



Couch Conversations

Psychotherapy and Counseling, Inc.

Mindfulness Strategies

Mindfulness, broadly speaking, is a practice that consists of three important components: 1. Be in the Present Moment, 2. With Awareness of what is Happening, 3. And Without Judgment. Mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, trauma, stress, relationship issues, and many more life issues. Take a look at each of the components and identify ways you can integrate these elements into your daily practice.

1. Be In Your Present Moment

- Show up:** Come to your present moment by “showing up” for yourself and in your life.
- Pay attention:** You must learn to STOP in order to pay attention to what is happening for yourself and the things around you.
- Be intentional:** Engage with yourself and your surroundings intentionally and not because you are on autopilot.

Practical Tools: Deep Breathing, Mindful Breathing, Guided Breathing

2. With Awareness

- Gain understanding:** Understand yourself, your mind, and your body fully.
- Recognize environment:** Clarify what is going on in your surroundings, your environment, and in your everyday life.
- Increase awareness:** Overtime, get into the habit of understanding yourself and your surroundings.

Practical Tools: Guided Meditation, Grounding Exercises, Guided Imagery

3. And Without Judgment

- Demonstrate self-compassion:** Have compassion for the difficulties you experience and reduce self-judgment when practicing mindfulness.
- Take out the “shoulds”:** Try not to get caught up with how things “should” be. Instead ask yourself, how are they really and what is realistic for change?

Practical Tools: Mindful Movement, Tensing and Releasing muscles

How Can Therapy Help? When we take the time to practice these mindfulness techniques, we may enter into experiences that are painful to look at and require healing. This is a natural and an expected part of mindfulness healing. Therapy can be a forum for understanding these painful experiences and promoting the change to become the best version of yourself. If you are interested in learning more about how our therapists can teach mindfulness strategies for your healing journey, visit www.couchconversationstherapy.com.

Practical Tools for Mindfulness

Meditation: Meditation is a type of mindfulness exercise that is helpful in increasing awareness of yourself and your surroundings. Guided meditation is best when initially starting out because it provides direction for what to focus on. Meditation can also be sitting in silence for a designated amount of time (i.e., 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 30 minutes) and focusing on your present moment and breathing patterns, with awareness and without judgment. It is best to start with a shorter duration such as 3 minutes a day, and work your way up to a longer duration and more frequency of meditation sessions.

Breathing: There are many different types of breathing techniques that promote mindfulness. Deep breathing exercises involve inhaling and exhaling through your belly (i.e., expanding your belly when you breathe), and exhaling longer than the inhale (i.e., breathing in 3 counts on the inhale, and 5 counts on the exhale).

Grounding Exercises: These exercises allow you to stay in your present moment by tuning in to your surroundings. One popular grounding exercise is pointing out 3 things you see in your environment (i.e., I see the lamp on the desk), 3 things you hear (i.e., I hear the birds chirping outside my window), and 3 things you feel (i.e., I feel my body on my chair).

Guided Imagery: Guided imagery involves visualizing a space, environment, or context that induces relaxation. Most often, people might visualize an ocean, a lake, a forest or any other setting which allows them to experience relaxation and calmness in that moment in time.

Tensing and Releasing Muscle Tension: This practice is also known as progressive muscle relaxation and involves a very specific method of tensing certain muscle groups and releasing them after a few moments. It allows the body to feel the tension that most people carry when they are stressed or anxious, and it gives the body the opportunity to release that tension and find a more relaxing way of being.

Mindful Movement: Most people know yoga to be a type of meditative practice that involves stretching and connecting with the body in a deeper way. While yoga has many benefits and falls under the mindful movement category, there are many other ways of practicing mindful movement. This can occur when you are walking, running, dancing, skating, or even lifting weights. We can be mindful while doing any type of movement to gain deeper awareness of ourselves and bodies.

*All of these practices can occur in a variety of formats. Starting out with mindfulness based practices, some people find it easier to work individually with a therapist who can assess what these strategies are attempting to address (i.e., reducing anxiety). Mindfulness practices can also occur in a group setting and vary in length and duration. Overtime, you will be able to do these practices on your own and use them as a preventative measure rather than in reaction to a difficult situation.