

What is Mindfulness?

Bringing awareness to your experience...an intentional, moment to moment noticing with curiosity and kindness.

“Paying attention, on purpose, in a particular way, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

3 attentional skills working together:

Concentration - ability to focus on what you want, when you want

Clarity - increased awareness of thoughts, emotions, senses and external behaviors

Equanimity - Non-reactivity; The ability to let sensory experience come and go without push or pull.

Must balance mindfulness with compassion.

***The best way to bring mindfulness to your school, office, team or home is through your presence. Any shifts you see will start with you. Only moments of mindfulness.*

Benefits

Attention - focus and concentration (especially with technology use)

Emotional Regulation - creating space; impulse control, increased self awareness and manage stress

Resilient - bouncing back from setbacks more easily

Clarity - ability to see the forest through the trees

Compassion - a common humanity; love in action

Misconceptions of Mindfulness

“One can become a mindful person.”

It is merely a launching pad or the gateway to shifting and action. It is not the be all and end all. It is a practice and not a place you will “get” to. You will never be a mindful person, but you will be able to have moments of mindfulness throughout your day. The long term intention is compassion.

“Thank goodness for mindfulness.”

Mindfulness is not enough on it's own. It is an empowering capacity to notice where our attention is at any given moment. Any make decision if we are going to let be there or bring back to something that is more deserving or where we want our attention. It is not to fix or change anyone. The purpose is to learn how to navigate and experience life in its entirety more clearly.

“It is a great way to have a calm work environment.”

It is a wonderful way to bring pause to parts of your day. It is a special time of day to bring stillness and become aware of what our mind and body are telling us. It is an opportunity to notice thoughts and feelings that arise and how that impacts our decision making and interactions.

“Mindfulness is thinking about nothing.”

It is about noticing the ebb and flow of our thoughts without attaching to them or judging them. Also, noticing the habitual response or patterns we may have in regards to our thoughts.

“Mindfulness is about never thinking about the future or past.”

It is about bringing deliberate awareness to the act of planning without attaching to the vision or outcome. Thinking about the past or future is not negative as long as we are intentionally doing so.

“Mindfulness makes you happy all the time.”

The present moment can be either or both a pleasant and unpleasant experience. In mindfulness practice, both these experiences are treated in the same way - with gentleness and kindness.

“You have to meditate to be mindful.”

Mindfulness is a particular technique and can be extended and applied to anything (walking, seeing, eating, conversation, dishes) not just sitting with our eyes closed. It is connecting with different sensations and temperature and the intention of our activity; tracking what our internal activity in response to the stimulus. It is bringing a level of metacognition to our experience. That is not always what meditation is. Meditation is different than this and can be many different things. You do have to be mindful to meditate.

3 Step Framework Towards Developing Presence

1. PAUSE - Intention and Attention
2. SHIFT - Perception and Action
3. BE - Connection and Compassion

Tips for Mindfulness Integration in Daily Practice

1. Experience everything (or what you can) without judgment.
2. Wait 10 seconds for colleagues to respond and breathe before responding.
3. Celebrate silence!
4. Actively take deep breaths at work. It will activate your parasympathetic nervous system.
5. Develop a practice of your own.