

Relaxation and Mindfulness

Virtual self-help guide



Practicing relaxation can provide many benefits which include slowing your heart rate down, controlling your breathing, easing unpleasant emotions and allowing you to feel more in control.

Mindfulness is the art of being present in the moment and having some control of what thoughts you allow to 'hang around' in your mind.

Both relaxation and mindfulness are skills to be learnt and practised. This means that it may take a bit of time to learn them, so try not to give up on them too early.

They are both brilliant techniques that can help at times of increased stress, pressure, worry or even just on a daily basis.

Over the next few pages will be some useful tips, suggestions and resources on relaxation and mindfulness.



Relaxation

Practising relaxation is good for your overall wellbeing, but can be particularly helpful if you would like to be able to better manage emotions such as anxiety, worry or stress.

There are various relaxation techniques to help calm the mind and ease muscle tension often associated with feelings of anxiety and stress.

Relaxation can be practised as often as you need or want, but a good place to start is setting aside 20-30 minutes each day to make it part of your daily routine.

It is important to note that you may not feel better straight away and it may take time and regular practice before you start to notice some of the benefits.

What is a relaxation exercise?

There are many different forms of relaxation, however three well-practised techniques include breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery. Click on the bubbles below to learn more about each technique. Please note that it is worth exploring relaxation further to find an exercise that suits you best.

**Breathing
Exercises**

**Guided
Imagery**

**Progressive
Muscle
Relaxation**

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally”

- *Jon Kabat-Zinn (Founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction)*

Mindfulness is a technique you can learn and practise which involves purposefully trying to focus on being in the present moment and allowing thoughts to simply enter and leave your mind.

When practising, you may find your mind naturally drifts to worries or concerns you have about things in the past or future. Being non-judgemental in mindfulness means telling yourself this is ok and normal, but then just bringing your attention back into the present moment, allowing those worrying thoughts to ‘pass through’ your mind.

Benefits of practising mindfulness include:

- Increasing your ability to be self-aware.
- Stress reduction.
- Feeling more able to cope with difficult thoughts or situations.
- Feeling more in control of what you focus on.
- Being less judgemental of yourself.
- Reducing unpleasant physical symptoms associated with stress, anxiety or worry.

How can I practise Mindfulness?

Here are a few exercises you could try from the charity MIND. You don't need any special equipment to practise mindfulness and different exercises may work better for different people:

- **Mindful eating.** This involves paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. For example, when drinking a cup of tea or coffee you could focus on how hot it feels on your tongue, how sweet it tastes or watch the steam that rises from the cup.
- **Mindful moving, walking or running.** Notice the feeling of your body moving. You might notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures on the ground or nearby surfaces, and the different smells that are around you.
- **Body scan.** This is where you move your attention slowly through different parts of the body, starting from the top of your head moving all the way down to the end of your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth, tension, tingling or relaxation of different parts of your body.
- **Mindful colouring and drawing.** Focus on the colours and the sensation of your pencil against the paper, rather than trying to draw something in particular. You could use a mindfulness colouring book or download mindfulness colouring images. The Student Wellbeing Centre has it's own mindfulness colouring and activity book. To purchase a copy, please visit: <http://lncn.eu/ixz8>
- **Mindful meditation.** This involves sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing, your thoughts, sensations in your body and the things you can hear around you. Try to bring you focus back to the present if your mind starts to wander.

As with relaxation, it is important to note that you may not feel better straight away. Mindfulness is about the skill of focussing on the here and now and needs regular practise to be effective. Aim to practise daily, even if you are feeling well and calm.



Useful Resources



Watch this video by the charity MIND for 8 relaxation tips to help look after your wellbeing.



Listen to this short guided relaxation video anytime you need to feel calmer, ease stress or anxiety, or if you just want to practice some relaxation.



Click [HERE](#) to explore some relaxation exercises you can practice, available on the MIND website.



The Free Mindfulness Project

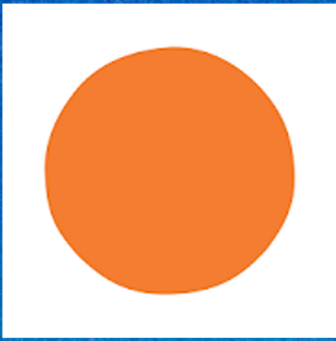
Click [HERE](#) to access free downloadable mindfulness audio exercises.

getselfhelp.co.uk
GET.gg



Click [HERE](#) to access material on mindfulness including what it is, how it works and some exercises to practice.

Useful Apps



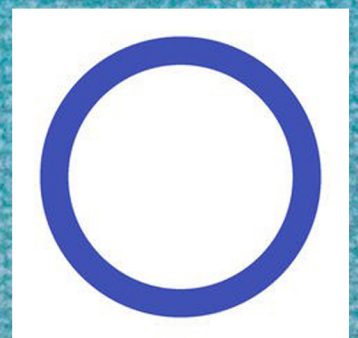
Headspace (free) - Headspace is a comprehensive meditation app, with guided and unguided meditations to help you through all phases of your life. The free app offers ten sessions, however there is an optional in-app subscription which allows you to access hours of extra content. Available on iOS and Android.

CALM (free) - It should come as no surprise that Calm is designed to help you be calm. With stunning backgrounds that you can stare at for ages, and a range of meditations, Calm provides a space for you to get away from it all, without having to go anywhere. Optional in-app purchases available. Available on iOS and Android.



The Mindfulness App (free) - Start your journey to a more relaxed and healthier state of mind with The Mindfulness App. Whether you are just starting out or experienced in meditation, The Mindfulness App will help you to become more present in your daily life. Optional in-app purchases. Available on iOS and Android.

Breathe Easy (free) – Although simplistic, this app is brilliant at helping you practice one of the most important elements of relaxation, meditation or mindfulness – controlling your breathing. Just breathe in and out as the circle continuously grows and shrinks at a regular rate. Available on iOS and Android.



Drop-in:

Monday-Friday between 12-2pm
Thursday (term-time) between 5-7pm

Tel: 01522 886400

Email: studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk