

## Mindfulness for Managing for Stress

Stress is part of everyday life. If you're like me, some days it seems to come from every aspect of life too. Recently, I was introduced to mindfulness as a way to reduce stress and unwind. I am already seeing the benefit of being mindful and thought I'd share some of what I've learned.

Let's start with what mindfulness is:

Mindfulness is not an activity; it is more a way of thinking or being. It has been described as paying attention, purposefully, to the experiences that are occurring in the present moment without judgement.

How can mindfulness help me?

Do you wake up some days and feel like you are on autopilot? Mindfulness can help you learn how to make more intentional decisions improving your life. Research has also shown that mindfulness can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and negative emotions and lower blood pressure.

How does mindfulness reduce stress?

There are many triggers of stress such as work, family, school or traffic. Generally, when people are stressed, they react spontaneously. Possibly yelling or becoming angry. Mindfulness helps you to recognize and respond to emotions appropriately. With mindfulness you are aware of the feelings, emotions, and thoughts that accompany stress or anxiety allowing you to catch them prior to reacting. Therefore, you can take the steps needed to calm down, diffuse the situation, and make an intentional decision on how to move forward.

How do I become mindfully aware?

- Purposefully and intentionally direct your attention in the present moment.
- Fully engage with and be attentive to the present moment.
- Be nonjudgmental towards whatever emerges in the moment. Accept sensations, thoughts, and emotions without judging them as good or bad. Just pay attention and observe them until they have passed.

How can I exercise mindfulness?

Once you familiarize yourself with mindfulness the key is to continue to practice it. Continue to focus in the present moment. To help with this, focus on one of your five senses to ground you. When practicing mindfulness, it's important to know what the focus is so that you can return to it when you are distracted.

As you practice being mindful you will find it becomes easier to focus, calm down, and deal with stressful situations as they arise. To learn more about mindfulness

Reference:

Naik, P., Harris, V., & Forthun, L. (2016) Mindfulness: An Introduction. *UF/IFAS EDIS*, October.  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY138100.pdf>