

What is mindfulness?

Independent Lives developed this handout about what mindfulness is.

This action plan is taken from Skills for Care's 'Developing resilience in practice' guide: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ResiliencePractice.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on and paying attention to what's happening in the moment and accepting it without judgement.

It's called 'practice' because it's not easy - it takes time and repetition.

By learning how to shift our attention to the present moment and increase our awareness, we can:

- see things more clearly
- be more present and focused at work and at home
- notice the small pleasures of everyday life
- be less caught up in routine-thinking patterns which can add to feelings of stress
- bring a kinder approach to ourselves
- appreciate things that really matter
- gain insight into our emotions
- boost our concentration
- manage and/or relieve pain
- be more aware of ourselves and our surroundings.

Mindfulness is not:

- relaxation
- religion
- being 'nice' and 'feeling good' all of the time
- getting rid of thoughts
- the answer to all our problems.

There are different ways to learn about mindfulness and how to practice it in your daily life, including face-to-face learning, group learning, one-to-one sessions, books, audios, videos and online courses.

Mindfulness won't suit everyone so we recommend that training is provided by a qualified teacher or learning provider. You can search for a local teacher or provider at:

- www.bemindful.co.uk/learn-mindfulness
- www.bemindfulonline.com.

Activity: practicing mindfulness

We do a lot of things in our daily life out of habit, for example, washing our hair or brushing our teeth, and often we don't really notice that we're doing it.

Next time you're doing a daily activity, try to focus on the activity and don't let your mind and thoughts wander off.

For example, when you're brushing your teeth, notice what you feel and experience:

- what does the toothpaste taste like?
- what is the texture - is it grainy or smooth?
- what is the colour of the toothpaste?
- what can you hear and feel - is the water running, how does the toothbrush feel against your teeth and gums, how is your arm moving, are you sitting or standing, how does that feel?

If your mind wanders off, just try to bring it back to the activity that you're doing at that moment. You might be surprised what you notice when you do the activity mindfully.