

Wellness Bulletin

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Mindfulness: Cultivating Peace During Turbulent Times

ONE SKILL SET

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions and challenges in our health care system, our economy, our supermarkets and for many of us – our minds. This is a time that is calling for great resilience, compassion, creative problem-solving and commitment to the greater good of our communities. Luckily there is one particular skill set that can help us with all of these challenges – mindfulness.

One of the truths of life is that we can't always control what happens to us, but we do have the ability to choose how we respond to what happens to us. Jon Kabat-Zinn, often dubbed the father of psychological mindfulness, provides the analogy that "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf". Mindfulness helps us to enjoy the pleasurable waves and ride out the tough ones without making it harder for ourselves.

A MINDFUL LIFE

It is fairly well accepted now that mindfulness meditation can be great for relaxation, which is really important because we want to be able to calm our minds and bodies when we need to. But mindfulness is also so much more than this. When we practice living a mindful life, we practice making the choice (over and over again) to pay full attention to this moment – to what we are thinking, feeling, doing and experiencing.

We do this with an attitude of trust, openness, acceptance and kindness towards ourselves, our experiences and others. It allows us to be less judgmental and reactive and to understand ourselves and the current challenge better, which in turn leads to us feeling more capable and being able to make more helpful choices. Ultimately, these are some of the most important factors of resilience.



DEFAULT MODE

Mindfulness isn't easy because it's not the default mode of the human brain which has developed to think (rather than experience) and to focus on the past and future (rather than on the present). The default mode has been very important in improving the practical elements of life but has come at an emotional cost because it disrupts the peace that we can feel by being in the present moment.

It also creates a situation where we are often dealing with all sorts of problems in our mind – real, imaginary, future, past – that don't need dealing with right now (if ever), increasing our sense of pressure, stress and emotional distress.

If there was ever a time in our lives to cultivate the skill set, attitude and practice of mindfulness to provide moments of peace it is now. Maybe even in this very moment.

If you would like to learn more about Mindfulness book an appointment with one of SMG Health's EAP clinicians and they can teach you this skill as part of our proactive approach to mental wellbeing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT SMG HEALTH

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