



COVID-19 & Mindfulness

Resources for Health & Care Staff

Thank you

In this crisis we owe you huge gratitude for your work caring for the health and wellbeing of people who need it. Whatever your role, this needs courage, dedication and humanity.

Many members of the public are anxious and stressed. For you, putting your own health at risk to support others, this can also be true.

Here are some resources on mindfulness practice. Many people find these practices, short or long, help them to deal with events that challenge their mental wellbeing. Please share freely with colleagues who might benefit.

If these help any one of you working under these unprecedented pressures that is enough.

Thank you again.

Why Mindfulness can help

Mindfulness practices [can help](#) people who experience emotional exhaustion, burnout, stress, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and other problems. They can help improve self-compassion, the quality of sleep and improve relaxation.

Mindfulness training has also been used in high stress & trauma-prevalent public services with working conditions that require staff to perform a wide range of emergency duties in unpredictable environments.

It didn't matter what practice I did on a daily basis as long as I did one. I think this can be classed as the emergency approach – the breathing exercise as an anchor, the mantra that we STOP, BREATHE, REFLECT and CHOOSE as part of our daily life. Time will allow us then to focus on the deeper practices – for instance the ability to fall asleep when we need is often linked to the Body Scan, the ability to fight anxiety or panic attacks, to the Breathing Meditation. In short it is about being in the present and not focussing on the past which we cannot change nor the future which we cannot predict.

- Tim Boughton, Advisor to the Army on Mental Health, after 20 years in the military serving many of those on operations around the world

In times of uncertainty, our internal threat/protection system becomes more activate, especially when we focus on the caring of others. Unless we take care of ourselves, our energy is depleted. By taking the time to PAUSE, BREATHE and ask 'WHAT DO I NEED IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT?' we can be more present and respond rather than react. This is an act of kindness to ourselves.

- Dougie McPhail, Mindfulness Teacher to Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS and police personnel

Mindfulness Resources

Space for Health Workers

[Breathworks](#) free online '[virtual quiet space](#)' for healthcare workers is a space to give you some mindfulness tips, guided practices, including weekly live sessions and video responses to questions. It is a peaceful 'virtual house' that you can repeatedly visit when you have a few moments to recharge and recuperate.

Short Practices

Even a few minutes can help in a time when you are feeling very high stress or emotion

- 1 minute [Breathing Space](#) (Breathworks)
- 90 Second [Mini meditation \(Finding Peace in a Frantic World\)](#)
- 3 Minute Breathing Space [audio](#) or [video](#) (MiSP/Oxford Mindfulness Centre)

- 3 Minute [Coping with Difficulties](#) ([Bangor Centre for Mindfulness Research & Practice](#))
- 4 Minute [Breathing Practice](#) ([Oxford Mindfulness Centre](#))
- 4 Minutes [Feeling as Safe as You Reasonably Can](#) (Dr Rick Hanson)
- 5 Minute [Tension Release](#) & other meditations ([Breathworks](#))
- 5 Minute [Chocolate Meditation](#) ([BBC Mind Set Meditations](#))
- 9 Minute [Befriending](#) and Compassion for Self and Others ([Finding Peace in a Frantic World](#))
- 7 Minute [Mountain Meditation](#), 15 Minute [Body Scan & other meditations](#) ([Free Mindfulness](#))

COVID-19 specific videos and podcasts

[Dr Iud Brewer daily videos](#) on Corona Virus Anxiety & why short mindfulness practices create our mental health hygiene

The Short Pause (with thanks to NHS Fife Going Beyond Gold)

Take regular short 2-3 minute pauses as often as you can during the day with 4 key steps

- Breathe

Take a few deeper breaths than normal – a long slow in breath and a long slow out breath - pay attention to your in-breath, all the way in – and your out-breath, all the way out. Feel a sense of letting go on the out-breath.

- Ground yourself

Feel your feet on the ground – notice any sensations like tingling or heat or cold. Paying attention to your feet takes your attention away from thoughts and difficult emotions.

- Smile

You may not feel like smiling, but doing it will automatically relax tension in your body – and it may light up someone else's day if they see you.

- Notice

Take notice of one thing you can be grateful for, right now in this moment, e.g. help from others, comfy bed, taste of tea or coffee, message from a friend, daffodils, etc.

Online Sessions

Oxford Mindfulness Centre is offering [Free Weekly Online Mindfulness Sessions](#) via Zoom (now extended to up to 500 participants). If the timing doesn't fit with your work, each session is available as [a podcast](#) afterwards

The Mindfulness Association is offering a [Free Daily Online Meditation](#) via Zoom at 7pm

Vidyamala Burch of Breathworks is offering a weekly [Facebook live meditation](#) on Tuesdays at 7 pm

Free open weekly guided mindfulness sessions via Zoom with Ed Halliwell Tuesdays at 6pm ([register here](#))

[Gaia House](#) is offering online practice sessions on different weekdays and at different times

[A Mindful Leader](#) is a USA organisation offering free online weekday meditation and support sessions and [resources](#)

Children may well be anxious at this time, particularly if their parents are working in health or care roles. [Mindfulness in Schools](#) is offering a Sit Together every weekday at 11am for children & young people accompanied by an adult and Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7.30pm

[Bubbles and Flashlights](#) is offering Mindfulness sessions by zoom for children and for young people

Apps

The popular [Headspace](#) App is offering extended free content including Weathering the Storm meditations during the COVID-19 crisis. For NHS healthcare workers they offer Headspace Plus. Visit [headspace.com/nhs](https://www.headspace.com/nhs) and enrol using your NHS email address.

[Calm](#), another very popular app, has many [free resources](#) for this crisis period, including help for sleep and resources to help children

[Insight Timer](#) has thousands of free meditations of many types freely available as well as calming music recordings

The [Healthy Minds App](#) is now free for individuals

[Liberate](#) is a free meditation app made by and for the Black and African Diaspora

[MindPilot](#) is a new free app with a mindfulness course by experienced mindfulness teachers Tessa Watt and Vishvapani Blomfield

Sites with many free resources

[Free Mindfulness Project COVID-19](#) links you to up talks and online practice offered during the crisis by many leading mindfulness teachers.

[Free Mindfulness Project Resources](#) links to free downloadable meditations of different lengths.

[Bangor University Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice](#) offers many mindfulness meditations of varying lengths, including some in Welsh Language, plus some yoga tutorials.

[Center for Mindful Self-Compassion](#) 10 Self-Compassion Practices for COVID-19 and related audio meditations by [Chris Germer](#).

The Mental Health Foundation has a range of [podcasts](#), including meditations, relaxation techniques and breathing space, to help manage stress.

The [Mindfulness Network for People of Colour](#) has links to free resources and can link you to group online meditations in the UK and US.

City University [Centre for Excellence in Mindfulness Research](#) will be sharing a wide range of resources publicly.

Courses

[Breathworks](#) is a longstanding provider of mindfulness training courses, including online. They have introduced a free online course for people isolating at home during the COVID-19 crisis. A special area with resources focused on health staff will be live soon.

[Monash University](#) has been providing mindfulness and wellbeing training for students for many years, starting with medical students. Its two online courses run for free but materials are available long term for a paid upgrade. Monash/FutureLearn [Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance](#) is currently open. [Maintaining a Mindful Life](#) extends this but it not currently open.

[BeMindfulOnline](#) is a well established online mindfulness course with a good evidence base, recommended by the [NHS Apps Library](#). It has a £30 charge, unless you live in London where it is free via the [Good Thinking](#) website.

Books

There are many excellent books about mindfulness. Here are just a few that focus on teaching mindfulness practice:

Mindfulness: A practical guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Book & CD) Mark Williams & Danny Penman

Mindfulness for Health: A practical guide to relieving pain, reducing stress & restoring wellbeing (Book & CD) Vidyamala Burch & Danny Penman

A Mindfulness Guide for the Frazzled, Ruby Wax

Mindfulness for Women (Book & CD) Vidyamala Burch & Claire Irvin

Health and Mindfulness

Mindfulness affects many bodily aspects of health and also how we think about our response to health.

Mindfulness training [helps us cope](#) with distress and disability in everyday life, as well as under serious stress.

Many qualities strengthened by mindfulness practice help our own health self-management:

- Compassion & self-compassion - important for preventing, recovering or reducing depression or suicidal thoughts
- Observing the transience of thoughts - reducing stress-induced intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, emotional reactivity, anxiety, suicidal thoughts
- Breathing space practices - reduce intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, emotional reactions, anxiety, blood pressure, panic attacks
- Sense of wider connection - helps cope with loss, life events, diagnoses, trauma, loneliness

- Being in the present moment - reduces fear of the future or anger & regret for the past
- Attention practice– witnesses our emotional responses, helping us managing pain or fears
- Stronger mind-body connection – increases awareness of the body, how we treat it and its changes

Health Education England's NHS staff and Learners [Mental Wellbeing Commission](#) cited research showing mindfulness practice reduced stress, anxiety and distress, increased empathy and could be of benefit to help doctors to cope with work pressures.

More information on [Health, Wellbeing and Mindfulness](#)

[Mindfulness APPG hearing](#) on mindfulness in high stress & trauma-prevalent public services (ambulance, police and armed services)

"You are not alone in feeling the way you do and we shouldn't be frightened to ask for help"

"I owe myself some time and compassion"

Scottish Ambulance Service Emergency Ambulance Personnel

About The Mindfulness Initiative

The Mindfulness Initiative grew out of a programme of mindfulness teaching for politicians in the UK Parliament. It provides the secretariat to the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group.

We work with legislators around the world who practice mindfulness and help them to make capacities of heart and mind serious considerations of public policy. We investigate the benefits, limitations, opportunities and challenges in accessing and implementing mindfulness training and educate leaders, service-commissioners and the general public based on these findings. Visit www.themindfulnessinitiative.org to find out more.

Getting in touch

If you have any questions, suggestions or other feedback on this document please get in touch by emailing info@mindfulnessinitiative.org.uk.

Supporting our work

The Mindfulness Initiative doesn't receive any public funding and in order to retain its neutral and trusted advisory position in the sector cannot generate revenue from competitive products or services. As such, we are entirely dependent on charitable gifts for sustaining our work. If you found this briefing paper helpful, please consider making a contribution.

Visit www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/appeal/donate to make a one-time or recurring donation.

Research & Writing: Jenny Edwards CBE

Copyright © 2020 The Mindfulness Initiative
Sheffield, S1, United Kingdom
UK Registered Charity: 1179834



www.themindfulnessinitiative.org