

Carers' Self Advocacy Toolkit

Mindfulness



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of thinking and focusing that can help you become more aware of your present experiences. Research has shown mindfulness to be helpful in dealing with anxiety. Practicing mindfulness can be as simple as noticing the taste of a mint on your tongue. There are some things you might do every day without even thinking about them, like brushing your teeth in the morning. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the feelings and sensations of these experiences.

Mindfulness practice has two key parts:

- Paying attention to and being *aware* of the present moment
- *Accepting* or being willing to experience your thoughts and feelings without judging them

For example, focusing on the inhale and exhale of your breathing is one way to concentrate on the present moment. Mindfulness involves allowing your thoughts and feelings to pass without either clinging to them or pushing them away. You just let them take their natural course. While practicing mindfulness, you may become distracted by your thoughts and that is okay. The process is about being willing to notice where your thoughts take you, and then bringing your attention back to the present.

Skills of mindfulness

Mindfulness is made up of a number of skills and to develop them needs practice – though the good thing about mindfulness is that you can practice them at any point during the day, like when you are washing the dishes, taking a shower or cooking.

- **Awareness** - try and focus your attention on one thing at a time. This includes being aware of all the things going on around you (sights, sounds and smells) as well as the things going on inside you (thoughts, feelings and sensations)

- **Non-judging observation** - look at what you are observing without thinking “this is good” “this is bad” An important part of this is accepting everything about what you are feeling and thinking about yourself
- **Being in the present moment** - part of mindfulness is being in touch with *now* rather than getting caught up in negative thoughts from the past or worries about the future Use your five senses to be an active participant in the now
- **Beginner’s mind** - this is about being open to new possibilities. It also is about observing things as they really are, rather than what we have built them up in our minds to be. Try thinking, if I was new to this place, what would I see?

Practising mindfulness

Mindfulness takes practice. As you go about your day, try mindfulness when you get the chance, even if it’s only for five minutes. The more you practice the easier it will become.

A good first option might be to look at some self-help materials available from your library, GP surgery or hospital local carers centre. There are a number of leaflets and online resources that can help you learn more about your own anxiety and how you might be able to deal with it.