



International
Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing



Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

NECS

Introduction to Mindfulness



For further information, please contact

International Wellbeing Insights +44 203 142 8650

support@stress.org.uk



North of England
Commissioning Support Unit



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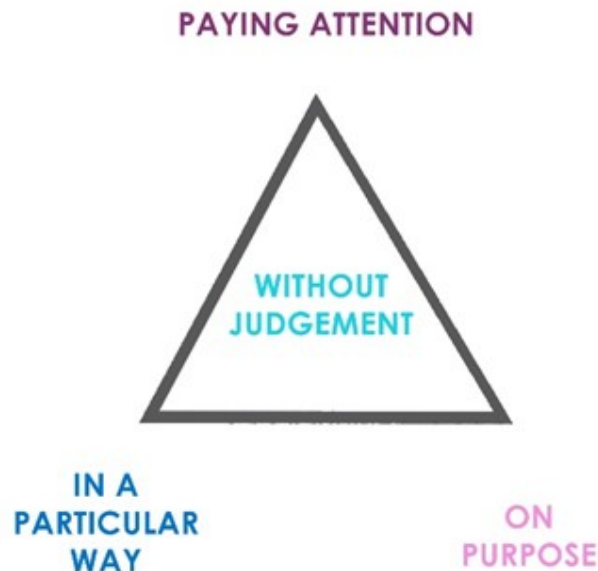
Stress Management Society
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WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Jon Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as:



Mindfulness is about observing the reality of the moment as it is (not as you want it to be), without judgment. A simple way to describe mindfulness is: the art of noticing what is happening, when it happens, without judgement or preference.

WHAT?

WHEN?

WITHOUT JUDGEMENT?

Modern mindfulness stems from the studies of meditation that took place in the 70's. Much of our current understanding of mindfulness can be accredited to Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Research studies have taken this work further in fields as varied as medicines, psychology, neuroscience, business, social sciences, education, creativity, project management & criminal justice system. The majority of the research looks at how mindfulness allows us to manage stress effectively and the physiological and neurological changes it brings to support this.

USING MINDFULNESS TO DE-STRESS

There is a connection between mindfulness and relaxation/peace of mind.

For most of us, for much of the day, we are stuck in 'doing mode', our minds are scattered. Mindfulness is all about learning to pay attention, to increase our focus. Where we place our attention and how we pay attention has an impact on our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as how we are impacted by stress.

Most people find their minds are constantly wandering as they think about the things they would like to happen, things that have already happened and things that are not happening (that they would like to happen). A wandering mind is often unfocussed, less resilient and leads to more stress in our bodies. The art of mindfulness is to focus on what is actually happening right now in the reality of this moment.

This 'wandering mind' and 'automatic pilot' mode that we may find ourselves in is rarely in the present moment, centered on what is happening right now. We tend to be drawn into dwelling on the past/projecting into the future. We live in the judgment of the past/analysis of our experiences, NOT the experience itself.

Research has shown how our reaction to stress effects our bodies:

- Cognitively, we are caught up in mental rumination/stress
- Physiologically, this triggers the amygdala/fight-flight response
- Raises cortisol/adrenaline in the blood stream
- Raises the heart rate/blood pressure
- Suppresses the immune and digestive systems and interrupts sleep

This can be avoided. First, we need to recognise the 'automatic pilot' so that we can choose to step outside of it. Once we recognise this, we can cultivate focus through mindfulness.

BREATHING MINDFULLY & THE BODY SCAN

1-Minute Focus Practice

This breathing exercise is an easy mindfulness technique that allows us to practice being purposeful, in the present moment, and non-judgmental:

- Close your eyes and breathe normally
- Watch your breath, focusing your awareness
- Notice the sensation of your breath around the nostrils
- Where is your breath coming in to? Is your breath fast or is it slow?
- Do not force the breath, just observe it for a few minutes

Step 1

Choose a quiet place where others can't disturb you and where you feel comfortable. Turn off any devices that may distract you such as your phone or TV.

Step 2

Make sure you are in a comfortable position and move your awareness to your body. Check in with your body as it is right now, notice any sensations that are present, feeling the areas that are in contact with the surface you are lying/sitting/standing on. Mentally examine your body for any tense areas, such as the thighs or shoulders, and see if you can relax and loosen them.

Step 3

Allow any thoughts from your past or future to float out of your mind so you can fully engage in the present moment. The only thoughts you now have are your awareness of your body; and all of these thoughts are met with a sense of positivity and friendliness. This means letting go of judgmental thoughts that label problematic or painful areas as the enemy. These areas are just as they are.

Step 4

In your mind, turn your attention to each individual part of your body. Only concentrate on one area at a time, such as one hand. Feel the sensations in and around your hand, the temperature, any textures it is touching, a possible breeze flowing across the skin; is it relaxed, tense, heavy etc. Make sure you don't start thinking about it ("That blanket is really making my hand itch, should I itch it or leave it? And my finger is aching, where does that come from?"). Instead, just be aware of the sensations in a non-judgmental way: "The rough blanket is touching my palm, and there's a sensation in the index finger". The latter means you are aware but you are staying neutral, and are able to progress with the scan. The main point is being curious and open to what you are noticing.

Step 5

Finally, become aware of the entire body as one entity, and maintain this awareness for a few minutes. Feel the body both internally and externally, still aiming to stay fully in the present.

WALKING MINDFULLY

Follow these simple steps to practice mindfulness as you walk:

Step 1

Stand up and take two or three relaxed breaths. Start to walk around your surrounding area whether this is inside, in the garden or out on a walk with no phone, no distractions. Allow any thoughts about work or personal life to float out of your mind as you fully engage with your surroundings. Let go of any judgmental thoughts towards external noises from birds, cars or other people.

Step 2

Take the time to really look around your surroundings, focus on it with your full attention. Be aware of all of your senses without any judgements. What do you see? What can you smell? Is there an aroma or fragrance? What can you hear? Can you hear the sound of the birds? What can you feel? Do you feel the breeze on your face? Do you feel your jacket rubbing on your skin? The sun breaking through the clouds?

Step 3

Think about where you are placing your foot with each step. Are you anticipating where you are placing your foot? Is the ground hard, soft, smooth, bumpy? Are you walking fast? Are you walking slow? Just observe what is occurring naturally.

Step 4

If your attention wanders, simply notice that this is happening and gently direct your attention back to exploring your surroundings and any sensations you notice.



A SIP OF MINDFULNESS

Step 1

Sit comfortably in a chair take two or three relaxed breaths. Pick up your glass of water. Take time to really look at the water. Focus on it with care and full attention.

Step 2

Slowly bring the glass of water to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly where to position it. Are you anticipating drinking the water? Is it difficult not to just drink it?

Step 3

Take a sip. Just let it sit on your tongue for a few moments. Don't swallow it. Just leave it on your tongue and notice how the water feels.

Step 4

When you're ready, begin to swish the water around the mouth. Very slowly, extending the time it takes to swallow as long as possible. What is that like? What does the water feel like? What sensations, textures, tastes, and smells do you notice? If you feel the urge to swallow the water right away, just notice that urge, and slowly swish the water for a minute or so, without swallowing.

Step 5

When you feel ready to swallow, consciously notice the intention to swallow, then see if you can notice the sensations of swallowing the water, sensing it moving down to your throat and into your oesophagus on its way to your stomach. Notice how your body as a whole feels.

Step 6

Now bringing your awareness gently back to your breath for two or three breaths, and when you are ready, gently open your eyes.



A TASTE OF MINDFULNESS

Step 1

Sit comfortably in a chair take two or three relaxed breaths. Place a piece of chocolate/fruit in your hand. Take time to really look at the chocolate/fruit. Focus on it with care and full attention—imagine that you've just come to Earth from a distant planet without such food and you have never seen an object like this before in your life.

Step 2

Now close your eyes. Turn the chocolate/fruit over between your fingers, exploring its texture. What does it feel like? What are its textures? Is it warm or cool?

Step 3

Hold the chocolate/fruit beneath your nose, and with each inhalation notice any smell, aroma or fragrance that may arise, and if there's anything interesting happening in your mouth or stomach. Notice how you react to the smell.

Step 4

Slowly bring the chocolate/fruit to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly where to position it. Are you anticipating eating the chocolate/fruit? Is it difficult not to just pop it in your mouth?

Step 5

Gently place the chocolate/fruit on your tongue. Just let it sit on your tongue for a few moments. Don't chew it. Just leave it on your tongue and notice how the chocolate/fruit feels.

Step 6

When you're ready, begin chewing. Bite the chocolate/fruit very slowly and gently, extending the time it takes to bite through it as long as possible. What is that like? What does the chocolate/fruit feel like between your teeth? What sensations, textures, tastes, and smells do you notice? If you feel the urge to swallow the chocolate/fruit right away, just notice that urge, and slowly chew the chocolate/fruit for a minute or so, without swallowing.

Step 7

When you feel ready to swallow, consciously notice the intention to swallow, then see if you can notice the sensations of swallowing the chocolate/fruit, sensing it moving down to your throat and into your oesophagus on its way to your stomach. Notice how your body as a whole feels

Step 8

Now bringing your awareness gently back to your breath for two or three breaths, and when you are ready, gently open your eyes.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP) is a 24/7 phone and web service providing confidential support and advice in such areas as family matters, debt advice, counselling, dealing with illness and relationships . Further details of the service can be found on the intranet. You can access the service at www.pamassist.co.uk or on 0800 882 4102. When using the service online you will be asked for your organisational username and password which is; Username – necs Password – necs1

THE WELLBEING ACTION PLAN and SIGNPOSTING TOOL can be found on the Health and Wellbeing Page on the Intranet.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS

WOW INTRANET PAGE – Where you will find information and access Individual Risk Assessment

Access to national support, wellbeing support apps and guides can be found here: <https://people.nhs.uk/>

Access to your LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCE HUB – The NHS staff mental health and wellbeing hubs have been set up to provide healthcare colleagues rapid access to local evidence-based mental health services and support where needed. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/staff-mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs/>

BETTER HEALTH –Better Health is here with lots of free tools and support <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/>

SUPPORT RESOURCES

EVERY MIND MATTERS - Expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

LIVE WELL – Advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choice about your health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

National health and wellbeing support for our NHS people – Health and wellbeing support options available to all NHS staff www.england.nhs.uk/people

National NHS mental health and wellbeing support options – If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, or just want to feel happier, the NHS website can help signpost you to existing support options <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>

NHS APPS LIBRARY – Find apps and online tools to help you manage your health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

WELLBEING WORKSHOPS- NECS has a number of wellbeing sessions which can be booked on <https://learning.necsu.nhs.uk/>

MY ACTION PLAN - 30 DAY CHALLENGE

Knowledge is power...only if you apply it or take action!

The 30-day challenge will maximise your chances of turning useful knowledge and techniques into positive behavioural change. It takes 30 days to turn actions into habits, which is why this is a month-long programme.

What do you aim to achieve/what will you commit to over the next 30 days as a result of this mindfulness workshop?

Action Point 1:

(e.g. For 10 minutes a day I will practice walking mindfully)

Action Point 2:

(e.g. I'm going to have a meal and not watch TV, just paying attention to my food)

Action Point 3:

(e.g. I will take a few minutes out of my day to focus on my breath)

Who will you make yourself accountable to over the next 30 days?

How will you stay in touch? How many times over the next 30 days?

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

Stress is a much used (and abused) term these days. You frequently hear people say “I’m stressed” or “I’m depressed”, yet there is still much confusion about what these terms actually mean and how best to tackle them. This is where we can help. We are the UK’s leading authority on stress management issues, which is why you will regularly hear us talking about this topic in the media.

International Wellbeing Insights is an organisation dedicated to leading effective universal change by maximising your resilience, happiness, productivity and success with our passionate approach to reducing stress and promoting wellbeing. Our extensive knowledge of stress and wellbeing and our cutting edge interventions have made us the primary organisation dealing with work-related stress reduction and wellbeing promotion in the UK since 2003.

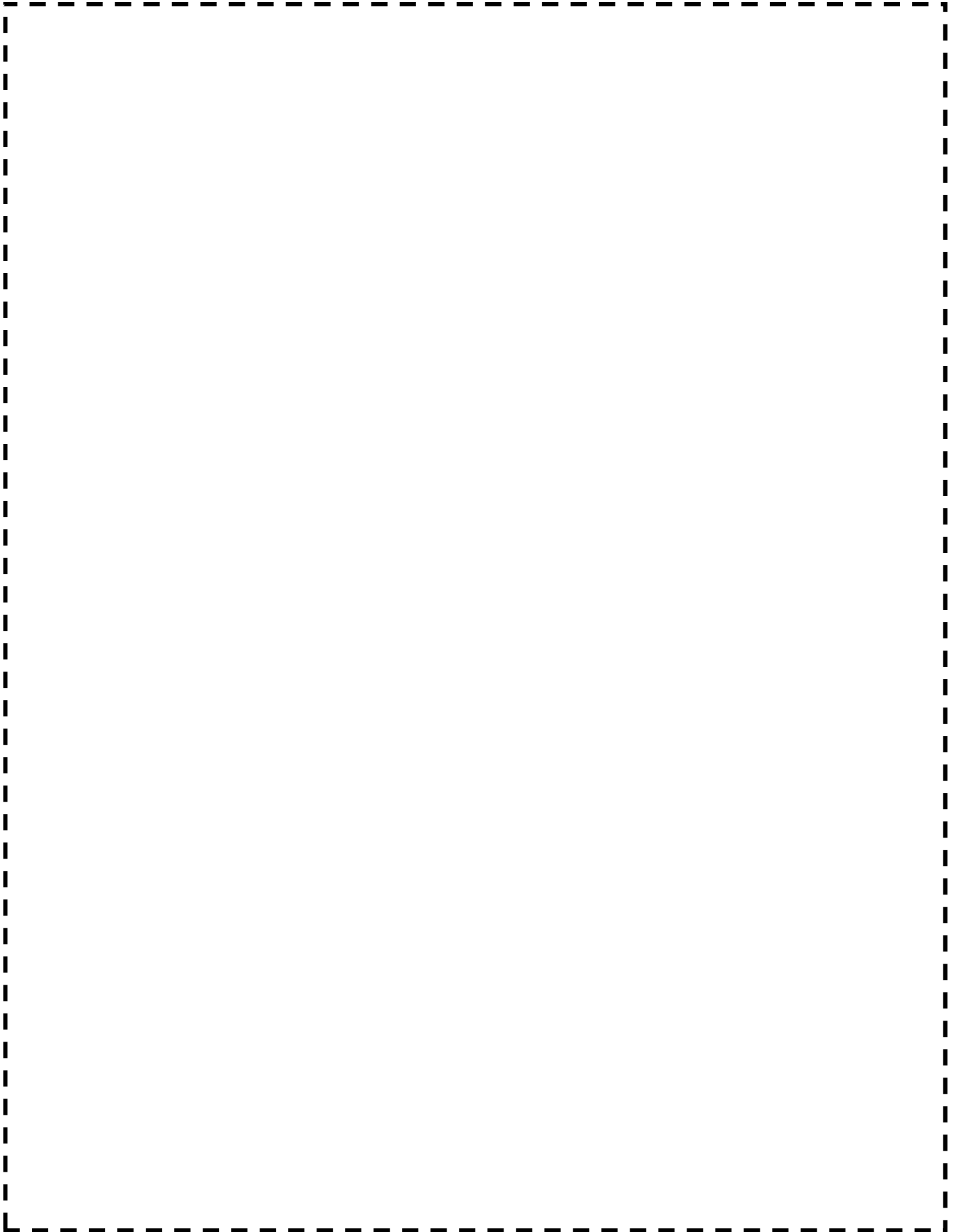
For years, we’ve been empowering individuals to take charge of their wellbeing through our workshops, guides and regular updates. We also act as a trusted advisor for many companies such as SMBC, Garrett, Dragados, DHL, and the NHS—guiding them through the wellbeing solution maze.

For more information or to book a workshop or a coaching session see www.wellbeing.work or call 0203 142 8650 or email info@stress.org.uk

If you want to promote wellbeing in your company using branded stress management products, go to www.stress.org.uk.



NOTES





We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

Find Us Here:

The Lighthouse
Suite S, Quay West
Salamander Quay
Harefield, Middlesex

Call Us On:

Switchboard: +44 (0) 203 142 8650

Email Us On:

info@stress.org.uk

Visit Us On:

www.stress.org.uk
www.wellbeing.work

We have supported many organisations, including:

