

## Monday Mindfulness

The aim of mindfulness meditation is to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. However, as you practice, you will find this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It is normal that your mind may wander, but just bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing your breathing again.

### TIME & PLACE

Aim to practice daily for 15-30 minutes, the more you practice the easier it will become.

Find a time and space where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your preferred practice time.

### POSTURE

- Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- Straighten your back, but not to the point you feel uncomfortable.
- Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, take a break or adjust your position.

### AWARENESS OF BREATHING

Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing. Try this, breathe in for the count of 3, hold for the count of 4, and blow out for the count of 5, then breathe naturally.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

### WANDERING MIND

It is normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don't worry, that is normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them, without judgment. Acknowledge that your mind had wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Repeat the process again and again.

## TALKING TUESDAY

How difficult is it normally to talk to each other at home, lives are busy, parents are working, stress levels high. This is an ideal opportunity to sit down and actually talk to each other and more importantly listen to each other.

During this time the main topic of conversation may be causing some anxiety and tensions at home, a talking game could help lighten the mood.

Think about questions you would really like to ask your parents & siblings. Make some question cards up so it feels less personal, this will also help to get the whole family involved. Take turns to read cards out and find out about each other.

Think about when your parents were your age and ask them about how they felt, what were they like at school, what were friendships like for them, first dates, what their aspirations were when they were your age. Allow your parents to get to really know you too, relationships are two way.

Talking to our family in a way we actually get to know them, helps us feel secure and stable. It helps to build confidence and healthy relationships. It also allows us to feel acknowledge and heard, which is really beneficial in maintaining positive mental health.

## WALKING WEDNESDAY

It is a well known fact that exercise really benefits our mental health. The recommended 10,000 steps a day is something we are all familiar with. Now you are no longer in school, look at ways you can reach that daily target.

Beginning an exercise plan doesn't have to be difficult, even when we are restricted to where we can go. Walking for as little as 30 minutes a day, 3 times a week, has been found to be beneficial, however reaching 10,000 steps a day can be more challenging with limited space.

If you can get outside, then aim to get at least an hour a day of walking in, this will help maintain a positive attitude and help with sleep at the end of the day.

Things to help you:

- Plan to exercise with a friend (use face time to talk and walk together)
- Walk with family members
- Set an alarm to remind you when to exercise, this also help with establishing a routine into your day.
- Get a 10,000 steps challenge going with friends.
- Walk your dog if you have one, or maybe there is an elderly neighbor who may need their dogs walking.
- If you can't get outside, then think of how you can get 10,000 steps walked indoors. Use the stairs, laps of the house, exercise machines, whatever you choose is perfectly fine.

Exercise helps with sleep difficulties; stress, low energy; self-esteem and anxiety so please try and make this part of your daily routine.

## THOUGHTFUL THURSDAY

Showing kindness and thoughtfulness helps with positive mental health.

Perform an extra act of kindness today and everyday day. This could be a compliment, a helping hand, a gift or something else. The act may be large or small and the recipient may not even be aware of it. Ideally your acts of kindness should be beyond the kind things you already do on a regular basis. And of course the acts mustn't put you or others in danger! Do at least one extra kind act each day for a week, ideally a different one each day.

- Think about the elderly, either in their homes, hospitals or care homes. It could be a very lonely time especially those most vulnerable. Why not send letters, drawings or paintings to the local care home or neighbors and hospitals. I'm sure they would love to receive some positive and uplifting words and artwork right now.
- Can you knit, if not why not learn? Most neonatal wards at the hospitals really need little squares for baby blankets. Check these websites for information: [www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk) [www.uch.nhs.uk](http://www.uch.nhs.uk)
- Keep a daily journal or scrap book; this can help when our thoughts feel overwhelming. It can feel better when we can read our thoughts rather than listen to them in our minds.
- Helping with gardening, either at your home or any neighbors that may not be able to get they may appreciate having their grass cut.
- Maybe start cooking/baking; you could help your parents out by taking turns in the kitchen.

Whatever you decide to do is totally up to you, just thinking about others and trying to help out will help you feel resourceful and purposeful.

## FUNDAY FRIDAY

Having fun is imperative to good mental health so think about the things you like to do and how you can adapt these into a new routine.

- Technology is great for keeping in touch and multi player game playing is ideal for beating some stress and anxiety we may be feeling.
- Not online gaming, what about starting a multi player board game with all of your friends or family. Using Skype/face time facilities you can host a games day/night.
- Learning can be fun, ever wanted to learn something completely different, then now is the time. There are lots of online learning centers that offer certificated course, maybe a different language, a writing course, all of which could come in useful some time.
- If the weather is nice, why not set an exercise obstacle course in the garden. Family championship games begin.
- Take time for self care, maybe some home beauty treatments, massage, facials, nails, don't stop caring about yourself.
- Funny movie marathon, how many comedy movies in one day can you watch!!! It will certainly give you a laugh, and laughter is a great morale booster.

It is ok to have fun, even when things feel stressful and worrisome. It is important to remember the things that are happening right now, are all temporary and will change in time.