What is Mindfulness?

The practice of mindfulness is an approach of moment-to-moment awareness. It involves bringing attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way (Terrasch, 2015). Staying in the present moment involves paying attention to bodily sensations, emotional reactions, mental talk and imagery, and physical surroundings (Creswell, 2017)

Mindfulness is not a structured practice. Rather, it can be tailored to fit the needs and life of the individual. Mindfulness can be practiced practically anywhere alongside any activity, allowing counselors and other professionals the ability and freedom to practice at their leisure.

Becoming Mindful

The mind wanders aimlessly on autopilot 47% of the time (Creswell, 2017). Instead of allowing the mind to wander, being mindful requires bringing attention to daily life experiences. Mindfulness can be integrated into normal, mundane daily tasks. Eating, walking, talking, cleaning, and even sitting can be done with mindful awareness. Instead of doing things habitually without any thought, take time to notice how something feels, smells, tastes, and looks.

Mindfulness is a skill that is intentional and takes practice and time to develop. Anyone can practice mindfulness and integrate a sense of awareness into their daily life activities.

Mindfulness Practices

Mindful Yoga
Yoga is the process of stretching, moving, holding positions, and balance while cultivating an awareness of the body. Mindfulness can be included into yoga practice by cultivating an awareness of the senses and the body’s movements. Yoga can be practiced at home or in a more structured class experience.

Mindful Meditation
Meditation is a state of still relaxation which allows the mind to stay in the present moment without dwelling on the past or in the future.

Guide to Mindful Meditation
1. Take a seat. Find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.
2. Set a time limit. If you’re just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as 5 or 10 minutes.
3. Notice your body. You can sit in a chair with your feet on the floor, you can sit loosely cross-legged, in lotus posture, you can kneel—all are fine. Just make sure you are stable and in a position you can stay in for a while.
4. Feel your breath. Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.
5. Notice when your mind has wandered. Inevitably, your attention will leave the sensations of the breath and wander to other places. When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—simply return your attention to the breath.
6. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don’t judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

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