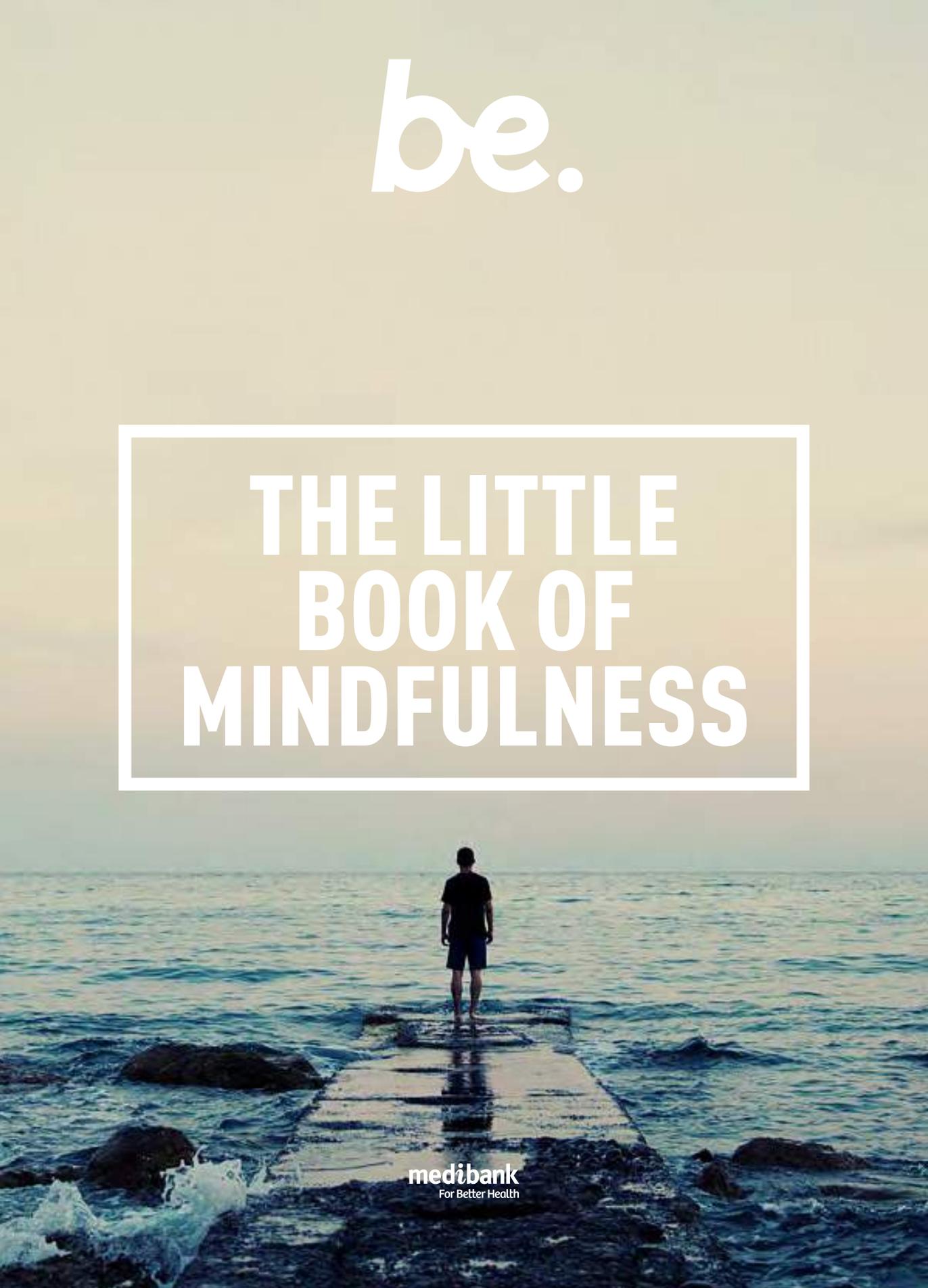


be.

**THE LITTLE
BOOK OF
MINDFULNESS**

A person in dark clothing stands on a concrete pier extending into the ocean. The sky is a soft, hazy orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The water is dark blue with gentle waves. The overall mood is calm and contemplative.

medibank
For Better Health

EDITOR'S NOTE

Do you ever feel like your mind is racing? Like your nerves are frayed, your energy has sapped, and a fog is clouding your thoughts?

Mindfulness is a tool that can help you become happier, calmer, more creative, more focused, and more in touch with yourself.

By bringing your full attention to your body, your breath, your senses and your surroundings, you can open yourself up to an invigorating experience that leaves you feeling energised and centred.

And if you practice these techniques regularly, you can make real changes to how your mind manages the stresses and demands of your everyday life.

The principles of mindfulness are simple to learn – but like all things, it takes practice.

In this book, we've brought together a collection of expert advice to help you get started building a habit of mindfulness.

Whether it's through meditation, or simply through a mindful approach to everyday activities, the practise of mindfulness really can change your life.

But don't just take our word for it. Experience it for yourself. Slow down. Take a moment to pause. Breathe and be.

This is a *be.* publication. For more wellbeing advice, stories and ideas, visit: bemagazine.com.au

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HOW MINDFULNESS MAKES YOU CALM, CLEAR AND FOCUSED



What if you could take a moment to pause – silence your mind, unfrazzle your nerves, and really connect with your world?

Mindfulness is the new black. It is an effective mental technique, borrowed from the 2000-year-old Buddhist contemplative practice and adapted to suit non-religious contexts, including board rooms, corporations, hospitals, schools and sports teams.

As a doctor trained in psychiatry and a meditation teacher, discovering the science supporting the benefits of mindfulness meditation really motivated my own practice. The research is compelling. We now know that mindfulness meditation when practised regularly can truly transform your brain and your health for the better.

Mindfulness is a practice which supports the capacity to stay focused on what you are doing as you are doing it. It's a powerful antidote to the distractible nature of the mind and the information-overload in our digital world. When practised regularly, it can bring more calm and effectiveness into everyday life, reducing stress and enhancing mental capacity.

It is initially practised through meditation, but can also be applied to daily activities such as eating, walking or working. Mindfulness is the simple, yet challenging discipline of noticing what you are doing when you are doing it and becoming master, rather than slave, to the impulses of your mind.

5 STEPS TO MINDFULNESS

1. Tune in to the breath

It may sound like an irritating cliché, but there is scientific rationale for this advice. The breath is not only a powerful indicator of one's state of mind but also a helpful modulator.

During a busy day, take a few moments to consciously tune in to the breath. Feel three breaths move in and out of the body. Then slow down the exhalation to help trigger the relaxation response. Extending the breath in this way sends a message to the parasympathetic nervous system (the system that opposes the stress response) to calm down the body, which helps you think more clearly and feel more relaxed.

2. Use your surroundings as a circuit breaker

Take moments in the day to disconnect from the flurry of to do lists and direct your attention externally by tuning in to your senses. Listen to the sounds in the room, feel your body in space, see the space you are in, notice the temperature and smells. By tuning in to your senses, just for a few moments, you give your mind a micro break from the stress of thinking.

3. Use technology with awareness

Sitting at a computer all day? Bring awareness to your posture and breath. It has been noted that email apnea, the temporary suspension of breathing while dealing with emails, means we are inadvertently creating stress in the body. When we breathe irregularly, the body becomes acidic through retention of excess carbon dioxide. This acidity may contribute to stress related diseases. Check in with your body and breath whilst working at the computer to ensure you are getting sufficient oxygen.

4. Simplify your to do list

Bring attention to the top three priorities of your day. Break your work time into smaller blocks for higher levels

of efficiency, and take short breaks between blocks. (Look up the pomodoro technique for a helpful way of doing this.)

5. Use your lunch as a mindful practice

Rather than eating whilst working on the computer, or missing out on lunch altogether, use your lunch as a way of practicing mindfulness. This means noticing you are eating as you are eating, intentionally tasting your food, and bringing awareness to the act of chewing. This will give your mind an opportunity to rest from the whirlwind of the day, allowing space for mind and body rejuvenation.

Dr Elise Bialylew is the founder of Mindful in May. An out-of-the-box thinker, a doctor trained in psychiatry and psychotherapy, and a meditation teacher, her work has been featured in the Huffington Post, New York Times, the UN and on national Australian television. Dr Bialylew coaches people to live their most fulfilled lives at: mindlifeproject.com



THE LIFE-CHANGING ART OF MEDITATION

By Lucy Richards

Just a few minutes of mindfulness meditation each day can improve your happiness. Here's how to get started.

The mind is like a muscle. Just as we exercise and eat healthy to keep our bodies fit, practising mindfulness meditation is a way of keeping our brain fit and healthy too.

Mindfulness is the opposite of mindlessness. It's about building your awareness of the present moment by focusing attention on the here and now, rather than getting caught up thinking about the past, or worrying about the future.

Global research shows that mindfulness meditation can be helpful in managing stress, building resilience and increasing focus and concentration. Learning the skills to be more in the present moment ensures that you can live a more fulfilled, enriched life and literally "stop to smell the roses" in our busy, tech filled world.

Being present. Mindfulness meditation builds your ability to be in the present moment, with acceptance and without judgment. By learning to focus your attention in this way, you are also building awareness of your thoughts, emotions, sensations and experiences.

From a mental health point of view, it is incredibly self-empowering to be aware of your experiences and see them for what they actually are, rather than getting caught up in the story behind them, which can often lead to mental ill-health.

Developing a meditation practice. Meditation is quite a personal experience, and different people will naturally connect with different types of meditation. The beauty

of mindfulness meditation is that you can use anything as the focus for your attention: breath, body, sounds, even a piece of chocolate. This allows you to practice mindfulness meditation in a way that suits you.

How often? Smiling Mind (and the research!) suggests practising between 3-5 times per week to really feel the benefits of mindfulness meditation. Smiling Mind's meditations are guided and last between 5-15 minutes, so they are easy to implement even into the busiest of days. Being an app also ensures that users can meditate on their commute on the way to work, before they go to bed or even whilst making their cup of tea.

What time of day? If you're a first timer, meditating first thing in the morning, or last thing in the evening before bed is a great start, and you only need to set aside five minutes.

How to get started. Download Smiling Mind's free app! Our meditations are short, guided easy to follow. Like starting anything for the first time, we know that you need to be reminded and encouraged to keep up the practice to build the routine, so within your account you can set yourself reminders. Everyone's life is different and we have lots of different meditations in there so you can find the ones that suit you best.

Lucy Richards is General Manager of Smiling Mind.

Smiling Mind is a science-based mindfulness meditation app that has been downloaded over 250,000 times. To start your mindfulness meditation journey visit: smilingmind.com.au

HOW TO MEDITATE A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

By Dr Elise Bialylew

Get Comfortable

Begin by finding a comfortable position, either sitting on a chair or a cushion on the floor, or lying down. Gently close your eyes. Take a moment to check in with how you're feeling right now, allowing yourself to let go of any concerns about the past or future.

Become aware of the feeling of your body sitting here. Notice the areas of contact your body makes with the chair or the ground. Your feet resting flat on the ground, your legs supported by the chair, your hands resting comfortably in your lap.

Breathe In, Breathe Out

Take a deep breath in and gently let it go. Take another deep breath in, and let it go. Allow the breath to float in and out in its natural rhythm – not trying to control it or change it in any way.

Focus Your Attention

Rest your attention on the breath as it flows in and out from moment to moment – not thinking about the breath, but rather *feeling* the breath, wherever it arises in the body. Notice the quality of the breath in this moment. Is it relaxed or restricted? Long or short? Notice as air moves in and out of the nose. Notice the feeling in the belly as it expands on the in breath, and falls away on the out breath. When you notice your attention has been carried away by thoughts, simply let go of the thoughts and gently direct your attention back to the sensations of the breath in the body.

Calmly Return To Your Day

When you're ready, gently open your eyes. Carry this mindfulness into the rest of your day.



THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

How to combat stress with one simple concept – ‘eyes closed silence’.

By Jonni Pollard

The ever increasing demands on our time day-to-day are taking their toll on our health. Life is moving forward at an unrelenting pace and the average Australian is experiencing alarmingly high levels of stress.

Whilst workplace stress alone is impacting the economy, perhaps the greatest price we are paying is the diminishing quality of our daily life experience and general wellbeing.

As a professional meditation teacher I see clients from all walks of life, ranging from CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, tradespeople, artists, teachers, medical professionals, mums and dads. What I have observed is that everyone is experiencing the same thing - stress.

Symptoms of stress include:

- Constantly feeling anxious and worried
- Feeling irritable, agitated and easily annoyed
- Argumentative and defensive with friends and family
- Restless sleeping
- Low levels of energy, often waking up feeling tired
- Restless and frenetic mind
- Often self-critical and/or critical of others.
- Feeling flat and uninspired
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Skin rashes and conditions
- Clenching your jaw muscles and grinding your teeth at night
- Headaches and migraines

Stress is held in the body and over a prolonged period of time can manifest as a variety of illnesses and conditions. When we are stressed and fatigued we are a shadow of our authentic selves. We lack energy and enthusiasm and we aren't terribly inspiring to be around.

Fortunately this has not gone unnoticed in the medical and scientific world. An enormous amount of research has been conducted over the last decade to fully explore and understand the effects of stress and its impact on the body and mind, along with effective ways to combat it.



There is a growing body of scientific evidence to suggest that the ancient practice of eyes closed silence is an effective way to gain the sufficient rest the body requires to relieve stress.

Eyes closed silence refers to any mental process, including the most common practices of meditation, prayer, observance of the breath and contemplation, that induces a set of integrated psychophysiological changes termed as the 'relaxation response'.

The relaxation response is a measurable change in the mind and body that deactivates the stress response and enables the body to rapidly repair from its negative effects.

Some of the measurable changes within the relaxation response include:

- Higher brain functioning
- Increased immune function
- Lowered blood pressure
- Lowered heart rate

Psychological changes observed in the relaxation response are:

- Increased awareness
- Increased attention/focus

- Increased clarity in thinking and perception
- Lowered anxiety levels
- Experience of being calm and internally still
- Experience of feeling connected

Regularly practicing eyes closed silence has been demonstrated to significantly assist the restoration of the mind and body to their normal functioning states. In our unstressed state we are happy, healthy, vital, enthusiastic and inspired; capable of responding to life's challenges and demands with grace and ease.

1 Giant Mind

1 Giant Mind is a global non-profit dedicated to empowering people worldwide with learn-to-meditate programs, resources and research: www.1giantmind.org

Jonni Pollard is a meditation teacher and co-founder of global meditation non-profit 1 Giant Mind.

CLARE BOWDITCH ON FINDING BALANCE

Meditation has long been a part of Clare Bowditch's life. The much-loved Australian singer-songwriter shares how she brings calming energy and mindful connectedness into her every day.

On happiness and family.

A really hard lesson I learnt early on as a mother was that in order to really be there for my children, I needed to put on my own oxygen mask first. Sounds obvious, but 'happy mama' often equals 'happy family'. When my children were really small, it was challenging to get even five minutes a day to myself to practise my mindfulness, but the more I do it, the happier I am.

On living a balanced life.

I follow my muse, I follow my children's lead, I continue to build my career on the principles of creativity, exploration and service: I cannot stress enough how great this has been for my health and for the happiness of my family. I regularly take sabbaticals from technology (I put on an auto message saying my computer has gone on holiday), and I regularly pencil in time in my calendar to work out what it is I want from this life, and whether my current actions are bringing me close to that.



I dance, I walk, I pray, and I drink green smoothies with my husband every morning. When things get really tough, I do what the doctor ordered: I sleep, take fish oil, pull back on commitments that aren't essential, make mud pies. I don't try and do anything perfectly, ever, including meditation. I just do my best.

On stress and fame.

Let's tell it like it is: fame is a 'made-up' concept, it's externally judged, and it's largely irrelevant to me and my work. The pressure I do feel around work is related to the fact that like all human beings, I suspect I was not born for no reason, I suspect I am here to give something to the world (we all are), and sometimes in the chaos of life, I wonder if I have given enough yet.

On the link between arts and wellbeing.

If we had an hour together, it still would not be enough time to tell you everything I know about the role that the

arts, that our creativity, can play in our health and in our healing, most particularly in times of transition. I believe in this so strongly that I launched an enterprise called Big Hearted Business to teach people from all walks of life how to re-connect with their creativity. Art is, as Pat McGorry calls it, a most important connector: it connects us to meaning and to community and to the memory of what it is to make the most of your life, and do the things that inspire you.

On Smiling Mind.

I became an ambassador for Smiling Mind because I really do believe that when we meditate, even just for five minutes a day, our lives are happier, our world is happier. Smiling Mind makes it so easy for children and even for their parents to begin experimenting with mindfulness. I am really proud to be involved. My children really do love it too. My daughter especially likes the idea of the chocolate meditation practice.



10 WAYS TO BRING MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR DAY

By Dr Elise Bialylew

Mindfulness isn't just about meditation – it's the art of tuning in to your senses and being present in each ordinary moment. Here's how to bring mindfulness into your everyday life.

Many people think meditation is a practice which involves emptying your mind of thoughts. This misconception can leave beginners feeling like 'bad' meditators. Mindfulness meditation is not about emptying the mind, but rather stabilising our attention and training our minds to be more focused, effective and skillful in everyday life.

You can bring mindfulness to everyday activities simply by tuning in to your senses, which helps you to actually be present in what you are doing, rather than lost in thinking.

Here are ten steps to bring mindfulness into your daily life.

BE MINDFUL IN CONVERSATION.

Use listening as a meditation. Pay attention to the whole person speaking. Notice the sound and rhythm of their voice and their facial expressions. Notice your mind drifting off into fantasy or thinking whilst the person is speaking. Notice your urge to speak – is it easier for you to listen or talk?

BE MINDFUL WHEN EATING.

Notice the food on your plate. Pay attention to colours, shapes and smells. Bring awareness to the sensation of chewing and the flavours, textures and temperatures in your mouth. Notice any urge to eat quickly or swallow your food without chewing it completely. Be aware of the mind being hijacked from the experience of eating and gently bring it back to the food.

BE MINDFUL IN SUPERMARKET QUEUES.

Tune in to the body. Notice your feet on the ground, the sounds, and your breath. Check in with how you are feeling, notice any irritation or impatience in the body and using the breath, see if you can let it go.

BE MINDFUL ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Before checking in to Facebook or Twitter, bring a conscious intention to the amount of time you plan to spend engaging on social media. Notice the urge to keep checking and scrolling through the feed. Notice any emotions that arise as you experience other people's lives.

BE MINDFUL WHILE DRIVING.

Notice your hands on the wheel. Feel your posture. Notice any tension in the body and actively relax the body. Let your shoulders be soft, perhaps turn off the radio and be in silence. Notice any urges to use your phone.

BE MINDFUL IN CONFRONTATION.

Tune in to the body, notice any sensations that come with anger or fear as you are in a difficult conversation: heat, tightness, a rapid heartbeat? Notice your urge to defend or react in some way.

Anchor your attention to sensations in the body as you negotiate.

BE MINDFUL AT THE GYM.

Tune in to the sensations of your body while exercising. Notice the kind of thoughts that arise when you are exerting yourself. Take a moment to be grateful for the capacity of your body to so miraculously function.

BE MINDFUL IN BED.

So many people use digital technology, whether laptops or phones, in bed. Phones are commonly used as alarm clocks these days. Notice how you relate to technology in the bedroom and whether this impacts on your ability to fall asleep.

BE MINDFUL IN THE SHOWER.

Choosing something you do regularly each day can be a helpful way to remember to practise mindfulness. Tune in to the sensations of water and temperature on your skin. Notice when your mind wanders off and gently bring it back to the sensations of your body.

BE MINDFUL WHEN WALKING.

These days we often do many things while walking – we listen to ipods, text message, speak on our phones. Try using walking as a mindful practice. Feel your feet making contact with the ground. Notice what it feels like to walk a little slower if you're not actually in a rush. Take in your surroundings, the smells, the colours, the sounds. Use mindful walking between meetings to create a moment of mindfulness in your day.



MINDFULNESS APPS



Smiling Mind

This colourful, intuitive mindfulness app is designed with young people in mind, making meditation easy, accessible and fun. Created by a team of psychologists specialising in adolescent therapy, the app guides you through a daily meditation practice, with programs specially tailored to different age groups, from children aged 7-11 right through to adults. Smiling Mind also offers free mindfulness resources for groups, teams and workplaces, and a special program for expecting parents. smilingmind.com.au



Headspace

Just 10 minutes a day is all you need to get started with meditation. Headspace takes you through simple guided meditation exercises to help you relax, de-stress and get in touch with your breath and body. Along with these mindfulness sessions, the app provides animations about how the mind works and tips that help give you a deeper understanding of what's going on. headspace.com



Simply Being

Choose your session length, decide if you want relaxing music, soothing natural sounds, or just a calming voice, and let yourself be taken through a short guided meditation. Perfect for beginners, this simple app by Meditation Oasis makes it easy to create your own mindfulness practice, with an easy to use interface and plenty of customisable options. meditationoasis.com



1 Giant Mind

Learn to meditate with step-by-step audio and video guidance. Choose between calming ambient background music or silence, and customise the length of your session to suit you. This app also provides a journaling tool, making it easy to track your progress. 1giantmind.org

STEPHANIE RICE ON MINDFULNESS AND CLARITY

A mindful approach to life keeps Stephanie Rice calm, centred and ready to achieve her goals. The Olympic superstar shares the clarifying influence of meditation on her life outside the pool.

After years of pouring every ounce of energy into their chosen sport, it can be a challenge for elite athletes to adjust to regular life after retirement. This is a challenge three-time Olympic gold medallist Stephanie Rice has embraced gracefully, using meditation and a holistic approach to health to learn to live for the now, not with her eye on the next sports prize.

"It's been tough – when I was training I had a very strict routine with my health and exercise," Stephanie says. "It was always a big necessity, in order to swim well, to eat the right food at the right times, and obviously exercise. And it was very unbalanced. Right after the London Olympics, I kind of wanted to go the other way and not exercise, eat the foods that I had deprived myself of for so long. After a month I got over that as well."

Transitioning from vegetarian to vegan and back again, it's been a search for the right balance, and along the way she has educated herself on smaller quantities and learning to enjoy the foods she has wanted to eat, not those prescribed for an Olympic swimmer.

Much more than just a physical fitness adaptation, the mental health of athletes plays a vital role in how they're able to cope in the years following sporting success.

"Sport is so end-goal focused. There's always something you're striving for and you always know what's around the

corner in terms of meets and training. Moving into normal life, it's just not like that. I have no idea where I want to be in 10 years' time. That's a huge change for me, and it was quite overwhelming at the start because I wanted to know what the end result was and the more that I was searching for it, I wasn't finding it."

By focusing on her wellbeing from a holistic point of view, Steph found a more balanced and mindful approach to life, which allows her to shine outside the pool, with new projects including a partnership with Russell Athletic. From meditation practice, to alternative therapies like kinesiology and reiki, combined with the practical advice of a business coach, she uses a diverse mix of different strategies to learn more about herself.

"I began meditating probably eight months ago and I love it – I've noticed a huge difference since starting," she says. "I did my first meditation retreat the other week and I really liked it because I've never really done anything like that for myself; it's usually going away for holidays or a friend's party, but it was really nice to do something for me."

"It was almost challenging in that respect because it was really slow, and I don't usually like that, but it was a good counter-balance to bring things into perspective. It has not only helped me with stress and fatigue and tiredness, it has helped me set intentions for the day and pick up on insights in myself."





MINDFUL EATING

By David Cameron-Smith

Slow down your eating and really experience the flavours, textures and sensations.

Almost one quarter of all the food we eat is forgotten in an instant. This is because we are eating while focusing on an entirely separate task. Whether we're racing between office appointments, working furiously to meet a deadline, managing a complex family schedule or just lounging in front of the TV, for many of us food is just fuel for the engine and disappears.

We get hungry, distracted, stressed and harried, all cueing the body to want food – right now. Food is pulled from handbags, drawers, vending machines, the fridge or the back of the pantry. The eating and the food disappear in the blur of distraction, gone and forgotten.

The opposite of this is mindful eating. Mindful eating is when a person stops and gives the majority of their thoughts and time to the actual act of eating. It requires habits that break up the continued stresses and distractions of the day, requiring time out to stop and purposefully eat. Mindful eating requires decisions and habits to be formed about when to eat, what to eat and how it might be prepared.

How to eat mindfully

1. Take a break and move away from your desk or lounge.
2. Purposefully move to another room to sit and eat.
3. Make meals that require more preparation than just peeling a wrapper.
4. Eat meals, not snacks.
5. Eat slowly and savour the flavour.
6. Eat with other people.
7. Practise remembering everything you ate yesterday.

Professor David Cameron-Smith is Chair in Nutrition at the Liggins Institute, University of Auckland.



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HOW TO BE MINDFUL AT WORK

Soothe those office stresses, connect with your coworkers, and create an enriching, fulfilling work environment.

In his book *Mindfulness at Work*, Dr Stephen McKenzie explores the principles of mindfulness and the role it plays in reducing stress, improving productivity and boosting enjoyment at work. "Mindfulness can help us to transform our working lives into something that really fulfils us, rather than merely something that we have to do or that we are paid to do," Dr McKenzie says.

There are seven general mindfulness principles that Dr McKenzie suggests can be introduced into our workplace, helping to shape our everyday reality into the one we want to be in.

1. Self-knowledge

Allowing ourselves the time to learn and discover who we really are – rather than identifying ourselves with who we think we are – can help us enormously in our work. Mindfulness empowers us to understand that we all have a unique talent to offer the world, and discovering who we really are and how we can best express it will influence the work we do.

2. Unity

"We all know that a champion team will beat a team of champions any day or night, and this is because of their unity," Dr McKenzie says. By being mindful of our connection to others and recognising those around us, we can all help each other to work better and more enjoyably.

3. Truth

At the heart of truth is open-mindedness. Be prepared to be proven wrong, embrace ideas that aren't your own and acknowledge that truth can be found anywhere.

4. Awareness

How often do we do one task while thinking about something else? Scan emails while eating food, make phone calls while glancing over paperwork... How much

better, more engaged and more resonant would aspects of our life be if we maintained our awareness and consistently connected with what we were doing? The workplace is a great opportunity to practise being present and not distracted.

5. Service

"Our motivation is the key to how well we will do in any job, and it's vital that our motivation is to meet the needs of the person with whom or for whom we are working, rather than meeting our own ideas about our needs at the expense of the person we are serving," Dr McKenzie says. It's a common belief that giving is better than receiving, and giving service with attention, care and generosity is the most rewarding.

6. Reason

Reason can play a key role in our job by helping us work in line with everyone's best interests, not just our idea of our own best interest. Act on the basis of reason; don't act out of selfishness.

7. Wonder

Experiencing all aspects of our working life as if they were brand new can be a productive, enjoyable approach to our job. Instead of dragging ourselves through the day and seeing everything as a repeat of the day before, search for the wonder in what we do and the people we work with.

Want to learn more about how mindfulness can improve your working life?

Mindfulness at Work: How to avoid stress, achieve more and enjoy life by Dr Stephen McKenzie is available through Exisle Publishing: exislepublishing.com.au

bemagazine.com.au

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