**Breathing Space Mindfulness**

**with Birmingham City Council Chaplaincy**

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**A Definition of Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through

paying attention

on purpose,

in the present moment

non judgementally,

to things as they are.

**Introduction**

**Mindfulness meditation is moment to moment awareness. It is being fully awake. It involves being present for moments of our lives, without striving or judging** – without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. You step fully into the moment. There is a sense of completeness, of enough-ness.

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment – by focussing on things like our breathing or our bodies. This helps us to let go of our thoughts and concerns about the past or the future. Regular practising of mindfulness helps with managing the stress of responsibilities by being more aware of the’ whole picture’

Mindfulness has been developing over the last 40 years, drawing on meditation techniques and psychological theories. It’s pioneer leader is a writer called Jon Kabat-Zinn who developed Mindfulness practises in the US to help people manage stress.

**Practising Mindfulness**

Most people learn Mindfulness attitudes through Meditation exercises – either self-led, in groups with a leader, or through recorded meditations. Meditations are training exercises in learning to focus and being aware. They often involve directing our awareness at sensations, breathing and noticing our thoughts.

These exercises can be only a few moments or more than an hour – they can be adapted to the time available.

Books and websites are sources of guided meditations that some people use. (See below)

**Benefits of Mindfulness**

Mindfulness exercises have been shown to have lots of benefits to body and mind for general concerns, but significant health issues should always be referred to the medical services. Mindfulness is now well established within the NHS as an intervention with a number of measured benefits.

**Self-Attitudes that Mindfulness Develops**

*Non-Judging*: Taking the stance of an impartial witness to your own experience. Noticing the stream of judging mind .. good / bad / neutral… not trying to stop it but just being aware of it.

*Patience*: Letting things unfold in their own time; Practising patience with ourselves. “Why rush through some moments in order to get to other ‘better’ ones? Each one is your life in that moment.”

*Beginner’s Mind*: Too often we let our thinking and our beliefs about what we ‘*know’* stop us from seeing things as they ‘*really are’*. Cultivating a mind that is willing to see everything, as if for the first time.

*Trust*: Developing a basic trust in yourself and your feelings. Honour your feelings. Taking responsibility for yourself and your own well-being.

*Non-Striving*: Meditation has no goal other than for you to be yourself.

*Curiosity*: Allowing yourself to experience things you have not noticed before

*Intention and commitment*: Finding the discipline to set aside time to be mindful and sticking with it.

*Kindness and gentleness*: Learning to be gentle with yourself and your thoughts… even when you get distracted or lose touch with ‘being aware’

**Resources**

General information about mindfulness can be found on *websites* such as everyday-mindfulness.org, mindfulnet.org and bemindful.co.uk.

Free mindfulness *guided meditations* can be downloaded at freemindfulness.org.

Selected *Books* on Mindfulness:

Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace: Mark Williams and Danny Penman 2011

Mindfulness On The Go: Padraig O’Morain 2014

Mindfulness for Health: A guide to relieving pain, reducing stress and restoring wellbeing: Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman 2013

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness meditation for everyday: Jon Kabat-Zinn 2004

Full Catastrophe Living: Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Mindful Way Through Depression: Mark Williams

*Further Chaplaincy Support* is available from Council Chaplains:

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