

# Mindfulness

Wake up to what's going on in your life.



# Mindfulness

## Your University at your side

### Mental Health and Wellbeing at the University of Wolverhampton:

- provide free and confidential individual counselling
- offer non-judgemental support and understanding
- are professionally trained
- are experienced in dealing with a wide range of problems

### Counselling can:

- help you to develop your strengths
- offer you the chance to focus on and understand your difficulties
- enable you to make positive decisions and changes
- help you to develop the skills and resources to cope
- help prevent small problems from becoming bigger

### Get in touch

You can make an appointment to see a counsellor by filling out the Contact Us form at [www.wlv.ac.uk/SSW](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/SSW), alternatively, you can come along to one of our drop-in services. For more information go to the web address above and click on the Mental Health and Wellbeing option. From here you will find a wealth of useful information and self-help tools as well as our Drop-ins and Group activities.

## What is mindfulness?

*"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)*

### Mindfulness is about being aware

It is not a religion but a way of being which once embraced helps you in the way that you live. It is practised by people of different faith traditions and none. Mindfulness is a simple form of meditation that has its roots in the ancient Buddhist practise of Vipassana or Insight Meditation.

Mindfulness can make the everyday more pleasurable and the difficult easier. You can start to 'wonder' at life, appreciate the little things and take less for granted.

### How can mindfulness help?

Mindfulness can help you feel calmer; less stressed; more empathic; less critical (of yourself and others) and generally help you to participate in your life more.

In addition you can:

- become more vibrant, more fulfilled and get more out of life.
- find yourself worrying less and more able to cope with challenges 'life' throws at you.
- It is also about having the option to respond more skilfully to negative emotions so you don't become exhausted and depressed.
- for some it is about living rather than simply existing, about being really involved in what is going on at the time.

## Who is mindfulness for?

- Everyone who wants to enhance their wellbeing!
- It is for people whose creativity seems to have disappeared.
- Those who are feeling frazzled.
- Those who have lost the enjoyment in life that is normally there.
- Those who normally work hard and are conscientious, who seem to be working harder and harder, and finding less time for friends and family

So, if you are struggling with some of those feelings which can spiral downwards, struggling with not being able to concentrate properly or feeling that life has lost its zest, why not try practising some mindfulness exercises?

Examples of simple mindfulness exercises, varying in length from 3 to 30 minutes, can be found by visiting <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

*"Remember the advice of 'take a deep breath'? It remains one of the most instant mood changers and calming exercises. It's free, it's instantly available and it gets oxygen to your brain." Rowan T (2013)*

### So how does it work?

Mindfulness meditation typically consists of becoming fully aware of the breath as it flows in and out of the body. Focusing on the breath in this way provides an 'anchor' to return to whenever the mind wanders. It involves becoming aware of thoughts, feelings, body sensations and impulses to act. Understanding the transient nature of such thoughts, feelings, sensations and impulses leads to the recognition that we have a choice as to whether to act on them or not.

Mindfulness is not an alternative to dealing with your problems, nor is it going to remove those painful, difficult and sad times in your life. But it can help you gain some more control over your life and help you cope with difficult feelings and situations.

## Why attend a course?

Instead of chasing your tail, getting busier and busier spending more and more time getting nowhere fast, and falling out with friends or colleagues, try mindfulness meditation and see whether it can make a difference for you. Research, cited in Williams and Penman's book: *Mindfulness a Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World. (2011)* suggests it does.

As can often be the case when learning anything new, it is easier to be guided and do it with others, as you would say for learning a sport, musical instrument or other skill.

There are mindfulness courses around. Speak to your local surgery to see if they know of any local course or check on the website. The University Counselling Service values the benefits of mindfulness and runs courses throughout the year for staff, and separately for students.

**" This course has been of great benefit to me on both personal and professional levels. It has enabled me to manage the balance between life and work"**

### References

Kabat-Zinn J. *Wherever you go, there you are: mindfulness meditation in everyday life.* New York: Hyperion, 1994.

Rowan T. (Ed). *the little book of Mind-ful-ness.* London: Quadrille Publishing, 2013.

Williams M. and Penman D. *Mindfulness a practical guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World.* London: Piatkus, 2011.

