

MINDFULNESS TIP SHEET #2

MINDFUL OBSERVATION

Mindfulness is the awareness of and complete immersion in the present moment without judgement. It is being, completely, in the here and now. Mindfulness frees you from the thoughts of your past and worries about the future.

But for many people, mindfulness sounds like a wonderful idea but too impractical and perhaps too abstract or outlandish of a concept...but it doesn't have to be wishy washy or impractical! **The research unequivocally tells us that mindfulness helps us cope with life's challenges.**

Sometimes, closing our eyes can be hard to begin with when we're learning to be mindful. **Mindful observation** can be a first step to learning to be mindful, while keeping our eyes open and being aware of what's around us.

So, let's give it a go...

- Bring yourself into the present by deliberately making yourself comfortable
- Then ask yourself: "What is happening right now?"
- Simply allow yourself to observe whatever happens.
- Label any thoughts that you have and then leave them alone...just be prepared to let them float away. Just name them as they are, not negatively or positively, but just as they are, without judgement. Focus on facts only.
- Attend to your breathing or simply take in your surroundings, or what you might be doing instead.
- Besides thoughts, there may be sounds you hear, bodily sensations that you are aware of. If you find yourself constantly elaborating on thoughts, rather than labelling them and returning to the neutral, remember to observe your breathing.
- When emotions or memories of painful events occur, don't allow yourself to become caught up by them, give them short labels such as "that's a sad feeling", "that's an angry feeling" and then just allow them to drift or float away.
- These memories and feelings will gradually decrease in intensity and frequency.
- More importantly, you will begin to identify yourself as an objective observer or witness rather than a person who is disturbed by these thoughts and feelings.
- When you're ready, return back to your environment.
- This requires practise but can then be used whenever you are stressed.

Some tips to help remain observant while being mindful can be to...

01

Observe

Notice your experience, do not add words or labels if you can help it. Let thoughts, feelings and experiences come into your mind and slip right out. Push away nothing, cling to nothing. Watch your thoughts, notice what you're doing, notice what comes through your senses.

02

Describe

Put into words your experience. Some examples can be "my stomach tightens", "a thought that 'I can't stand this' has passed through my mind", "my feet are tingling", and "sadness has come over me" can be some examples.

03

Participate

Let go of ruminating and get involved in the moment. Accept yourself and the situation as it is.

04

Non-judgementally

Don't evaluate, focus on facts only. Focus on "what", not "good, bad, should, shouldn't". Acknowledge what's helpful and unhelpful, but don't judge it. If you find yourself judging, don't judge your judging!

05

One-Mindfully

Do one thing at a time, whatever it is, with all your attention. Let go of distractions and go back to what you are doing. If you find yourself doing two things at once, stop and do one thing at a time.

06

Effectively

Do what works, what is helpful and healthy. Avoid "right vs wrong", "should vs shouldn't" and "fair vs unfair". Act skilfully to meet your needs in the current situation, whatever it is.

If you or someone you know needs help contact **TIACS** on 0488 846 988 or your organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your GP or call: **LifeLine** on 13 11 14, **Kids Helpline** on 1800 551 800, **MensLine Australia** on 1300 789 978 or the **Suicide Call Back Service** on 1300 659 467.