

## **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is the act of deliberately paying attention to the present moment while remaining non-judgemental. This allows us to become aware of sensory impressions, thoughts, imagery, emotions, and impulses. We can become aware of the condition of our minds; calm and clear, agitated, dull and foggy, etc. We begin to “watch” the stream of our thoughts rather than swimming among them being pushed by the currents.

## **Why use mindfulness?**

- Practicing mindfulness can improve your ability to focus and pay attention.
- It can lower your levels of stress and anxiety.
- Mindfulness can allow you to gain perspective about your current concerns or worries.
- It can even help you manage your emotions in a more productive manner.

## **How do you begin?**

- You will want to sit in any posture that you find comfortable. Often people choose to lie on their backs or sit with a straight, but relaxed back.
- When you first begin practicing mindfulness, it is easiest to keep your eyes closed. However, as you become more skilled at it, it is useful to learn to keep your eyes open so you can practice in a wider range of settings.

## **What do you do?**

- While practicing mindfulness, you will use our breath or a mantra (a repeated phrase that you find calming) as an anchor for your attention. Using your breathing allows you to instantly focus on your body.
- Accept that your brain will wander to other thoughts. When this happens, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.
- You may even notice sensations from your body, such as the urge to scratch an itch, or a tingling in your toes. Acknowledge it and gently return your attention to your breathing.
- Depending on your emotional state, you may notice your emotions bubbling to the surface. Notice the signals your body sends to you, like sweating palms, nausea, headache, etc. Again, acknowledge the body signals and gently return your focus to your breathing.
- If you are using a recorded visualization, notice the details in the scenery that is described or the sensations of your muscles, etc.