

Mindfulness and Relaxation

Physiotherapy Patient Information

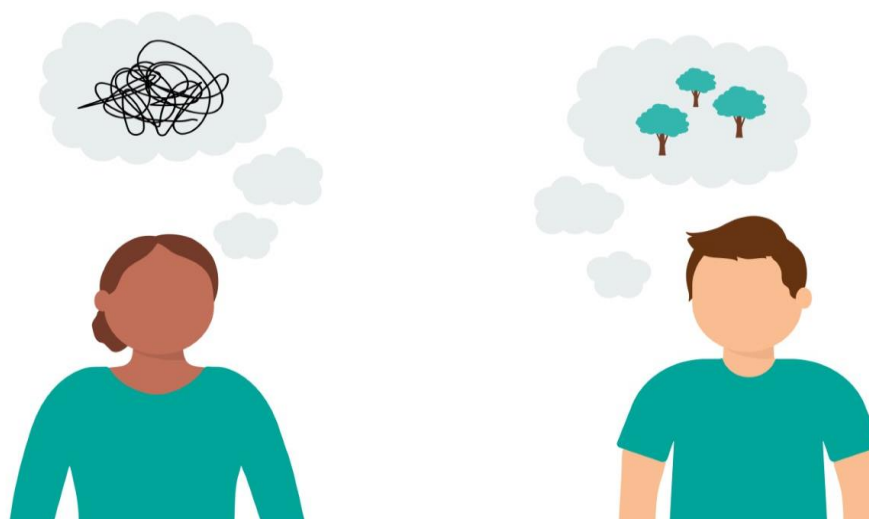
What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is defined as a type of meditation. In it you focus on the present moment towards your thoughts, feelings, and to the world around you. Techniques such as breathing, meditation and yoga are used to help you to become more aware of your own thoughts and feelings.

Why is mindfulness important?

It is easy to stop noticing the world around us and it is very easy to lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling. Often we can get caught up in our own thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are influencing our behaviour and emotions; spending too much time planning, problem-solving, daydreaming, or thinking negatively can be draining. Mindfulness is important because it enables us to reconnect with our bodies, feelings and the sensations we experience, through focusing on our emotions, sounds, smells, sights and tastes.

When we are mindful, we gain insight and awareness through observing our own mind; we reduce our stress levels, enhance our performance, and increase our attention to the world around us. Self-awareness also helps us to notice signs of anxiety or stress earlier on and as a result, helps us to deal with these emotions quicker and more efficiently. Therefore, mindfulness practises increase our ability to regulate emotions, decrease stress, anxiety and depression by paying attention to our own thoughts and feelings without judgement.





How to be mindful:

Here are five tips on how you can introduce mindfulness to your everyday life. It is important to recognise that mindfulness works differently for everybody, but studies suggest that mindfulness can have a positive effect on your cognitive processes to decrease anxiety and negative stress.

1. Mindful breathing – When you have negative thoughts, sit down, take a deep breath and close your eyes. Focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. Sitting and breathing for even just a minute can help.
2. Slow down – It's hard to slow down and notice things in a busy world. Try to take the time to experience your environment with all of your senses — touch, sound, sight, smell and taste. For example, when you eat a favourite food, take the time to smell, taste and truly enjoy it.
3. Move – Whether it's running, walking, or even stretching at your desk, become aware of your body's sensations. How are you feeling? Do you have any muscular tension?
4. Try something new – Trying new things, such as going somewhere new for lunch, can help you to gain new experiences, and notice the world in a new way.
5. Appreciate the little things – Focus your attention onto the pleasures of life, no matter how small they are. It is too easy to take things for granted or miss them altogether.

Mindful Walking

Mindful walking has both mental and physical benefits. During mindful walking, the journey is less about the destination and more about bringing awareness to this every day activity, whilst avoiding your distracted 'autopilot'.

1. Find Space. Mindful walking can be performed indoors, but also works well out in nature.
2. Check-in. Before you begin moving, perform a quick check in with your body. Notice the sensation of the soles of your feet on the floor and how your weight is distributed.
3. Notice. As you slowly begin to walk, notice the sensation of your body as you move through space. You can also be aware of the noises and smells around you, but primarily focus on the feeling of your gait (walking pattern). Much like the breath is an anchor in a seated breathing practice; your footsteps become the anchor in walking meditation.



Two Minute Mindful Breathing Exercise:

Mindful breathing helps you to become aware of your breath by focusing on how the air moves in and out of your lungs, mouth and nose. The act of focusing on your breath usually helps to slow down breathing patterns, subsequently making you feel more relaxed.

1. **Settle.** Begin by taking a moment to settle in a comfortable position. You can close your eyes or look down to limit visual distractions.
2. **Relax.** See if you can notice any areas of physical tightness or tension. That might mean dropping your shoulders, wiggling your fingers, loosening your jaw, softening the muscles around the eyes, or relaxing the stomach.
3. **Check-in.** Noticing where your body touches the ground or the chair. What does it feel like to have the weight of gravity pulling you down?
4. **Breathe.** Inhale through the nose, and exhale through the mouth.
5. **Notice.** Observe the pause in between each inhalation and exhalation. Notice the sensation of the air as it passes through the nostrils and mouth. You might even notice the belly rising and falling with each inhale and each exhale.





Resources

There are lots of apps available to support mental health, relaxation and mindfulness. Apps endorsed and used by the NHS are listed at www.nhs.uk/apps-library, or browse using your phone or tablet to find one that works for you.

The websites below have a good overview on mindfulness and relaxation exercises;

[NHS Mindfulness](#)

[NHS - 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing](#)

[NHS - Mental Wellbeing Audio Guides](#)

[Mindful Breathing Exercise](#)

[Mindful Exercises](#)

[What is Mindfulness?](#)

[Age UK](#)

[Mindfulness](#)

[The Free Mindfulness Project](#)

[Oxford Mindfulness Centre](#)

[The Wellness Society](#)

[Positive Psychology](#)

Local Services and Charities

[Bath Mind](#)

[B&NES Talking Therapies](#)

[Penny Brohn UK](#)



Free Audio Resources for Mindfulness Meditation:

[Mindful](#)

[The Free Mindfulness Project](#)

[Mindful Meditation Talks](#)

[The Mindfulness Network](#)



Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656/826319.