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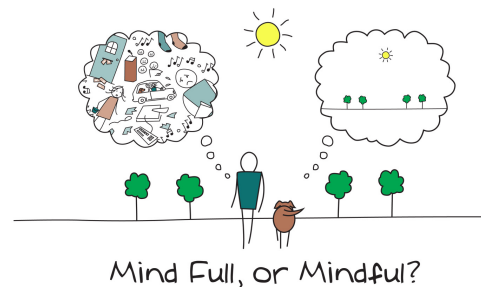
## Introduction to Mindfulness

*“Mindfulness is developed by purposefully paying attention in a sustained and non-judgmental way, to what is going on in your body, your mind, and in the world around you. It is being awake and aware, living in the present – simply being yourself and knowing something about who that is.”*

*<Full Catastrophe Living> - Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Over the last 40 years, scientists and researchers have started to look into the benefits of practicing mindfulness in a secular way, more and more evidence now shows that we can cultivate a greater capacity to concentrate on the present moment, to meet physical and psychological difficulties with ease and gentleness, to become less caught up by automatic and habitual stress reactivity, to enhance the utilization of parasympathetic nervous system for stress recovery, and in turn promote overall wellbeing. Neuroscience studies even suggest the possibility of rewiring our brain by practicing meditation to make better decisions (by taming the emotional fight-flight-freeze reaction caused by amygdala activation) and to better focus and remember important tasks (by engaging hippocampus & quieting Default Mode Network).

Mindfulness shows us a new way to be with ourselves, instead of keeping the “Doing mode” always on and getting lost in the past and future, by knowing that as human beings, we all share innate wisdom and resources to live and enjoy our lives fully.



### Daily small mindful practice check-list at home or at work :

- Observe your breath, body and mind first when we get up in the morning
- Simple gratitude journaling (morning or evening): write down 3 small things/events you feel grateful for.
- Short mindful walking: attending to the sensations of movement, the connection with the environment (Research shows that it can boost creativity too!)
- Mindful eating: When we eat, choose at least one bite and fully experience the food or drink using all five senses.
- Before we pick up a call or open/send an email, take a conscious breath, count to three and notice the body and mind state. Silently asking “What do I want to get?”
- Deep listening like a sponge with your full attention during conversation.
- One-minute present break: Put down your task or phone. Choose one thing (e.g. plant, window, painting) to be an object of attention. Be fully present with it for 1-min.
- Aware of the posture during the day. Ask the body where ease or tension shows up.
- In a tense or stressful situation, practice S-T-O-P (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed) (See below)

- Practice three-minute breathing space to check-in body & mind state. E.g. before meetings or important presentations
- When dealing with boring, tedious tasks, try bringing some playfulness and curiosity
- Practice simple random acts of kindness at work (e.g. holding doors, thank you notes, sharing snacks, silently wishing people well)

## Mindful “First Aid” : S.T.O.P. & Breathing Space in a stressful situation

“**S**top. **T**ake a Deep Breath. **O**bserve the body & mind. **P**roceed with awareness.”

### 3-Minute Breathing Space:

You can practice this anytime you feel tense or scattered and need to refocus. The object of the exercise isn't to control or clear your mind but rather to hold a magnifying glass to your patterns of mind. In Step 1, you move from your busy work-life doing mode into being mode. You observe what's going on for you at this moment. In Step 2, you anchor your attention on the sensations of breathing. In Step 3, you return to an open monitoring state, aware of everything that's going on around you, ready for the rest of your day. Link for 3-Minute Breathing Space recordings:

<https://www.mindfulocean.com/dbs-2019>



### Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Busy mind and hard to focus: It is natural! Our mind and brain is made to think. You may notice the mind can be very active especially in stillness. This is normal and natural that your mind keeps drifting off when meditating which is an unusual task as a beginner. All you need to do is to notice where the mind drifted without any judgement and evaluation, then gently invite the attention to return to the object that you are guided to focus on. It takes time to train our mind.
2. Drowsy and sleepy during practice: Instead of fighting against the sleepiness, see if you can consider it as a signal sent by the body. The moment when you feel awake again, if you are willing to, check-in with the body and acknowledge what is needed for you to continue the practice with wakefulness. Every time your answer can be different, e.g. changing your posture, opening the eyes, or stop and try in a different time of the day. Experiment with openness and curiosity.
3. Restlessness and pain: Meditation is a task and practice which we are not used to do, since we are trained and so conditioned to multitask and react to everything quickly. At first, it is okay to move, adjust your posture or find more support to the body during the practice, without forcing the body to push through limits. By maintaining awareness, move the body by knowing the intention, where and how you move, and what changes afterwards. With more practice overtime, you may find it easier to offer some space to just observe the areas where you feel painful or restless, perhaps directing your breath there to soften.

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