

Up The 10

By Jennine Wilson, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Valley Region

Mindfulness can help alleviate stress, improve sleep, and lower blood pressure. You might be saying that sounds good to me so how does one get started.

I attended a mindfulness training a number of years ago where a story was shared about stickers on power corporation line workers' helmets saying "Up the 10". The gist is 90% of the time our thoughts are in the past or the future, 10% of the time our thoughts are in the present. "Up the 10" stickers are to remind line workers to stay present while working to be as safe as possible. This was a great take away for me that fit.

I now say this to myself often, especially while walking, driving and doing simple tasks. When I notice my thoughts wandering to the past or future, I say "up the 10" to myself. I take a breath noticing the inhale and exhale, I notice where I am, relaxed in my body, and where I am not. I notice what my eyes have landed on and what sounds I hear. It reminds me to be present.

I also bring my attention to my feet, feeling the ground under me when I am standing in queues, helping me to be present in the moment I am in. Another strategy is to use my finger on one hand to go up and down the fingers on my other hand, inhaling on the up and exhaling on the down. The touch and breath help me be present.

There is more than one way to practice mindfulness and the more you do it the more automatic it becomes. Being present helps me be non-judgemental about how I feel in the moment and helps me respond rather than react even in difficult moments. The more I practice the more I notice when my thoughts wander and when my shoulders are in my ears. It helps me slow down, relax, and be aware.

A Harvard Health article states "Some experts believe that mindfulness works, in part, by helping people to accept their experiences – including painful emotions-rather than react to them with aversion and avoidance."

This is their guidance on "Learning to stay in the present." A less formal approach to mindfulness can also help you to stay in the present and fully participate in your life. You can choose any task or moment to practice informal mindfulness, whether you are eating, showering, walking, touching a partner, or playing with a child or grandchild.

Attending to these points will help:

- Start by bringing your attention to the sensations in your body.
- Breathe in through your nose, allowing the air downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully.
- Now breathe out through your mouth
- Notice the sensations of each inhalation and exhalation
- Proceed with the task at hand slowly and with full deliberation
- Engage your senses fully. Notice each sight, touch, and



sound so that you savor every sensation.

- When you notice that your mind has wandered from the task at hand, gently bring your attention back to the sensations of the moment.

Family/friend Caregivers' are essential and their worlds are full of planning, decision making, thinking three steps ahead, appointments, many necessary tasks, exhaustion and incremental losses. All of that can make it hard work to stay present, but we need to be gentle with ourselves and be non-judgemental about our emotions. My hope is the simplistic practice of something like "up the 10" will help people be present more often, helping us to capture the little moments we are grateful for. What will you try on to see if it is a fit for you?

Information adapted from
<https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>
and <https://www.helpguide.org/>