

## Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness can help achieve a better quality of life both mentally and physically. Meditation is a very useful tool that can be used at any time or anywhere by a person to reflect on their emotions, to slow down racing thoughts, and be more 'in the moment'.

Mindfulness is about the person focussing on themselves, their mind, their body and surroundings. Instead of letting the mind get carried away by unhelpful thoughts and feelings, mindfulness meditation encourages the person to take notice of their thoughts and feelings nonjudgmentally.

### Mindfulness exercises to try

**One Minute Breathing:** Start by taking several deep breaths. Fill your belly up with air like a balloon and gently let the air out. Focus on your breath for one minute. Breathe in and out slowly, holding your breath for a count of six and slowly exhaling. As your mind wanders to other things, try to bring your attention back to your breath.

**Mindful Observation:** Pick an object in the room and observe it for one minute. Notice the colour, texture, shape, smell, and size of the object. By focusing carefully on one object at a time you can improve your concentration and slow down your thoughts.

**The Game of Five:** Take notice of five things in your day that usually you don't take notice of by using your senses. Try to hear, smell, feel, touch or see things that surround you. For example when you are out and about look around you and see how you can match your five senses to things and sounds around you. This is a particularly good mindful exercise if you are feeling annoyed, stressed or angry about something.

Trying these mindful exercises can make a difference. Your skills will develop through regular practice and gradually you will feel the benefits.

### Where can I find out more about Mindfulness?

Mind website

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mental Health Foundation

[www.bemindful.co.uk/](http://www.bemindful.co.uk/)

Aware NI

Workshops and programmes on mindfulness.

[www.aware-ni.org/](http://www.aware-ni.org/)

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