Mindfulness Information & Resources
Mindfulness involves learning to direct our attention to our experience as it unfolds, moment by moment, with open curiosity and acceptance.

Rather than worrying about what has happened, or what might happen, Mindfulness trains us to respond skillfully to whatever is happening right now, be that good or bad.

Unmindful?

Have you ever found yourself at the end of a car trip from point A to point B and don’t remember the journey? Have you ever eaten a meal without really tasting it? Do you ever get out of the shower and not remember if you used the shampoo? Have you ever been in conversation with someone and realised that you haven’t heard a word of what they said?

Well, in that case, you know what it is to be “unmindful”.

The benefits of learning to be mindful.

Mindfulness may not be for everyone, although research has shown that practising mindfulness can produce a number of benefits including:

- Enhanced ability to focus, and pay attention
- Increased ability to manage stress effectively
- Improved self-awareness and awareness of others
- Raised levels of empathy, resilience and emotional intelligence
- Better memory and decision making
- Longer and better quality sleep, with fewer sleep disturbances

So, what is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to, and seeing clearly what we are thinking and feeling without being carried away by our thoughts and emotions. It helps us recognise and step away from habitual, often unconscious, emotional and physiological reactions to everyday events.

Being mindful will not eliminate life’s pressures. But regular practise can help us respond to them in a calmer and more positive manner that benefits our wellbeing and our relationship with ourselves and others.

So, rather than worrying about what has happened, or what might happen, practising mindfulness allows us to respond more skilfully to whatever is happening right now, be that good or bad.

What does it involve?

Our minds are easily distracted, often unhelpfully going over past events in our head and worrying about the future. Learning to pay attention to our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations, and interrupting the tendency for automatic, knee-jerk reactions, can have a positive impact on our lives.
Mindfulness is achieved through a variety of practice exercises to focus attention, expand awareness and interrupt unhelpful reactions.

There are many approaches to learning mindfulness including facilitated group sessions, online programmes, apps and workbooks. All involve daily practice, and much of this can be achieved by becoming more mindful about everyday activities.

For general information on mindfulness
Visit www.mindfulnet.org - a not-for-profit website bringing together information and research on Mindfulness. Or check out www.mindful.org for a range of current articles. Oxford and Bangor University websites are good sources of information.

http://www.oxfordmindfulness.org
https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness /centreinfo.php.en

Getting Started

For suggestions on how to weave mindfulness into everyday life, visit www.pocketmindfulness.com and try out their 6 mindfulness exercises you can try today. If you prefer an app try www.headspace.com

Find a mindfulness training course, teacher or on-line resources

Visit the Mental Health Foundation’s mindfulness site www.bemindful.co.uk to find out more about mindfulness, find a registered teacher or participate in their on-line programme.

There are many face-to-face mindfulness courses available - do a google search for MBSR or MBCT to find one near you - but make sure your teacher complies with the code of practice for mindfulness-based teachers or is listed here.

Mindfulness for Wellbeing and performance

This is a free, 6-week on-line mindfulness programme. Futurelearn is a private company wholly owned by the Open University. It launched in 2013, and brings free resources from universities around the world.

This programme is described on their site as "a practical six-week course explores the science, practice and philosophy of mindfulness. You will learn how to incorporate mindfulness practices into your life to reduce stress, improve mental health, and enhance your personal and professional life".

Book: A practical Guide to Finding Peace in a frantic World - by Mark Williams and Danny Penman. Includes a CD of guided practises, which can also be accessed on line and downloaded.

Mindfulness for Physical and Mental Health

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are programmes specifically designed as interventions to support physical or mental health conditions.

If you are - or think you might be - suffering from any type of clinical condition, please consult your medical practitioner before embarking on a mindfulness programme.

NHS Choices provides a number of helpful information pages on Mindfulness for pain, mindfulness for depression, and mindfulness for wellbeing. Go to www.nhs.uk and search for mindfulness.

The Mental Health Foundation website www.bemindful.co.uk offers an on-line programme and you can also search for a registered mindfulness teacher on this website.

Mindfulness in Government and the Civil Service?

Since 2013, over 120 MPs and Peers have participated in an eight-week mindfulness programme.

A number of government departments have explored mindfulness as part of their staff
wellbeing / personal development programmes. Since 2014, over 2000 civil servants across government have participated in pilot programmes and Introduction to Mindfulness sessions, delivered on a voluntary basis by Marion Furr as Chair of the Department of Health Staff Health and Wellbeing programme. DH have also organised an annual Mindfulness Symposium as part of Mental Health Week for the past 3 years.

In October 2015, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Mindfulness published their Mindful Nation UK report with recommendations on mindfulness in health, in education, in the criminal justice system and in the workplace.

You can download the report at www.themindfulnessinitiative.org.uk

A group of volunteer civil servants has formed the Mindfulness Initiative Civil Service Working Group to consider the APPG recommendations for mindfulness at work, in relation to the Civil Service.

The purpose of this group is to work as a departmental stakeholder group, ensuring cross-department collaboration to develop and implement a coherent action plan for the introduction of Mindfulness across the Civil Service. Group members will represent their individual departments whilst supporting the group’s development and the effective induction of new members. It will support and be supported by the well-being service in CS Employee Policy helping to test and implement proven learning approaches, share expertise and best practice and reduce duplication of effort across departments.

The Mindfulness Initiative Civil Service Working Group employ the term Mindfulness to cover a breadth of potential uses including wellbeing and mental health and maintain that any Workplace learning should be delivered by qualified practitioners.

Civil Service Live featured an Introduction to Mindfulness at every event in 2016, facilitated by a small group of trained mindfulness teachers from within the Civil Service and external volunteers.

1 For further information contact Marion Furr marion.furr@norrgren.com Mobile: 07973 548668
2 For further information contact Marcus Rogers marcus.rogers@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk (secretariat)