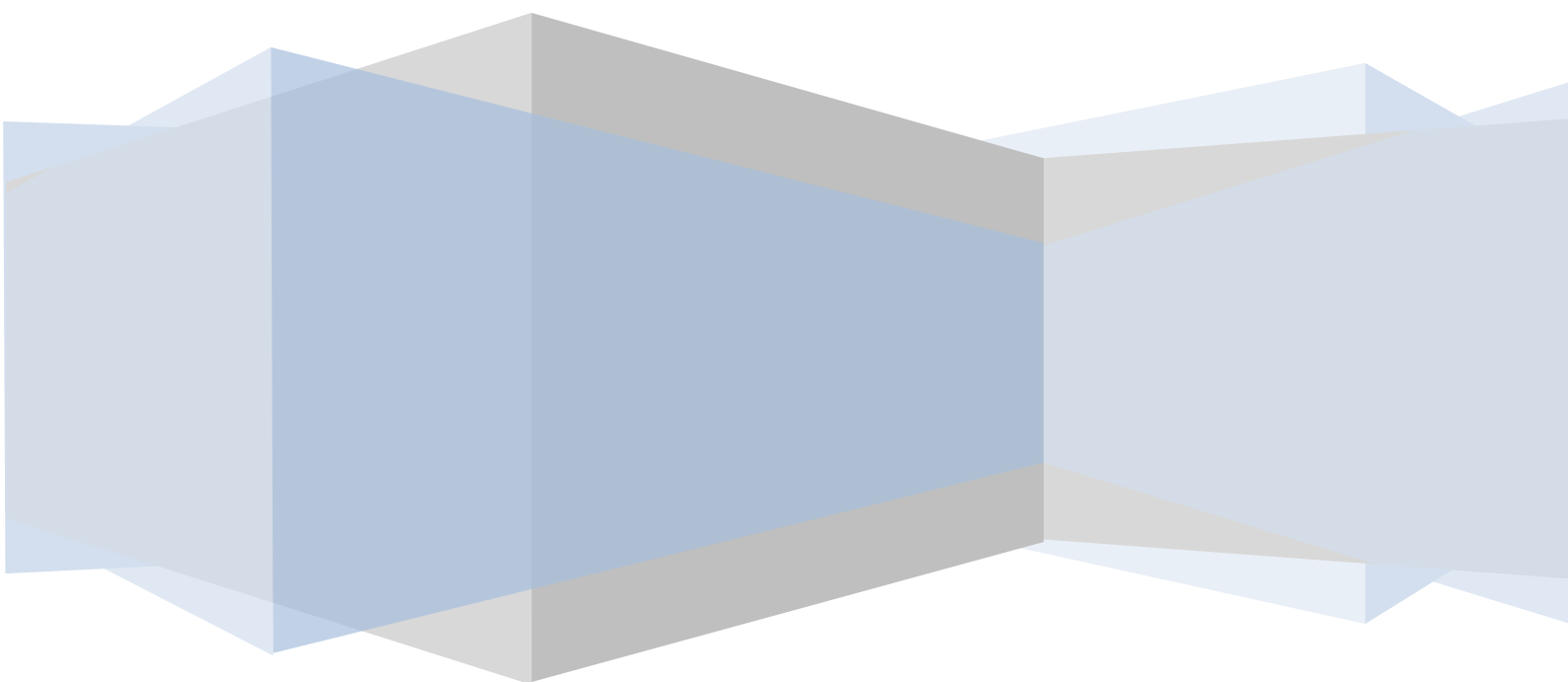


Cwm Taf University Health Board – Psychological Therapies Department



Mindfulness

Stabilisation Pack



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is defined as *‘paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and without judgement’*.

When someone is being mindful, they are noticing what is happening in the present moment by paying attention to and becoming fully aware of their thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and environment. Paying attention in this way is different from how the mind normally behaves. Most often the mind is on ‘auto pilot’ and caught up with thoughts about the past and the future rather than focused on the present moment.

Mindfulness involves training the mind to focus attention and stay in the present moment. As the mind is not used to staying present it will naturally wander. The act of mindfulness is about noticing this and then gently returning your attention to the present moment.

If you have tried mindfulness and found staying present challenging, then you are not alone! The human mind is complex and will naturally wander and worry. Training the mind to pay attention requires practice, so do not feel disheartened if it feels difficult.

Why is it helpful?

Self-awareness – Staying in the present helps you to become more aware of your thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. Focusing on the present can help to identify the areas of life that you may wish to change.

Controlling attention - Mindfulness can help you to gain control over the mind rather than the mind having control over you. Paying attention in the present moment can help prevent the mind being taken over by thoughts of the past and worries about the future.

Emotions - When people experience a feeling such as sadness or anxiety they often want to get rid of it as quickly as possible. This is not easy and can be unhelpful. Sometimes fighting difficult feelings makes them last longer. Trying to accept and tolerate the emotion is encouraged in mindfulness practice.

Thoughts - Mindfulness encourages you to recognise thoughts as merely thoughts and not facts. This can help reduce the power of thoughts and help

achieve some distance from them. Visualising your thoughts on clouds that float by or leaves that drift on a river may help to get some distance. When thoughts are too strong or loud, then attention can be refocused on the breath, the body, or what is happening in the environment.

TAKE TEN BREATHS

This is a simple exercise to centre yourself and connect with your environment. Practise it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

- Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until the lungs are completely empty—and then allow them to refill by themselves.
- Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
- See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just passing cars, driving past outside your house. Expand your awareness: simultaneously notice your breathing and your body. Then look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch, and feel.

MINDFULNESS OF PLEASANT ACTIVITIES

Pick an activity you enjoy such as cuddling with a loved one, eating, stroking the cat, playing with the dog, walking in the park, listening to music, having a soothing hot bath, and so on.

Do this activity mindfully: engage in it fully, using all five of your senses, and savour every moment. Imagine you are an alien who has just landed on this planet who is seeing everything through fresh eyes and everything experience is new. When your attention wanders, as soon as you realise it, note what distracted you, and re-engage in whatever you're doing.

Further ways to explore mindfulness

They are many ways to be mindful. More suggestions are in the Resources section below. Other ideas about how to stay in the present can be found in the section on 'Grounding.'

Mindfulness Resources

These **websites** have links to guided meditations that you might want to try when you are first learning this skill:

www.youtube.com – you can find guided meditations as well as experts such as Jon Kabat-Zinn giving talks about mindfulness here.

www.freemindfulness.org/home

www.mindful.org

In addition to this, Cwm Taf Health Board in partnership with Communities First now run mindfulness self-help courses for anyone to attend. Information for these courses can be obtained from your care coordinator or:

CTT_stresscontrol&mindfulness@wales.nhs.uk

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness meditation for everyday life by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2004).

Full Catastrophe Living, Revised Edition: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013).

Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life by Thich Nhat Hanh (1992).

The Mindful Way through Depression. Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness. By Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world by Mark Williams & Danny Penman (2011).

'Get some headspace' by Andy Puddicombe. (2012) London: Hodder Paperbacks.

There is also a useful website at www.headspace.com and a 'Headspace' app for mobile phones.