• Mindfulness is the practice of being fully aware of our moment-to-moment life experiences.
• Mindfulness comes from **paying attention on purpose**, in the present moment as if your life depended on it, and doing it **without judging**. (Kabat-Zinn)
• Observing/witnessing the thoughts, feelings/emotions, sensations in your mind, body and the external environment without being carried away by them, chasing them or being distracted by them.

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Suggestions for Starting a Mindfulness Practice

• Stop and simply follow your breath and thought patterns several times a day. You can link this mindful break to daily routines (waking up, eating meals, going to bed) or use an alarm device on your computer or cell phone to remind you to stop and breathe mindfully throughout the day.
• Try meditating once or twice during the day starting with 5 minutes and gradually increasing your sitting time to 15-20 minutes at a time. There are CDs and recordings on the web with guided meditations which are often helpful especially when you are just learning to meditate.
• Try being mindful in some of your daily activities. Perhaps take a mindful walk once a week, try cooking or cleaning up one meal a week mindfully.
• Try mindful body practices like yoga, tai chi, qigong, body scans or mindful walking meditation.

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Meditation Basics

Be open to the experience--there is no right or wrong way to meditate so avoid judging yourself. Focus on the breathing and gently bring your mind back to the breath whenever you notice it wandering away. Here are the steps we used today but feel free to improvise if you would like:

1. Find a quiet place to sit upright in a comfortable position...straight back chair works well
2. Set a timer for the amount of time you wish to meditate...5-10 minutes is a good place to start
3. Close your eyes or soften your gaze and begin by listening/feeling your surroundings for a minute or so to put your mind in the present..."here I am...right here, right now"
4. Scan your body from top to bottom--acknowledging areas of tightness or pain and softening/relaxing each area of your body
5. Now focus on your breathing...don't try to control it...just observe the breath in and out. Notice how deep or shallow, rapid or slow. Notice the gap between the in breath and out breath.
6. If you notice your mind wandering...just gently bring your attention back to the breath. Some people find counting each breath up to 10 and then down to 0 helps them stay focused. Reciting a prayer or mantra with the breath is also an option.
7. Continue your focus on the breath until the timer rings. Then slowly open your eyes and re-engage with your surroundings.
Selected Mindfulness Resources

✓ Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment and Your Life (2011); Wherever You Go There You Are (1994); Full Catastrophe Living (1990)
✓ Daniel Siegel, Aware (2018)
✓ Chade-Meng Tan, Search Inside Yourself (2012)
✓ Dan Harris, 10% Happier (2014)
✓ Daniel Goleman & Richard Davidson, Altered Traits (2017)
✓ Elisha Goldstein, The Now Effect: How This Moment Can Change the Rest of Your Life (2013)
✓ A. Weil & J. Kabat-Zinn, Meditation for Optimal Health (CD)
✓ Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness for Beginners (CD)
✓ Jack Kornfield, Meditations for Beginners (CD)
✓ www.headspace.com (also available as an app)
✓ www.mentalworkout.com (also available as an app)
✓ www.calm.com (calm app) mindfulness bell (app store)