

Connolly Counselling Centre

# Mindfulness and Relaxation

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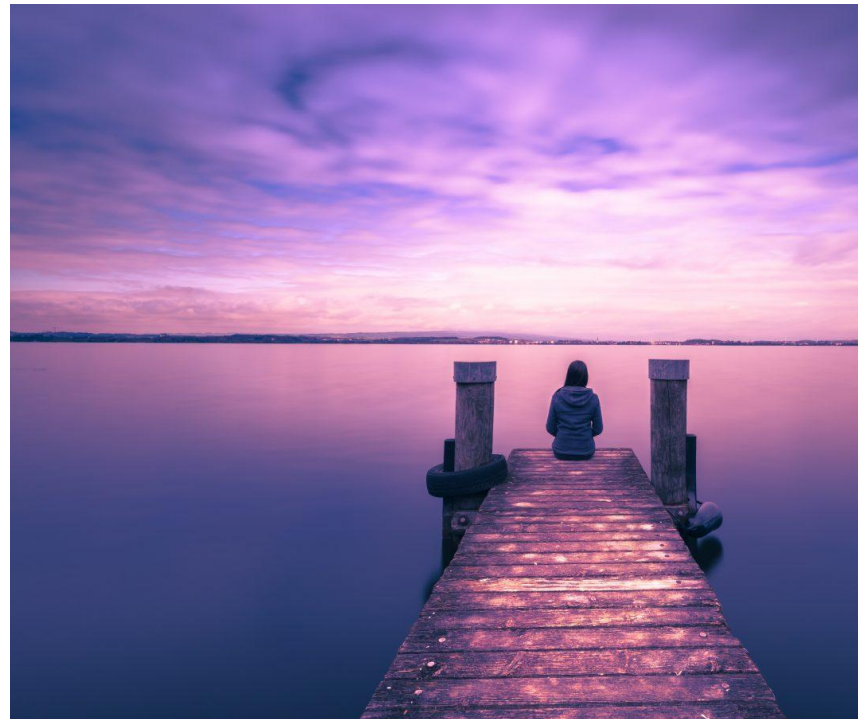
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## What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist and Hindu teachings and is the ability to be fully present in the moment without dwelling on the past or anticipating the future. To be mindful is to be fully aware of where we are, and what we are doing in the moment.

It can act as a tool to avoid self-criticism and judgment while identifying and managing difficult emotions. It has also been shown to aid in the reduction of stress and can also help us be more attentive to others' wellbeing.

It is a technique that everyone is able to do, however it needs to be learned first.



## Ways to be more mindful

Taking notice of your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and the world around you is the first step to being more mindful.

- Find some time to sit down and practice deep breathing. As you do focus on each breath and the sensations you are feeling: the sounds you hear, the scents you smell and the feeling of the air flowing in and out of your body. Identify and label your feelings. By doing so you can validate them and allow them to exist without judgement or ascribing negativity to them. Similarly, you can be constantly aware of how you are feeling at any given moment. Practice yoga or meditation to help calm your mind. Free yourself from both your past and future and attempt to live in the moment.
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# Meditation and Mindfulness Technique

Take a seat and comfortably straighten your upper body. Adjust your head until it comfortably rests on your shoulders and then position your legs into a secure position (crossed or feet resting on the floor, depending on your seated position) and allow your hands to naturally lay on top of them. Now drop your chin slightly and gaze downwards (you may close your eyes if you feel like it).

Begin by taking slow, deep breaths and focus on the air flowing in and out of your body. Allow your full attention to be on your breathing and if you feel your mind begin to wander slowly bring it back to your breathing. You may continue this breathing for as long as you feel necessary.

## Mindfulness and Relaxation

### What is Relaxation

Relaxation is a process that can help in the management of stress and can often decrease the effects of stress on your mind and body. It has also been shown to aid in reducing muscle tension and anxiety levels. Basic relaxation techniques are easy to learn and are often free or low cost, pose little risk, and can be done nearly anywhere and include:

**Progressive muscle relaxation:** You focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing different groups of muscles. By doing so you are allowing your body to understand and identify the difference between tensed and relaxed and in turn become more aware of physical sensations.

**Autogenic relaxation:** In this form of relaxation, you use visual imagery and body awareness to help reduce levels of stress. This may include visualizing a peaceful safe space and then focusing on your breathing and heart rate, or the slow relaxation of your body's muscles.

Other forms of relaxation include: meditation, deep breathing, massages, yoga, and Tai Chi.



## **Benefits of Relaxation**

- Slower heart rate and lower blood pressure
- Improved digestion
- Increased blood flow to muscles and reduction in muscle tension
- Better sleep quality
- Improved concentration and mood (lower levels of anger and irritability)
- Production of stress hormones is reduced

## **Mindfulness and Relaxation Takes Practice**

As you become more adept at these techniques you will be able to easily identify muscle tension and other symptoms of stress and address them. However, as with anything, mindfulness and relaxation is a skill and your ability to successfully do them will improve with practice. If one technique does not work, try another one. Be patient with yourself.

