

## Stress and Anxiety Management Through Mindfulness

Stress and anxiety effect everyone, but you don't need to let them rule your life! High stress and anxiety levels that aren't managed can cause a person to enjoy life less, work inefficiently, and have been proven to deteriorate physical health. Stress management helps a person to deal with their stress so they can lead fuller, happier, and healthier lives.

Mindfulness is a simple way to reduce stress and anxiety while improving focus and attention. It can be practiced in a number of ways and at any time of the day. In fact, any activity from sitting in class to washing the dishes can become mindfulness practice!

Mindfulness is awareness of the present moment with acceptance. Do you find yourself being carried away by situations or fantasies that cause you to be frustrated, upset, or even just waste your time? By focusing attention on the present moment with acceptance of what **IS**, we help level out the emotional roller-coaster of our lives.

So, how do we do this?

**BREATH!!** Focusing on our breathing makes us pay attention to the present moment instead of replaying the past or worrying about possible futures. You can start by just taking a few mindful breaths throughout the day to bring yourself into the present. If you would like greater results then you can try seated mindfulness meditation.

### How To

Sit comfortably in a chair with your spine straight but relaxed. Rest your palms on your lap and close your eyes. Focus your attention on the sensation of your breath passing in and out of your nose. At first it may help to count your exhalations in order to steady your mind. Try keeping count up to 10 and then starting back at 1. If the mind wanders (and it will) gently guide your awareness back to the breath. Becoming angry at not being able to fully focus only works against you, be compassionate towards yourself. Try to sit for 5 minutes a day every day. You can gradually increase your sitting time as your focus improves. In many ways this is like a workout for your mind. Just like with physical fitness, you can't expect to go into the gym and lift more than you've ever lifted before. You build your strength slowly over time.

Any activity can be mindfulness practice. All it takes is focusing on what you are doing instead of letting your mind wander. When walking just walk. When eating just eat. You will find with practice that the most average everyday experiences can become fully immersive and enjoyable. Attention, attention, attention.

Mindfulness Meditation downloads and mp3's.

<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

<http://www.integrativehealthpartners.org/pages/links.html>

Book on Mindfulness

The Mindfulness Solution by Dr. Ronald Siegel