

## Mental Health Awareness Week – 11-17<sup>th</sup> May 2015

### MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has been practiced in the East for thousands of years. In the West in the past thirty years it has been successful in helping people with mental and physical health problems, from stress, depression and anxiety to chronic pain, eating disorders and concentration, boosting our productivity at work, and giving us a greater enjoyment of life.

Despite its proven successes, access to Mindfulness is still limited. According to the Mental Health Foundation's surveys, over half of us say we'd like to attend free meditation classes to help with stress, yet only one in five GP's is able to access mindfulness courses for their patients.

#### What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is described as paying attention to the present moment, without getting stuck in the past or worrying about the future. Mindfulness can be practiced standing, sitting or walking. It can be practiced both indoors and outside; at home, in school, at work or simply out and about. You can practice mindfulness for 5 minutes or 5 hours – that's the great thing about mindfulness, you can tailor it to suit your own needs.



What you may be surprised to hear is that you have probably been mindful at some point in your life and didn't even know it... Have you gone for a long walk, breathing in the crisp, fresh air and then suddenly realised that four hours have passed? Have you listened so intently to a song that for a moment, you weren't thinking about anything but how beautiful the melody was? That's Mindfulness!

#### How can mindfulness help me?

Contrary to popular belief, mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind of thoughts and 'zoning out'. At the heart of it, mindfulness helps people observe the way they think and feel about their experiences, whether good or bad. . It allows you to be more aware of the way you function moment by moment. This can really change the way you manage and react to stressful situations, giving you a valuable tool to stay mentally healthy, and an ever-expanding body of evidence shows that it really works.



Mindfulness is known to be successful in helping people with a range of physical and psychological health problems. Mindfulness is particularly useful in managing chronic pain, boosting concentration and improving our productivity at work. It has also been found to be successful as a treatment for stress, depression and anxiety.

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was designed specifically to help people who are prone to recurring depression. It combines mindfulness techniques like meditation, breathing exercises and stretching with elements from cognitive therapy to help break the negative thought patterns that are characteristic of recurrent depression.

Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction incorporates techniques such as meditation, gentle yoga and mind-body exercises to help people cope with stress. It gives people greater clarity on what is happening in their lives, improving problem-solving and boosting concentration. People who take a course in MBSR say that they feel more engaged in their work, more energised and less anxious. They sleep better and have fewer symptoms of stress.

### **So, where can I learn mindfulness?**



The Mental Health Foundation's 'Be Mindful' Online Course is a free 4-week online course designed to guide you through all the elements of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (CBMT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). You'll be taught by Ed Halliwell & Tessa Watt, both leading mindfulness trainers from the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, Bangor University, UK, and in as little as 4 weeks you can expect to be enjoying benefits including reduced stress, depression and anxiety. If you want to learn mindfulness visit the 'Be Mindful' Online website.

Find out more about mindfulness and its benefits by visiting the 'Be Mindful' website where you can:

- watch videos
- test your stress
- listen to podcasts
- find out about courses in your area and the online course
- purchase a report or toolkit
- share your experience of mindfulness



For more details visit:

- [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- [www.bemindful.co.uk](http://www.bemindful.co.uk)
- [www.mindfulnessinschools.org](http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org)
- [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)
- [www.oxfordmindfulness.org](http://www.oxfordmindfulness.org)
- [www.breathworks-mindfulness.org](http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org)
- [www.theconnection.tv](http://www.theconnection.tv)

### Useful books

Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World.  
Mark Williams & Danny Penman

Mindfulness for Health Book  
B Vidyamala Burch & Danny Penman

### Useful DVD's

The connection – Mind Your Body

