



HUMAN POTENTIAL AND HAPPINESS SERIES

BEING MINDFUL

BY BRIGID HARDY

Are you hearing about the benefits of mindfulness and not sure where to start? Or maybe you are looking to introduce something new into your current routine. Well take a deep breath and relax because there are lots of different ways to be mindful and it is easy to find something that will work for you.

The Eastern approach to mindfulness is highly meditative with meditation considered the most useful skill to master. Regular meditation practice seeks to build enhanced awareness of your experiences, and a non-judgemental reaction to those experiences. This is believed to ground the mind and increase focus on the present moment in a way that reduces mental suffering or dukkha, and increases wellbeing. Most beginner Eastern practices involve focusing on a neutral object like the sensation of the breath, a word or a mantra, or the feeling of the belly or chest inflating or deflating. This builds an easily accessible, cost-free practice and a method to redirect attention from unhelpful internal monologue or rumination.

“Mindfulness isn’t difficult, we just need to remember to do it” Sharon Salzberg

As a result of the West's embracement of mindfulness, there is no shortage of resources available. In the interests of inspiration, here are some of my favourite mindfulness tools.

Guided meditation apps – my personal favourite is 10% Happier but there are many free apps (or apps that have a free component) such as Buddhify, Headspace, Calm, Smiling Mind and Insight Timer. These apps offer a range of times and topics so you can choose 4 minutes to enhance performance before a big event or 40 minutes to calm your mind before you go to sleep at night.

Mindfulness or meditation courses - (either virtual or face to face) are often a relatively cheap way to learn and practise and offer the consistency and encouragement of both the group and the teacher.

Yoga - yoga is a Hindu spiritual practice that includes meditation, breath control and body postures or asana. Yoga is easily accessible in the West through local studio classes, online subscriptions (such as Udaya and Yoga International) as well as many free classes and tutorials available on YouTube. While the Western concept of yoga centres mostly around the asana and its positive impacts on the physical body, yoga is far broader than that and actually offers a way of life that leads to enhanced mindfulness. Traditionally, the ultimate goal of the asana was to prepare the mind and body to sit in meditation.

Mindful activity – whether it is eating, walking, folding the washing or washing the dishes, there is an opportunity to bring greater mindfulness to each moment. Just focus on what you are doing and intentionally move between what you see, feel and hear. Gently bring your focus back to what you are doing each time you notice you are being distracted by thoughts.



Mindfulness, of course, is also about noticing what is happening for you in the moment, not just when you are actively participating in a mindfulness activity. For example, why did you just react in a certain way, what is the underlying emotion and what might it mean? Are you experiencing a physical feeling that is connected to a conversation or experience you just had? Are you caught up in a story that serves your purpose but is based on assumption and very little fact or evidence? Being able to strip back, explore and get curious about these human experiences can lead to a healthy detachment and a happier way of living. Get curious and embrace your inner detective.

Whatever practice you choose, it is important to remember that observation and non-judgement are key. The scientist, writer and meditation teacher Jon-Kabat Zinn is acknowledged as the biggest influence in terms of bringing mindfulness from the East to the West. Kabat-Zinn is the founder of the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School where he developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, an eight-week program aimed at reducing stress. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as **“paying attention with purpose, non-judgmentally, and while in the present moment”**.

I like to think of mindfulness as a discipline or practice that gets easier and more accessible, the more I do it. A bit like building a muscle; it takes time and commitment. But most importantly, don't take it too seriously and allow yourself to have fun and play with it. Play in adults has been shown to reduce stress and increase overall wellbeing, so go and have some fun!

“The heart of meditation is taking ourselves a little less seriously”. @Headspace

If you would like to learn more about mindfulness and wellbeing, the team at Interaction have extensive expertise. Contact us on us on 02 6282 9111 or email icg@interactionconsulting.com.au or visit www.interactionconsulting.com.au



Brigid Hardy is Interaction Consulting's Company Director. She is a trusted strategic advisor, qualified coach and capability development specialist. Brigid holds a rare accreditation in Mindfulness from an Australian University and is a certified Mental Health First Aid facilitator and Yoga teacher. She is a serial traveller and explorer of the world, always in pursuit of mindfulness, improvement and growth, an eternal optimist and deeply grateful for all of the joys and challenges in life.