

Mindfulness Basics

Mindfulness occurs when we are present and engaged in a moment with openness and non-judgement. Mindfulness happens naturally at times, such as when we are focused on just one task like eating a meal, or it can be intentional such as through mindfulness meditation practices.

Components of Mindfulness

Awareness. During a state of mindfulness, you will notice your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they happen. The goal isn't to clear your mind or to stop thinking—it's to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, rather than getting lost in them.

Acceptance. The thoughts, feelings, and sensations that you notice should be observed in a nonjudgmental manner. For example, if you notice a feeling of nervousness, simply state to yourself: "I notice that I am feeling nervous". There's no need further judge or change the feeling.

Source: TherapistAid.com

Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been shown to improve many aspects of both mental and physical health for those to practice it regularly. Benefits seen from regular mindfulness practice include:

- Decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety (in conjunction with other prescribed therapies and treatments)
- Increased capacity to adapt to stressful situations and manage emotions
- Decreased rumination (when we keep returning to a disturbing thought or problem)
- Improved pain management

As with any health and wellness practice, no one size fits all. If you are interested in mindfulness, take time to learn more, ask questions, and determine which approach is a good fit for you. If you are currently receiving treatment for a mental health condition, discuss your interest in mindfulness with your mental health provider. They may have additional free mindfulness resources you can access or customized mindfulness practices that will benefit you.

Self-Guided Mindfulness Practices

Although helpful at times, you don't need an app or mindfulness facilitator to practice mindfulness on your own. Try any of these techniques to strengthen your personal mindfulness practice:

Mindfulness Meditation

Sit in a comfortable place, and begin paying attention to your breathing. Notice the physical sensation of air filling your lungs, and then slowly leaving. When your mind wanders—which it will—simply notice your thoughts, and turn your attention back to breathing.

Mindfulness Walk

While walking, make a point to practice mindfulness. Start by noticing how your body moves and feels with each step. Then, expand your awareness to your surroundings. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? This technique can also be expanded to other daily activities.

Body Scan

Pay close attention to the physical sensations throughout your body. Start with your feet, and move up through your legs, groin, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and face. Spend anywhere from 15 seconds to 1 minute on each body part.

Five Senses

Make a conscious effort to notice the present moment through each of your senses.

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 1 thing you taste
- 1 thing you smell

Source: TherapistAid.com

Free Mindfulness Resources

- **COE Corporate Mindfulness Sessions** (currently online via Google Meetings)
 - Every Wednesday from 12:30-1pm, open to all City employees.
 - Join the Google Group - [COE Employee Mindfulness Sessions](#) (calendar events are automatically added to all members' calendars) or email [Jessica Culling](#) to be added to these events.
- [4 Step Grounding Practice](#) with Jessica Culling
- **Anxiety Canada**
 - [MindShift CBT](#) - This app uses scientifically proven strategies based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you learn to relax and be mindful.
 - [Mindful Breathing](#)
- **MyHealth.Alberta.ca**
 - [Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction](#)
 - [Stress Management: Breathing Exercises](#)

To learn more about mindfulness at the City of Edmonton, contact [Jessica Culling](#), Mental Health/Healthy Living Consultant.