

Mindful moments

Every moment there is an opportunity to be present, notice, be in the now! We can call it lots of different things but generally what we are talking about is paying attention or connecting with what we are doing. In this way we can increase our awareness and get more out of life.

As Jon Kabat-Zinn defines it, mindfulness is *'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally'* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Here are some suggestions that you might like to try:

- Pay attention to your **breathing**, nothing else, just breathing in and out.
- Notice **sounds** around you. What can you hear right now?
- Notice what you can **feel**, e.g. the feeling of your clothes, air on your skin, hair on your forehead, your back against the chair you are sitting in and so on.
- Really **listen to your friend** or whoever you are talking to!
- **Hear the music** or radio or TV and really connect with the words. Switch off other distractions (do you really need to have the radio and TV on as well as chat to someone?)
- **Taste your food** like it is the first time you have eaten. What are the flavours? You can also take in the smells and the colours, textures of the food. Take your time to eat rather than gobble it down quickly!
- **Read slowly** and aim to increase your focus when you read. Turn off other sounds and each time your mind wanders away from what you are reading gently bring your attention back to what you are reading. With practice your concentration will improve just like doing exercise makes us fitter.
- Pay attention whilst you **brush your teeth or shave or have a shower**. Choose an everyday routine activity that you will be practice doing with greater awareness.
- **Walk with purpose** and notice what you see and hear and smell. You can also really connect with your body. How does it feel when you walk? What muscles do you notice? Are they telling you something? (you can also do this with **any form of physical activity**).
- Pay attention when you **drive**. Other motorists will thank you for it! Do you often see driving as a waste of time? Just a way to get somewhere? Do you often get impatient or angry when driving? It might be useful to see if you can notice your mind chatting away and stay focused on just driving!
- **Wash up or iron** and just focus on this! Household chores such as these we can think of as boring or getting in the way of more fun activities. And yet aren't these activities part of life? Do they go away because we wish they would?!?! When you are washing up, just wash up! Feel the soapy warm water and take care as you wash the dishes!