

## Mindfulness: thought for the day

### 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Hello everyone – what a week this has been!

Now we are all socially-isolating, socially- distancing and subsequently spending a lot of time at home, this is an opportunity to practise our mindfulness skills.

It is useful for us to revisit the basics and start this week by doing a 1 minute breathing exercise which I will outline below.

Firstly, let us remind ourselves that **mindfulness is a practice and a way of life.**

It is a means of helping us to **reconnect with our own inner calm**, which all human beings have, but many of us have lost with this through years of frantic lifestyles & thinking patterns which are unhelpful to us. We work towards reconnecting with our inner calm by practising the **exercises of mindfulness** regularly and gradually making **small changes to our everyday lives**. These two aspects of mindfulness practice are the tools we use to help us to live more fully in the moment, be more compassionate and understanding towards ourselves and other people, and reconnect with our inner calm and peace.

Over the coming weeks we will gradually work through these mindfulness exercises & small changes we can make to our lives to help us in this process.

**This week** -Let us do the One minute breathing exercise at least twice per day.

#### **One minute mindfulness exercise**

- Sit in your good posture position in an upright chair with your eyes closed.
- Focus your attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body. While focusing on your breath, be aware of every sensation

involved in your normal breathing (the air flow in & out through your nose & mouth, the expansion of your lungs & the flattening of your diaphragm).

- As your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breathing. **Don't judge yourself** because of your mind wandering – this is normal! Notice what that thought is before refocusing on your breathing, but don't allow your mind to be drawn into that thought. The action of **bringing your mind back to you breath without criticising yourself for the fact that it had wandered off is central to mindfulness**. See each mind wandering episode as an opportunity to practise this skill of refocusing on your breathing!
- Sometimes an emotion may enter your mind instead of a thought. For example this could be a feeling of irritation, anxiety, low mood or anger. If this happens, treat it in the same way as the thoughts that wandered into your mind. Notice what it is and then gently refocus on your breathing without judging yourself
- During each exercise you may experience a sense of calm or you may not. **Don't worry about this, just accept it as it is**. After a minute, open your eyes and notice the room again.

### **What are these unhelpful thought patterns which cause us problems?**

Thoughts and emotions come and go. One of the things we learn practising mindful breathing is the fact that these thoughts and emotions come and go largely without our control. What **is** under our control is whether we act on them or not. Negative thoughts (worries, for example) and feelings (anxiety, sadness and anger, for example) often trigger a whole string of other negative thoughts and feelings (from the past, or concerning the future). We may end up spiralling into a whole series of worries or a persistent state of anxiety or low mood. By treating the initial thought or feeling as something we can notice, but let gently slip by refocusing on our breathing and the current moment, we can learn to prevent these unhelpful spirals of thought & emotion.

**Have a good week everyone – stay safe and well!**