

Practicing Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness is a way to be present in your everyday life, whether it's at school, at home or out with friends. In this handout, you will learn about mindfulness and how it can help you feel less stressed and live in the moment every day.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is being present and aware of the moment without judging your thoughts, feelings and **body sensations** (what you feel physically). The past or future isn't on your mind. Instead, you are aware how you feel and what you think here and now.

HOW CAN MINDFULNESS HELP ME?

Mindfulness is helpful in many ways, including helping you:

- Do better in school
- Concentrate better in school and out of school
- Feel less stressed
- Sleep better at night
- Less pain in your body
- Help with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues
- Better health for your heart, stomach and intestines

Did you know?

Mindfulness is not sitting still and doing nothing, but it can be if you want. Mindfulness is simply being aware of your thoughts, feelings and surroundings and not judging or getting wrapped up in them.

A note for your parents...

Being mindful toward your teen, your friends and family and your surroundings can help improve your own and your teen's mindfulness skills. Being mindful also includes bring non-judgmental, kind, grateful, loving, patient, forgiving, trusting, open, generous, gentle and curious.

HOW CAN I PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

The good thing about mindfulness is that you can do it anywhere at any time. You can even practice mindfulness around others and they would never know!

- **Simply notice the sights, smells and things that surround you.** Focus on what's there for you in the moment, right here, right now. If you find your mind starts to wander, that's okay. Find something in your surroundings to focus on that will bring you back to the here and now.
- **Count your breaths either aloud or in head.** This is helpful if you're feeling stressed, nervous or overwhelmed. Breathe in for 5 seconds, counting 1-2-3-4-5. Breathe out for 5 seconds, counting 1-2-3-4-5. Simply be aware of your stressed or nervous feelings. Don't judge those feelings or try to push them away. They will pass as you count and breathe.
- **Release tension in your body.** Sit, stand or lie down in a comfortable position. Simply notice where you feel tense or stress in your body. When you breathe in, picture yourself gathering the stress or worry into a cloud. When you breathe out, picture yourself releasing that stress or blowing the cloud away.

SMARTPHONE APPS FOR MINDFULNESS

There are many apps that can help you learn to practice and use mindfulness every day:

- **Stop, Breathe and Think®.** A free app that lets you check in with how you're feeling and guides you through meditation lessons.
- **Calm.com®.** A meditation website and app designed to bring peace to your mind. The 7-day program is free. Other longer programs are low-cost.
- **MindShift®.** A free app designed to teach you positive ways of coping with anxiety, stress and feelings of being overwhelmed.