

# DEVELOPING MINDFULNESS AT WORK

## 3 Aspects of Mindfulness

**Intention** – Your intention is what you hope to get from practising mindfulness. You may want stress reduction, greater emotional balance or to discover your true nature. The strength of your intention helps to motivate you to practise mindfulness on a daily basis and shapes the quality of your mindful awareness.

**Attention** – Mindfulness is about paying attention to your inner or outer experience. Mindful attention is mainly developed through different types of meditation – either formal or informal – when talking, cleaning or driving, for example.

**Attitude** – Mindfulness involves paying attention to certain attitudes, such as curiosity, acceptance and kindness.

## Key Attitudes to Nurture Mindfulness

Your attitude to life makes all the difference. Use these attitudes to develop your capacity to be mindful, enabling you to live a more mindful life:

**Curiosity** – Become curious about your experience. How do you feel emotionally? What kind of thoughts are going through your head? What does your body feel like at the moment?

**Acceptance** – Acceptance doesn't mean resignation. Mindfulness is about accepting how you feel right now, rather than denying it. Acceptance first, change comes later.

**Letting go** – You don't need to try and hold on to pleasant experiences and push away unpleasant experiences. Have a sense of a light touch to your experience.

**Non judging** – Observe whatever you are experiencing as it is, rather than classifying it into good or bad, like or dislike, right or wrong.

**Non striving** – Allow yourself to experience whatever your experience is rather than creating a goal for some other experience and then striving to attain that different experience.

## A Short Mindfulness Meditation

Your capacity to be mindful is most powerfully developed through mindfulness meditation. One of the most popular mindfulness meditations is mindfulness of breath. This involves being mindfully aware of your breath. Follow these steps to try mindfulness meditation for yourself:

1. Be aware of the sense of your own breathing. You don't need to change the rate of your breath. Just feel the physical sensation of your breath entering and leaving the body.
2. You can feel the breath in the nose, the throat, the chest or down in your stomach. If possible, try and feel the breath in the stomach as it's more grounding and is more likely to make you feel relaxed.

3. When your mind wanders off into thoughts, bring your attention back. It is the nature of thoughts to take your attention away from whatever you want to focus on and into thoughts about the past or future, worries or dreams. Don't worry about it.
4. As soon as you realise that you've been thinking about something else, notice what you were thinking about and gently guide your attention back to your breath. You don't need to criticise yourself.
5. That's it. Mindfulness of breath is as simple as that. Bring a sense of the mindful attitudes to your experience such as curiosity and acceptance. You can do this exercise for as short as a minute, or as long as an hour.

## Practising Day-to-Day Informal Mindfulness

The great thing about mindfulness is that you can practise it any time. Informal mindfulness meditation is when you practise mindfulness without carving out a special time for it.

**Mindful communication** – When you are speaking or listening to someone else, become aware of the sound of your own voice, or the voice of the other person. Each time your mind wanders off into other thoughts, kindly guide your attention back to the conversation without criticising yourself if you can.

**Mindful walking** – The next time you're walking somewhere, notice the sense of touch between your feet and the ground. Observe how your weight seamlessly transfers from one foot to the other, almost effortlessly.

**Mindful exercise** – The next time you're in the gym, going for a jog, swimming or playing a sport, become mindful of what's going on. Focus your mindful attention on your own body, thoughts, emotions or the environment around you. Become curious about your experience.

**Mindful working** – Whatever your work is, by paying more attention to what you're doing, you're bound to achieve better results. Try reducing the amount of effort you make to pay attention and let the focus be effortless, relaxed and calm, as best you can.

**Mindful holidays** – It's easy to spend half your holiday thinking about the next holiday rather than actually being there. Feel the gentle warmth of the sun, put the camera down every now and then, and connect with the scenery with your own eyes. Breathe the fresh air. Be grateful for having the time and money to go on holiday.

**Mindful waiting** – You need to wait in a queue in shops, in your car, on public transport. Instead of becoming frustrated, practise some mindfulness of breath. When you're in traffic, notice the colour of the sky or trees. When in a supermarket, feel the calming sensation of your own breath.

**Mindful listening to music** – Get yourself comfortable, switch on your favourite piece of music and simply listen, moment by moment. As usual, after a while your mind will begin thinking of other things – just gently guide your mindful attention back to the sounds of the music. Be aware of both the sounds and the silence between the sounds.

**Mindful eating** – When you next eat, take a few moments to feel your breath; this can be a little hard at first as the habit is to dive in and munch! Chew each mouthful fully before you tuck into your next helping. Savour the taste.

**For more tips, resources and ideas about mindfulness, follow Incendo**

