



Mindfulness . . . *At Work for You*

What is mindfulness? Mindfulness is essentially a fitness routine for the mind. In the same way that practicing aerobic and strength training improves physical health and strength, practicing focused attention can actually reshape the brain.

Focused attention, also known as awareness, enables you to see what is on your mind and how thoughts may contribute to – or even create – discomfort and stress. Cultivating this skill can help change the way you view a situation, and make a difference in how you experience your day-to-day life.

Regular mindfulness practice creates physical changes in the brain. Through MRI imaging, actual neurological changes have been observed - changes that impact thought patterns and the body's physical response to stress.

Developing mindfulness helps you to:

- Better manage tension and stress
- Be more objective
- Communicate and make decisions more effectively
- Be more productive
- Enhance creativity

Think it's all in your head?

In addition to boosting brain power, numerous research studies performed at Harvard, Duke, Stanford and the National Institutes of Health have documented significant physical benefits including:

- Reduced blood pressure
- Lowered cholesterol levels
- Enhanced immune function
- Reduced headache, migraine and back pain
- Improved respiratory function

Practicing mindfulness involves learning how to focus attention on a chosen object as a way to counter the strong forces of distraction in the mind. Practicing mindfulness is much like practicing physical exercise – the benefits can be felt immediately but are greatest when you do it consistently, over time.

For further information on mindfulness please visit our website at: www.harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness

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Mindfulness:



Comments from Harvard Pilgrim staff:

- Practicing meditation right before my Doctors appointment made a huge difference. I normally have high blood pressure at every visit. I decided to consciously practice meditation while waiting in the waiting room and my reading was normal! This was a first and my Doc was very supportive!
- Since practicing mindfulness I have not been sick at all. My allergies didn't even arise this year which is unusual because I have hay fever. My blood pressure is 110/60 which is low for my age. I used to struggle with back pain but with the general sense of peace I feel, it has not been a problem.
- I can bring calmness almost immediately now. By seeing/realizing (being aware) that tension is arising and by seeing it, it dissipates.
- Not only did this course help me focus on my work, the techniques and practices supported me in reaching a personal weight loss goal.
- Whenever I catch myself cerebrally multitasking, I pause and focus on my breathing and once I regain focus on the task at hand, I do it mindfully, e.g. listening, working, chores, driving.
- There has been an improvement in the quality of my sleep. Menopause has impacted the quality of my sleep and mindfulness/meditation practices have made a difference.
- I am much calmer. I don't get myself into angst and worry over small things, or even large things for that matter. Even when the dept around me may be spinning and whirling with overwhelm, I'm managing to stay quiet and focused and get things done.
- My instinct to immediately react is not as strong as it was before. I notice how much I am constantly thinking of EVERYTHING. I knew I constantly multitasked in my head but before this class I would not have noticed it.
- Definite improvement in being able to stop the negative talk in my head and focus when I need to.
- Improved sleep, ability to deal with stress and step back without going into a tailspin. Greater enjoyment and appreciation of life, work, children, friends, family, co-workers and nature.
- I'm a better person, less edgy, more compassionate, less stressed about small things, less intense about work (but just as productive), calmer.
- My mind is so much less cluttered, and I feel like I am able to follow through with more things, which then frees me up to take on new things, instead of having 1,000 unfinished things just waiting.
- I am currently enrolled in a weight loss program and have integrated the mindfulness practices into the program. I have found the mindfulness practices have real, practical implications for improving health and obsessive behavior.
- I feel like I am more at ease with myself and this helps me to have more genuine interactions and trusting relationships.
- I hope this class continues and grows – it is an incredible gift to HPHC employees and is a great example of HPHC's progressive approach to health and wellness."

“This is probably the **best course I have taken** at HPHC, as I find it has had an enduring positive impact on my productivity and ability to deal with people in stressful situations.”



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