

## Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness practice is paying attention with intention and without judgment to the experiences we are having in the present moment. Our minds naturally gravitate to thoughts of the past and the future and we risk missing out on the things that are happening in our lives right now. Practicing mindfulness is as simple as choosing what you want to pay attention to – the breath, sound or music, movement – and gently returning your attention to that chosen anchor every time your mind wanders. Over time, the practice of being more fully in the present can help reduce stress and enrich your relationships.

## The Twenty Breaths Practice

- 1) Deliberately stop what you are doing. If possible sit down and/or close your eyes.
- 2) For each of the next twenty breaths, bring your attention fully to your breath without judgment. There is no need to breathe in a particular way, just pay attention to your breath as it is.
- 3) At the end of each breath, let go completely and then silently count the breath in your mind. Breathe in – breathe out – 1. Breathe in – breathe out – 2. You will count your breaths from 1-10 and then backwards again from 10-1.
- 4) Each time your mind wanders or you lose count, it is an opportunity to practice mindfulness by bringing your attention back to the breath. If you are distracted by sounds or thoughts, just notice them and bring your attention back to the breath. If you feel restless or tired or bored – just notice these feelings and return your attention to the breath.
- 5) If possible, rest for a few moments after the end of the practice. Open your eyes and take a moment to sense the world around you before resuming activity.
- 6) You can do this practice with 1 breath, 3 breaths, 5 breaths, or 10 breaths – whatever you have time for.

## Resources for further exploration of mindfulness

### Apps:

[Insight Timer](#): Free app that includes guided meditations, ways to connect with other people practicing mindfulness, and a timer that facilitates solo practice

[Headspace](#): Free Basic 10-day introductory course and then subscription is \$13/month

[Stop, Breathe, and Think for Kids](#): Excellent brief mindfulness practices with videos that kids love. Fifteen videos are free and subscription costs \$10/month

### Books:

[10% Happier](#): Television news anchor Dan Harris shares his account of developing his own mindfulness practice after having a panic attack on national television. His website and app contain many useful resources

[Full Catastrophe Living](#): Jon Kabat-Zinn is considered the founder of secular Western mindfulness practice and this is book is the foundation for his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program that has taught tens of thousands of people how to practice mindfulness.

Content created for the Pediatric Palliative Care Coalition by Miriam Stewart, April 2021. The Twenty Breaths Practice was developed by Michael Baime as part of the Penn Program for Mindfulness.

## Gratitude Practice

Gratitude practice harnesses the power of positive psychology. Our brains are hard-wired to retain the memory of negative experiences so that we can learn from them and prevent them from happening again. Gratitude practice retrains the brain to better remember and retain our positive experiences. Practicing gratitude nightly for even just one week has been shown to increase happiness and quality of life and reduce depression symptoms for as long as six months.

### Three Good Things Practice

- Each night for a week, write down three good things that happened in the previous 24 hours as well as an explanation for why it happened.
- Include as much detail as possible – sensations, emotions, context – including acknowledging anyone who contributed to the good thing
- Be on the lookout for any changes that are occurring in your internal or external world as a result of this nightly gratitude practice.
- Some people prefer paper and pencil for gratitude practice – if this is you, consider buying a dedicated journal to keep by your bed. If an app would be supportive – you can consider downloading the [“3 Good Things”](#) app and setting it up to remind you about your gratitude practice each night at the same time.