfulness is a way of managing and calming the whirl of your mind.

It is the skill of placing your full attention onto what you choose when you want to. It stops you feeling scattered and over-stretched.



Mindfulness is developed by paying attention to what's going on in your body and is learned through practising focusing on your breathing.

Brain imaging shows that the brains of people who practise for 20 minutes every day over a period of time change the structure of their brain. This helps them become calmer and less reactive so that they make better decisions, feel more in control and enjoy life more.

4 mindful exercises – choose the one that most appeals

1. Breathe slowly and deeply

Stand or sit still

Close your eyes or lower your gaze to the floor

Breathe in and out slowly and deeply for 10 breathes (count on your fingers)

Let yourself stretch up slightly with an in breath and sink down slightly with an out breath.

As you breathe in silently say to yourself 'calm' and as you breathe out say 'focused'

Open your eyes or raise your gaze, notice how you feel and carry on with your day

2. Relax your body

Stand still and close your eyes or lower your gaze to the floor

Feel your feet firmly in contact with the floor

Starting at your feet, work slowly up your body inviting and allowing your muscles to relax – your feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, pelvis, buttocks, stomach, chest, back, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, face, jaw, scalp

Take 3 slow in...out... breaths focusing your attention on how the breath moves in your body

Open your eyes or raise your gaze, notice how you feel and carry on with your day

3. Become absorbed in an everyday experience

Practise eating a raisin (or anything else) giving your full attention on the whole experience

Look closely at what you're going to eat – notice the colour, the texture, the weight, the feel, the smell...

Put the food in your mouth – notice the texture and the feel on your tongue, slowly bite and notice the tastes as you slowly chew and swallow. What was it like to eat that raisin

Take a moment to savour the whole experience before taking your next mouthful or carrying on with your day

4. Choose what you focus on

Call to mind a situation or experience that you didn't like and that made you feel angry, disappointed, frustrated or upset. What do you notice has happened in your body?

Now call to mind a situation or experience that made you feel happy, relaxed, successful, or loved. What do you notice has happened in your body?

If you could choose your thoughts (which you just did) which sort of thoughts would you call to mind to use as the backdrop to your day?

Practise consciously calling positive thoughts into mind whenever you find yourself getting a bit negative.