

Mindfulness

By Lynn Butler, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital District

One topic that comes up at support group meetings is the importance of mindfulness and of being more mindful. But, what exactly does it mean to be mindful and what is mindfulness?

Well, basically mindfulness means paying purposeful attention to the present moment, rather than worrying about the past or future. It involves acknowledging and accepting—without judgment, but rather a gentle curiosity—what you are feeling and thinking. When you are able to become more aware of what you are thinking, how you are feeling, and what is happening in your body, you give yourself the opportunity to change the way you react to any given situation. It has been proven that mindfulness can help reduce stress and its negative impact on your mental and physical health.

Here are a couple of ways you can try to be more mindful as you go about your day. When you wake up in the morning, instead of jumping up and starting your daily routine, take just a moment, relax, and lay there. How are you feeling? What emotions are present? Is your mind calm or are you already planning your day and what needs to be done? Try concentrating your attention on your breathing. Close your eyes. Take five mindful, slow breaths, focusing on each breath as it goes in and as it goes out.

At various points during your day and before you go to bed, stop and do the same thing. Think about how you are feeling, about what's going on. Then focus your attention for a moment on your breath, your breathing. Take five mindful, slow, deliberate breaths.

Another opportunity to try being more mindful is when you go to eat or drink something. Most of us eat on the fly. We don't take time to savor our food or appreciate the effort that went in to growing it or preparing it. At your next meal, before you dig in, stop, look at your food, savour the smell, then take a bite, chew, and swallow. Relish and appreciate your ability to eat and the food you are eating. Enjoy your food.

Every moment of your life will not be mindful. This is just not possible. Mindfulness takes time, practice, and patience, but the benefits are definitely worth the effort.

For more information on mindfulness and meditation you could contact Mental Health Services, a local yoga instructor, or access one of the following web links.

Mindfulness – The Superpower
[youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss)

Just Breathe
[youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg&t=106s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg&t=106s)

Meditation for Beginners
[youtube.com/watch?v=mtsdz_jhB7c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtsdz_jhB7c)

Guided Meditation with Sharon Salzberg
[youtube.com/watch?v=YeeDo-c3IDl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeeDo-c3IDl)

