

## MINDFULNESS

Sometimes living with pain can be overwhelming. It's not just the pain that hurts; your mind can start to suffer as you try to find a way to make the pain stop. Mindfulness has been often been defined as the awareness that comes from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn).

### MINDFULNESS APPROACH

#### **Acceptance**

- A key part of mindfulness is learning how to live in the present moment when the present moment is painful or uncomfortable. Mindfulness is also about learning to live in the present moment when things feel good and are pleasurable.

#### **Mental flexibility**

- Negative thoughts can drive negative feelings. When you're in pain, this can influence the sensitivity of the nervous system and increase the pain experience. Extreme worrying or distress is one of the biggest predictors that short-term acute pain will go on to become persistent pain.
- Mindfulness training is based on the idea of noticing what is happening in your brain and body with curiosity and without judgement.

#### **Mindfulness in everyday life**

- Mindfulness can be used to approach everything you encounter throughout the day, including eating, walking or even doing the dishes. The idea is to be aware of the present moment as much as possible.

#### **Mindfulness to avoid living on autopilot**

- Learning how to respond to experiences versus reacting in knee-jerk/habitual ways is a good way to train your brain to cope with difficult experiences before they spiral.
- A key part of mindfulness is cultivating the ability to simply notice our experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions, physical sensations), rather than get hooked by them or trying to stop them.

- Participating in mindfulness meditation can increase your awareness of your surroundings and present moments.

### **Mindfulness breathing**

- It can be helpful to use mindfulness breathing exercises as an anchor to pay attention to the present moment.
- When pain arises and the brain reacts automatically with negative thoughts, it can be grounding to pay attention to simply pay attention to your breath.
- The use of breath as a centre of focus for mindfulness training can be effective because it is constant and not something you have to consciously do. You breathe in and out regardless of your pain, frustrations, fatigue or worries.
- Some people count breaths (up to 10 and then start over) and others count to four while breathing again when breathing out.
- You can also sit with your hands on your belly and focus on noticing how they move as you breathe in and out.

### RESOURCES

- [LivePlanBe section on mind-body therapies and techniques](#)
- [Getting started with mindfulness](#)
- [Mindfulness for beginners](#)
- [Mindfulness meditation exercise](#)
- [Reasons why everyone should try mindfulness meditation](#)
- [How the brain can change your experience of pain](#)
- [Can mindfulness meditation really reduce pain and suffering?](#)
- [Free guided meditation and mindfulness practices](#)