

Mindfulness Means.....

Paying attention in a particular way:

on purpose,

in the present moment,

and non-judgmentally

Jon Kabat-Zinn

- How aware are you right now at this present moment of your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations?
- Most of the time we are on 'auto-pilot', and we only become fully aware of ourselves in the event of an emergency, or emotional crisis.
- We are 'wired up' this way – it helps to keep us safe – and protects us from all sorts of danger.
- The problem is that being on auto-pilot can make us tend to react and even over-react in some situations when our 'buttons are pressed'.
- Old habits of negative and unhelpful thinking can be triggered off and this can lead to worsening mood and extremes of behaviour – including attacking, withdrawing, defending, distracting, controlling and blocking.
- Many of these reactions are based on memories of past events that we have carried with us, or even anticipations of future ones that we can imagine and vividly create – these can actually be Pleasant and/or Unpleasant.
- We experience in the present moment everything as vividly and wonderfully or awfully as if it were actually still happening or really about to happen.
- And that is a pleasant or unpleasant reality we have created for ourselves.
- What we think, feel and do in that moment is not the 'true reality' of the moment – it is a reaction to the button being pressed.
- Learning to be Mindful of our tendency to react, and staying focused on what is really happening in the here and now – without trying to change anything, get anywhere or achieve anything – just quietly observing and being curious about and interested in the present moment, can help us to be more resourceful and calm. This can enable us to use our judgment and to have more time and choices - to respond rather than react.

Seven Pillars of Mindfulness

To gain awareness without trying to change anything. To be skeptical but open – to see what happens. You need to consciously, intentionally and purposefully cultivate the attitudes of 1. Non-Judging 2. Patience 3. A Beginner's Mind 4. Trust 5. Non-Striving 6. Acceptance and 7. Letting Go. These are the 7 Pillars of Mindfulness. They are not independent of each other. This Foundation of attitudes and commitment will guide you towards change.

- 1. Non-Judging** – Automatic judging locks you into mechanical reactions. You become preoccupied with liking and disliking. You need to observe and be an impartial witness. No need to judge your judging. Watch whatever comes up.
- 2. Patience** – To understand that things must unfold in their own time. Why rush through one moment to get to other 'better' ones? Patience can give peace to the agitated mind. You don't have to fill up moments with activity and thinking in order for them to be rich. Being patient helps you to be open to the moment to accept it in its fullness.
- 3. Beginner's Mind** – Willing to see everything as if for the first time. Free of expectations based on your past experiences. Each moment is unique and contains unique possibilities. See with fresh eyes. Right now with a clear and uncluttered mind. Watch out for the veil of your own thoughts and opinions.
- 4. Trust** – Trust in your own intuition and authority. Honour your feelings if something does not feel right to you. No point in imitating someone else. Become more fully yourself. The more you trust yourself the more able you will be to trust others. And see their basic goodness.
- 5. Non-striving** – Doing things for a purpose can be an obstacle – the goal is to be yourself. Try less and be more. Mindfulness is about simply paying attention to whatever is happening. Just watch. Allow the experience to be here because it already is. See and accept things as they are moment by moment. Movement towards goals will take place by themselves. An 'unfolding' that you invite to happen within you.
- 6. Acceptance** – Coming to terms with things as they are - at this time. No need to try to force situations to be the way you want them to be – only makes for more tension – waste of energy. You have to accept yourself as you are before you can really change. Acceptance is the precondition for healing and change. It's not about stopping or giving up or tolerating or avoiding. It's about a willingness to see things the way they are. This is the precondition for appropriate action.. You need a clear picture of what is actually happening. Take each moment as it comes and be with it fully, as it is. Receptive and open to whatever you are feeling, thinking and seeing.
- 7. Letting Go** – There are certain thoughts and feelings that your mind wants to hold on to. If they are pleasant you try to prolong them. If they are not you try to get rid of them, prevent or protect yourself from them because they are unpleasant and painful and frightening. Let your experience be what it is whatever it is. Practice observing from moment to moment. Letting go is a way of letting things be - of accepting things as they are. If you find it particularly hard to let go then focus on the opposite and observe what it feels like to hold on. You let go when you go to sleep - if you can't let go you can't sleep. Practice letting go when you are awake.