**What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness has been a buzzword over the last few years but what does it really mean and how is it good for our mental health?

Being mindful means being present and focusing on what you are doing. It’s being aware of our internal states and surroundings. Mindfulness means slowing down and taking your time. Being mindful is a way to act spiritually by living in the present moment, reflecting, and noticing the small things. Mindfulness has two main components: attention and acceptance.

Attention is about tuning into your experiences to focus on what's happening in the present moment. It typically involves directing your awareness to your breath, your thoughts, the physical sensations in your body and the feelings you are experiencing.

Acceptance involves observing those feelings and sensations without judgment. Instead of responding or reacting to those thoughts or feelings, you aim to note them and let them go.

Some of the potential benefits of regular mindfulness practice are:

* + - Reduced rumination and fewer depressive symptoms.
    - Stress reduction.
    - Decreased anxiety.
    - Boosts to working memory.
    - Improved ability to focus attention and suppress distracting information.

**Four ways to be mindful**

1. **Beat boredom when waiting in a queue.**

Next time you have to ‘wait’ for something, consider immersing yourself in some mindfulness. Have a look at what is around you - what can you see and hear? Research shows giving ourselves opportunities to let our minds wander can help people solve problems, enhance creativity and even help find meaning in life.

1. **Yoga for the mind and body**

Mindful yoga is not just a physical activity focussed on alignment and physical posture. It also incorporates mindfulness by focussing on our breath and non-judgmentally reflecting in yoga practice. It encourages deep, slow breathing, helping to calm the mind.

1. **Spending time in nature**

When people are mindful in nature it can maximise the experience of being in nature. Try noticing the sounds and smells around you, the different textures on leaves as you walk past or the breeze on your skin.

1. **During the workday**

Mindfulness is about developing a sharp, clear mind and can assist with being focussed and avoid distractions. Everyone is different therefore may benefit from mindfulness at different times during the workday or shift for example some people report benefits from deep breathing exercises and others report benefits from strategies that support them not get distracted by others. Find out more about mindfulness in the workplace in this Harvard Business Review article: https://hbr.org/2022/12/research-when-mindfulness-does-and-doesnt-help-at-work

**Read more information on the benefits of mindfulness in this article on the American Psychological Association website: https://www.apa.org/topics/mindfulness/meditation**