

# Mindful Living

Simply, mindfulness is the awareness of the present-moment in an accepting and non-judgmental way. To live mindfully, you must stay connected to the present moment without resisting it, judging it, or wishing it to be different. This is often easier said than done! However, positive benefits can be obtained by starting a practice of mindfulness with as little as a few minutes a day.

Research suggests that adding a practice of mindfulness to your daily routine increases the plasticity of the brain's grey matter which is involved in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and attentional control. These brain changes promote psychological and physical wellbeing by increasing activity in the part of the brain responsible for decision making, reasoning, and concentration; and reducing activity in the areas of the brain responsible for emotions like fear and stress.

Here are a few tips to live mindfully:

- **Create mindful mornings.** Including mindfulness in your morning routine will set a positive tone for the rest of your day. It will help you find a sense of positivity, calmness, and focus and better enable you to manage occupational stressors. Examples of mindful morning behaviors can include a morning meditation, mindful eating, or a mindful walk.

- **Add mindfulness to your workday.** One way to do this is to take several intentional mindfulness breaks throughout your workday. Every 90-120 minutes, or whatever time interval you can manage, stop what you're doing and mindfully observe your surroundings. Get out of your chair, away from your computer screen and take a break!

- **Avoid judgement.** At its core, mindfulness is about not judging. Take time to train your mind in non-judgment and expand your capacity for acceptance. It's about being aware of what's happening within and around you each moment, so you may consciously choose what response and/or action will truly serve your wellbeing.

- **Reduce exposure to social media.** Multiple studies have connected social media with anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, and loneliness. That means, watching how much time you spend scrolling through feeds is an important part of cultivating mindfulness. It's also an important step for creating more joy, peace, and a well-balanced life.

- **Spend more time in mindful activities.** Mindful eating, walking, and spending time in nature are great ways to be more mindful. Mindful eating can include chewing your food completely before swallowing, noticing your sensory experiences as you eat, savoring the flavors, and visualizing how the food was grown and produced. Mindful walking can help you better stay in contact with the present moment. This can be done by intentionally observing your surroundings, for example, what you see, hear, and smell? Spending time in nature can be one of the most powerful and enjoyable ways to cultivate mindfulness. Connect to nature, whatever access you have to it. Simply. Go outside and take notice.

Questions? Contact us at 363ISR.W.ART.363ISR.W@us.af.mil or at 757-764-9316