



ACTIVITY: Mindfulness

Purpose

- Explore the concept of mindfulness
- Identify benefits of mindfulness
- Learn short, easy ways to practice mindfulness

ESTIMATED TIME

10 minutes

MATERIALS

Required:

A. None

Background

Most of the time we have multiple thoughts running through our head. What's next on my to-do list? Why did my friend react like that? I have to remember to pick up dog food ... and on and on.

Sometimes our thoughts and concerns are important and need our attention. Sometimes we play the same thoughts, concerns, and anxieties on a loop, long after they have any purpose.

Because we have single-processor brains, our constant stream of thoughts and ruminations often causes us to miss the present moment. This is where mindfulness comes in.

Quite simply, mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the current moment without judgment. There are many ways to practice mindfulness, from mindful eating to extended mindfulness meditations. Research has shown many benefits to mindfulness, including:

- Stress reduction
- Increased working memory and focus
- Reduced fixation on unhealthy thoughts and decreased emotional reactivity

Mindfulness can be used as a way to calm and refocus ourselves at any moment and at any place.



Activity

After explaining what mindfulness is and the benefits of mindfulness, lead your group through one (or both) of the following activities:

Mindful Breathing :

- 1) Sit in a comfortable position. Breathe in and out slowly, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth
- 2) Let go of any thoughts. When a thought arises, just notice it non-judgmentally and imagine it floating away as you return your awareness to your breath.
- 3) Focus on paying attention to your breath, noticing how it feels as it enters and leaves your body. Notice the rhythm and the length of your breaths.
- 4) Notice how your body feels. Is there any tension or pain anywhere?
- 5) Continue this for 2-3 minutes.

The Raisin Exercise:

- 1) Hand out a raisin (or nut or cherry – any type of small food) to each participant.
- 2) Ask participants to look at the food like they have never seen it before. Notice every aspect of it – the look, the feel, the smell.
- 3) Have participants eat the food very slowly, paying attention to the texture and taste.
- 4) When they are done with their food, ask participants what they noticed during the exercise. Did they think about other things during the exercise, or did focusing on the food prevent negative thoughts or worries from occurring?

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- How did these activities make you feel?
- How could we incorporate mindfulness into our work? Into our home life?
- Does anyone currently have a mindfulness practice?
- What would happen if we took several short moments to be mindful during the day?

Let's Try This!

- Pick one activity you do daily - such as brushing your teeth or making coffee.
- Commit to being mindful (not multitasking!) during this activity for one week.

Follow-up

Share your experiences after being mindful during a routine activity for one week?

What is Mindfulness?

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Institute for Healthcare Improvement

10 Mindful Exercises for the Health Care Workplace

<http://www.ihl.org/communities/blogs/10-mindfulness-exercises-for-the-health-care-workplace>