

Pause ...

## The pursuit of mindful living

Modern Life is anything but Simple. We are in an age of expansion not seen before and doesn't look like slowing anytime soon. We juggle multiple roles, chase our never ending to do lists and many of us are entrapped in the web of technology as it advances and expands and intrudes into every corner of our existence, where not even the bedroom or the bathroom provide solace, anxious we'll miss the latest blog or txt or 'like'. The expectation we place on ourselves and those imposed upon us have never been greater – and the very things that may serve to help us maintain balance including solitude, down time, ordinary pleasures, connecting with nature and true connection (no device) time with family and friends are fast becoming redundant in our over stimulated, distraction laden daily lives.

As we re-assess this relationship with our digital devices, our distraction and our hyper stimulation, the popularity of tools and techniques to counteract and balance our life experience include traditional practices like meditation, yoga and the rapidly expanding movement of mindfulness and mindful living.

Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of The Centre for Mindfulness defines mindfulness as 'paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally and ..... as if your life depended on it!' Other definitions include ' a state of active, open awareness on the present', 'attention to the here and now', and of course Chiropractically 'PTC' (.

Mindfulness as opposed to a 'state of being' is more a 'practice', an 'active' and constant re-direction of awareness, a way of re-connecting with your life as it is, right now in this very moment, the benefits of which include a wiser relationship with what's going on in our lives rather than being at the effect or at the mercy of everything going on around us including our relentless thoughts, or emotions, our reactions and our judgements.

Traditionally the most common uses for mindfulness practice related to relaxation, stress reduction and spiritual advancement, and was widely used in conjunction with other practices including yoga and meditation, however more recently mindfulness practice has enjoyed increasing profile and popularity with CEO's, in the corporate world, amongst celebrities, sporting stars and many educational institutions.

So although the benefits of practicing mindfulness are exponential including stress reduction, better mood regulation, increased immune function, happier relationships, increased creativity, better productivity, reduced sicknesses, higher energy, lower feelings of anxiety or worry, the actual practice of mindfulness often eludes us as we rush through our days, chasing our to do lists and being entrapped by the ever expanding distraction machine of technology. Thankfully daily mindfulness practice does not require you to remove any of these obstacles and doesn't have to have you to sitting motionless with your eyes closed for hours at a time.

Practicing mindfulness everyday, even for just a few minutes, works so effectively because every time you focus on paying attention, you strengthen your mind and develop the ability to increase your focus, your resilience, your ability to bounce back

and you deepen and soften your connection with yourself and others. This makes for a highly effective and much happier you. Here's a few great techniques that have brought amazing results for others and most of them take less than a minute:

### ***Pause***

Just simply pause – Pause before you move, pause before you speak, before you eat, before you rush from one activity to the next. Pause before you lay hands on your people, pause before you take your hands away. Just pause whenever you think of it.

### ***Where's your tongue?***

Notice where your tongue is sitting in your mouth in this moment. There is some evidence that suggests that if your tongue is jammed against the roof of your mouth, it's a sign that your stress system is switched on. Notice where it is and just focus on releasing it and allowing it to sit gently behind your teeth – this practice will not only strengthen your mindfulness muscle and deepen your awareness and connection with your body, but may also cool your stress system down momentarily. And if your tongue is sitting behind your teeth, just pause and notice it there.

### ***Introduce Novelty***

Remember the novelty of first learning to drive, or driving on the opposite side of the road, or learning a new technique, or a new job. Novelty is a great way to increase our awareness and heighten our 'pay attention' focus. Introducing novelty to everyday routines are a really simple and effective way to strengthen your mindfulness muscle. Simple things like brushing your teeth with your opposite hand, getting out of bed on the opposite side, driving a new route to work, lengthening your stride when walking or my favourite, when you hug another person, hug 'left to left' or heart to heart. This practice, requires greater levels of awareness and therefore strengthens your capacity for mindfulness. The benefits of which we all now know.

### ***3 Seconds is a long time***

In all my years of teaching mindfulness, there is one practice, the results of which continue to astound me and those who choose this practice. Next time you hug your partner, your children, or someone you love, pause and hold this connection for the long count of 3. This practice has been shown to be especially effective with lovers when the 3 second count is applied to the 'hello' and 'goodbye' kiss. Trust me, give it a go – I promise a deepening and softening of your connection with each other over time. And, it's fun!