

## Taste of Mindfulness

*“Mindfulness is developed by purposefully **paying attention** in a sustained and **non-judgmental** way, to what is going on in your body, your mind, and in the world around you. It is being awake and aware, **living in the present** – simply being yourself and knowing something about who that is.”*

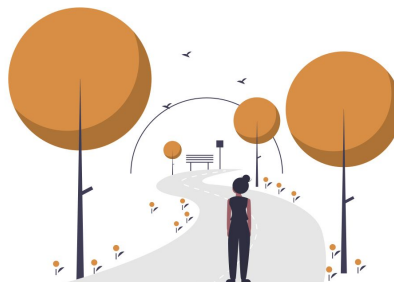
<Full Catastrophe Living> - Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD



Over the last 40 years, scientists and researchers have started to look into the benefits of practicing mindfulness in a secular way, more and more evidence now shows that we can cultivate a greater capacity to concentrate on the present moment, to meet physical and psychological difficulties with ease and gentleness, to become less caught up by automatic and habitual stress reactivity, to enhance the utilization of parasympathetic nervous system for stress recovery, and in turn promote overall wellbeing.

Neuroscience research studies even suggest the possibility of rewiring our brain by practicing meditation to make better decisions (by taming the emotional fight-flight-freeze reaction caused by amygdala activation) and to better focus and remember important tasks (by engaging hippocampus & quieting Default Mode Network).

Mindfulness shows us a new way to be with ourselves, instead of keeping the “Doing mode” always on and getting lost in thoughts about the past and future, by knowing that as human beings, we all share innate wisdom and resources to live and enjoy our lives fully.

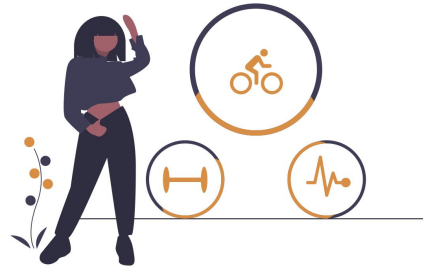


***Aware and Awake in Life***

## The Benefits of Regular Mindfulness Practice :

### **Improves physical health, sleep quality, increases energy**

Mindfulness can foster self-care and help us better utilize our parasympathetic nervous system in the body to rest, relax and recover from stress. It can also improve sleep quality and pain management capacity. (Kabat-Zinn, 1985; Black & O'Reilly et al., 2015; Davidson & Kabat-Zinn, 2003)



### **Promotes emotional health, manages stress, reduces anxiety & depressive symptoms**

Instead of reacting to and fighting against intense emotions in stressful and difficult moments, being mindful can allow us to notice the causes of these challenging feelings, to meet and ride through emotions with calmness and space, and to choose how we respond to the situation, heal & recover. (Weinstein, Brown & Ryan, 2008; Segal, et al, 2010; Jha & Stanley et al, 2010; Johnson & Thom, et al, 2014)

### **Boosts focus, more productive and transform our habits**

Mindfulness encourages us to manage distractions and stay present and focused on the task at hand and develop the brain network responsible for concentration. It also improves our ability to manage urges and impulses coming from addictive and unhealthy behaviors. (Levy & Wobbrock et al, 2012; Zeidan & Johnson et al, 2010; Hafenbrack, Kinias & Barsade, 2013; Brewer, 2011)



### **Fosters authentic, healthy & compassionate interpersonal connection**

Mindfulness allows us to connect and engage with other people with heart and presence. It enhances our ability to understand and be more compassionate about others' emotions and needs without giving up our authenticity and burning out. (Pratscher & Rose et al., 2017; Wang, Fox & Shackman et al., 2013; Kyeong & Kim et al, 2017; Carson et al., 2004)

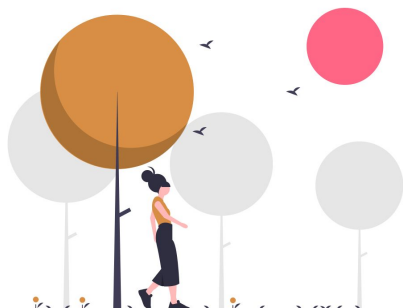
## Daily small mindful practice check-list:

- Observe your breath, body and mind first when we get up in the morning
- Simple gratitude journaling (morning or evening): write down 3 small things/events you feel grateful for.
- Short mindful walking: attending to the sensations of movement, the connection with the environment (Research shows that it can boost creativity too!)
- Mindful eating: When we eat, choose at least one bite and fully experience the food or drink using all five senses.
- Before we pick up a call or open/send an email, take a conscious breath, count to three and notice the body and mind state. Silently asking “What do I want to get?”
- Deep listening like a sponge with your full attention during conversation.
- One-minute present break: Put down your task or phone. Choose one thing (e.g. plant, window, painting) to be an object of attention. Be fully present with it for 1-min.
- Aware of the posture during the day. Ask the body where ease or tension shows up.
- Mindfully stretch the body to release tension and observe how the body moves non-judgementally.
- In a tense or stressful situation, practice S-T-O-P (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed) (See below)
- Practice three-minute breathing space to check-in body & mind state. E.g. before meetings or important presentations
- When dealing with boring, tedious tasks, try bringing some playfulness and curiosity
- Practice simple random acts of kindness (e.g. holding doors, thank you notes, sharing snacks, silently wishing people well)



**28-Day Mindful Challenge: Give yourself 5 minutes a day for self-care and do one mindful practice you like. Tag @mindfuloceanhk on Instagram to let us know it goes!**

## Mindful “First Aid” : S.T.O.P. & Breathing Space in an intense, stressful situation



“**S**top. **T**ake a Deep Breath.

**O**bserve the body & mind. **P**roceed with awareness.”

3-Minute Breathing Space:

You can practice this anytime you feel tense or scattered and need to refocus. The object of the exercise isn’t to control or clear your mind but rather to hold a magnifying glass to your patterns of mind. In Step 1, you move from

your busy work-life doing mode into being mode. You observe what's going on for you at this moment. In Step 2, you anchor your attention on the sensations of breathing. In Step 3, you return to an open monitoring state, aware of everything that's going on around you, ready for the rest of your day.

Link for meditation practice recordings (Both English & Cantonese) :  
<https://www.mindfulocean.com/cuhk-upals>



### Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Busy mind and hard to focus:** It is natural! Our mind and brain is made to think. You may notice the mind can be very active especially in stillness. This is normal and natural that your mind keeps drifting off when meditating which is an unusual task as a beginner. All you need to do is to notice where the mind drifted without any judgment and evaluation, then gently invite the attention to return to the object that you are guided to focus on. It takes time to train our mind.
2. **Drowsy and sleepy during practice:** Instead of fighting against the sleepiness, see if you can consider it as a signal sent by the body. The moment when you feel awake again, if you are willing to, check-in with the body and acknowledge what is needed for you to continue the practice with wakefulness. Every time your answer can be different, e.g. changing your posture, opening the eyes, or stop and try at a different time of the day. Experiment with openness and curiosity.
3. **Restlessness and pain:** Meditation is a task and practice which we are not used to do, since we are trained and so conditioned to multitask and react to everything quickly. At first, it is okay to move, adjust your posture or find more support to the body during the practice, without forcing the body to push through limits. By maintaining awareness, move the body by knowing the intention, where and how you move, and what changes afterward. With more practice over time, you may find it easier to offer some space to just observe the areas where you feel painful or restless, perhaps directing your breath there to soften.



*Just like every skill you learn,  
the more you practice mindfulness, the  
more likely you can enjoy its benefits.*

To learn more, please follow us on:

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