

# Everyday Mindfulness

*How mindfulness can help you live a healthier, happier life*

Although we may be driving or waiting in line, many of us are thinking about other things – work deadlines, a recent spat, an unpaid bill.

As Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh says we may be caught in the past or the future instead of living deeply in the present moment.<sup>1</sup> This is called “monkey mind” – when our thoughts leap from place to place.

Mindfulness, on the other hand, is when we stay in the present; we are open, curious and willing to be with what is. Taking the time to stop, breathe, observe, and connect with our inner experience can protect us from modern day stresses.<sup>2</sup>

By helping us be aware and present in the moment, mindfulness can help us improve our health by:<sup>2</sup>

- Lowering our blood pressure.
- Strengthening our immune system.
- Increasing our attention and focus.
- Easing anxiety and depression and promoting well-being.
- Supporting the areas of our brain that are in charge of decision making, emotional flexibility and empathy.

## *Bringing mindfulness to daily life*

You can practice mindfulness anywhere, anytime at no cost. Try these tips to bring mindfulness into your daily life:

- **Waiting in line or traffic:** The next time you are stuck in line or traffic, focus on your breathing, instead of feeling upset or impatient.
- **Waking up:** Instead of jumping out of bed or thinking about any unpleasant tasks you have to do that day, try lying in bed a little longer and focusing on your breathing.

*(continued)*

- **Eating a meal:** The next time you eat a meal, try eating in silence. Put your phone, magazine or newspaper away. Turn off the television. Instead of talking, focus on your five senses as you eat. Chew slowly, eat one bite at a time and savor the flavors and aroma.
- **Talking to others:** When you speak with others, practice mindful listening and truly pay attention to what they are saying. Don't get caught up in judging what they are saying, thinking about what you want to say next or mentally agreeing or disagreeing.
- **Working:** Avoid multitasking as much as you can. While we might think it makes us more productive, multitasking can actually slow us down. Focus on one thing at a time and do it mindfully. Another tip: Set the alarm on your phone to go off a few times during the workday to remind you to bring yourself back into the present.
- **Brushing your teeth:** You can even practice mindfulness while brushing your teeth – Focus on the taste of the toothpaste, the feel of the bristles and the temperature of the water.

If you're still feeling overwhelmed after practicing mindfulness, remember, you can call the number below anytime to be connected or referred to a professional who can help.

### *Need help?*

Call toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 1-800-XXX-XXXX

TTY users call 711.

Or visit us at: [members.mhn.com](http://members.mhn.com)

and register with the company code: XXXXXXXXXX

<sup>1</sup>“Five Steps to Mindfulness”, *Mindful*, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-practice/mindfulness-and-awareness/five-steps-to-mindfulness>.

<sup>2</sup>“About MARC,” *UCLA Mindfulness Awareness Research Center*, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=16>.