

Mindfulness Taster

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally'.

How might Mindfulness help me personally?

There has been substantive research on the individual and organisational benefits of Mindfulness practice. Putting into practice elements of Mindfulness will typically help you:

- Acknowledge your thoughts as simply that – thoughts rather than reality or representative of you
- Choose where to place your attention
- Live in the present, rather than in the past or future
- Generate better quality thinking
- Reduce stress
- Become calmer, more centred, clearer, more focused and less distracted.

How do I start?

Try a simple technique of mindful, meditative breathing to help you be in the present and quiet the activity in your mind:

- Count how many deep and slow in-and-out breaths you take in one minute
- Whenever you want to achieve a calm and focused perspective, choose a quiet place, stand quietly or sit still, close your eyes, and complete one or two minutes of mindful breathing
- As thoughts arise (as they will), acknowledge them and allow them to drift away
- As you recognise the benefits, choose a place and time of day when you are able to take a longer period for mindful breathing.

What ideas might I put into practice longer-term?

As you develop your interest and ability to be in the present, you may want to try giving complete attention to a single activity, where you remain in the present and acknowledge but let go of extraneous thoughts:

- Pay attention to and appreciate every aspect of a single object such as a nut or raisin
- Pay deep attention to every aspect of a daily activity such as brushing teeth, showering, the view from your train window
- Allow yourself to be completely absorbed in an activity such as walking, savouring a glass of wine, eating a favourite food
- Practice deep breathing when lying down, scanning every body part in turn to check for and release tension
- Take notice of your breathing and consciously choose to make it slow and regular
- Take notice of tension in your body and direct your breath to the area of tension to allow that area to relax.

Additional ideas to try:

- Plan periods of silence and reflection such as over a lunchtime break or on your journey home
- Create awareness and take notice of your thoughts, and where your thoughts tend to focus, such as planning, reflecting, analysing
- Seek training to extend your understanding and personal skills
- Read about mindfulness research and approaches.

How do Alliance coaches use Mindfulness?

- We use the above techniques ourselves and encourage our clients to do the same
- We often begin our Alliance meetings with mindful breathing
- By mindful attention to our own experience as coaches in coaching sessions we may learn more about the experiences of our clients
- We have all attended *Mindfulness for Coaches* training with Michael Chaskalson.

How might Mindfulness help my organisation?

Organisations who have incorporated Mindfulness have reported:

- Reduced absence rates
- Increases in productivity and effectiveness
- Better working relationships
- Greater employee engagement.

How might I find out more?

This is just a Mindfulness 'taster'. Experts offer training and a wealth of books, articles and blogs about research findings, the background of Mindfulness, and building your techniques. Here are some resources to get you started:

Training

- MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction), www.mindfulness-works.com/, www.mbsr.co.uk/

Reading

- Reference ¹: Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, Hyperion, 1994
- Michael Chaskalson, *The Mindful Workplace*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011: gives a comprehensive summary of mindfulness research and mindful practice as leader and coach; explores the links to emotional intelligence, wellbeing, happiness and neuroscience; provides references, exercises (including 'the raisin exercise') and suggested additional readings; provides website at www.themindfulworkplace.com
- Mark Williams & Danny Penman, *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, Piatkus, 2011

Articles / blogs / videos

- Peter Bregman, Harvard Business Review, *If You're Too Busy To Meditate*, 12 October 2012, http://blogs.hbr.org/bregman/2012/10/if-youre-too-busy-to-meditate.html?cm_mmc=SocialHub- -3271- -- -5175213775826326763
- Michael Chaskalson & Gareth Rees, on *Mindful Leadership*, February 2010 <http://www.alliancecoaching.co.uk/pdfs/MindfulLeadership.pdf>
- Bill George, Harvard Business Review, *Mindfulness Helps You Become a Better Leader*, 26 October 2012, <http://blogs.hbr.org/hbsfaculty/2012/10/mindfulness-helps-you-become-a.html>
- Liz Gooster, coach with The Alliance, *The 15 Minute Raisin*, 12 November 2012 <http://www.lizgooster.com/2012/11/12/the-15-minute-raisin/>
- John Morrish, Management Today, *Expand Your Mindfulness*, 31 May 2012, including the experience of David Huntley, coach with The Alliance <http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/features/1133191/expand-mindfulness/>
- Andy Puddicombe, TED Talks, *All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes*, filmed November 2012, including his definition of mindful meditation as 'familiarising ourselves with the present moment, and so experiencing a greater sense of focus, calm and clarity in our lives' http://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes.html

This 'topic taster' has been produced by The Alliance, a group of experienced coaches. Additional guides, support materials and case studies are available on our website. For further information contact info@alliancecoaching.co.uk or call 020 7794 5841 (www.alliancecoaching.co.uk).