



Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

*For Those Who Serve and Those Who Support*SM

What is Mindfulness?

“It’s a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your day while listening to the radio and commuting to work, and then plan your weekend. But in the rush to accomplish necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment—missing out on what you’re doing and how you’re feeling. Did you notice whether you felt well-rested this morning or that forsythia is in bloom along your route to work?”

“Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment—and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness helps you learn to calm your mind and body and help you cope with stress.” (Helpguide.org)

To integrate mindfulness into your life, it is important to adapt mindful attitudes. These attitudes relate to focusing your senses on the present moment rather than worrying about past events or events to come, and thereby leading to reduced stress. There are six mindful attitudes.

Mindful Attitude #1: Non-judging

Become aware of and recognize your judgments; become an impartial witness to your thoughts; notice and challenge the judgments you make.

Mindful Attitude #2: Patience

Be completely open to each moment; everything happens in its own time; don’t be impatient with yourself!

Mindful Attitude #3: Beginner’s Mind

Approach each moment as if it were for the first time; in each moment, ask yourself “What is really happening now?”; don’t see things today based on what happened in the past.

Mindful Attitude #4: Non-striving

Be in the moment without taking any action; have no agenda or purpose; the future will come whether you take action or not!

Mindful Attitude #5: Acceptance

Acceptance means seeing things as they actually are in the present; you have to accept yourself as you are now before you can really change.

Mindful Attitude #6: Letting Go

Experience reality as it happens; avoid the desire to savor pleasant experiences and suppress unpleasant ones; accept things as they are now – in the moment.

Mindfulness is effective in managing stress because it focuses the mind on the present moment. By focusing on the present moment, you no longer worry about things that have yet to be done, things that might happen in the future, and things that already have happened in the past. Practicing these attitudes can be especially helpful during stressful times such as deployment.

How to Practice Mindfulness Meditation

In mindfulness meditation, you practice bringing your attention to a specific object of awareness, such as focusing on the texture of a food you are eating or your breathing.

After a short time your mind will wander. When you catch this happening, simply notice it without judging yourself, letting it be, and then gently bringing your focus back to the object of awareness.

This will be cyclical. You will go between your mind focusing and wandering. Expect this. Learn how to observe wandering when it happens and NOT judge yourself for it.

For most people, focusing on a very specific object of awareness is helpful. This might mean focusing on a specific body part, such as your forehead.

Over time, you might be able to expand your focus of attention to include: a part of the body, regions of the body, the body as a whole, sounds, the thought process itself, emotions, or whatever comes up.

Here are some specific exercises you can try to get started:

- The **body scan**: turning your attention to your bodily sensations and “listening” to how your individual body parts feel without attempting to control or change them.
- The **raisin exercise**: helps bring you into the present moment by utilizing all of the senses. This can be practiced with a raisin or another food item by observing first how it feels in your hands and then how it tastes and continues on with your other senses. The more you explore the details of the raisin the more likely you are to be brought into the present moment.
- **Walking meditation**: an exercise to carry out when one is walking by paying close attention to the movement of your body and paying close attention to each step as it rises and falls to the ground.

- **Loving-kindness meditation:** first begins with extending compassion to yourself and close loved ones. Then gradually extend that compassion to friends, acquaintances, and people with whom you may be having conflict.

Resources

Helpguide.org

www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm

- *Offers information on the benefits of mindfulness and techniques to practice mindfulness to improve emotional and physical well-being.*

The Free Mindfulness Project

www.freemindfulness.org/download

- *Offers free guided mindfulness exercises including, mindfulness of breath, body scan, sitting meditations, mindful movement, and guided imagery.*

University of California Berkeley Greater Good

greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition

- *Offers videos containing more information on what mindfulness is, why you should practice mindfulness, videos with exercises to help you cultivate mindfulness, and mindfulness quiz.*

University of Missouri Mindfulness Practice Center

www.umsystem.edu/curators/mindfulness/guided

- *Offers videos on a range of topics from basic meditation and relaxation practices to the basics of mindful eating.*

Mindfulness Practice Log: Weekly Version

Name: _____

Week of: _____

Target # of Days/Time: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 min						
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 min						
<input type="checkbox"/> 20 min						
<input type="checkbox"/> _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> Day off						
Note:						

Getting to It: *What strategies (time of day, place, timers, etc.) made it easiest to practice this week?*

Quality of Practice: *What strategies (type of focus, refocus technique, etc.) helped you to improve the quality of your practice?*

Changes in Daily Life: *Did you notice any benefits in your daily life (patience, calmer, etc) from your practice this week?*

Plans for Next Week: *What is one thing you can do next week to improve practice and/or maximize benefits?*

Source: Gehart, D. R. (2010). Mindfulness. www.dianegehart.com/page12/page12.html