



SESSION 2:

Managing Difficult Emotions



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of being right here, right now, in this moment and just noticing what is happening, around you and inside you physically and emotionally.

It is a chance to stop planning for the future or getting caught up in the past, and be present, in this moment, without judging if things are good or bad.

It sounds simple, but often when you pay attention to the present moment, you are present for a little bit but then a thought pops into your head and can carry you away from what is going on around you.

This distraction from the present moment is normal, and happens to everyone. The real practice in mindfulness is **noticing that you are distracted, then gently bringing yourself back to the present moment.**

Different ways to stay in the present moment

In Session 1 we explored how to use the breath to keep us focused in this moment. But there are other ways to stay focused using other senses. These include:

- **Focusing on feelings in your body**

Close your eyes and move your attention to your big toe - what does it feel like? What sensations do you experience? You can move through your body like this all the way to the top of your head.

- **Focusing on touch**

If you are standing, bring your attention to the connection between the floor and your feet. Explore what sensations you feel in that moment. Does it change?

If you are sitting, bring your attention to the feeling of the chair on your legs and back.
If you are lying down, bring your focus to the feeling of the surface on your back, head and legs and the position of your body.

- **Focusing on sounds around you**

Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you - can you notice different layers of sounds, and how sounds come and go. Can you hear the moments of quiet as well as the noise.

Why mindfulness is helpful in difficult situations

When we get stressed out, or find ourselves in a difficult situation, it can be really hard to remember about mindfulness, but staying present can be very helpful and keep you from saying something that you may regret later. **Taking a moment to be present before we act or speak gives us a chance to consider what is the best action to take or what is the best thing to say.**

When you are overwhelmed or stressed, taking a moment to be present can also help you notice and be aware of how *you* are feeling. This allows you to make decisions with that in mind. If you are tired, for example, maybe you ask for help. Or tell your family that you are tired and ask them to be patient with you.

When we are paying attention to the present moment with mindfulness, we begin to see that nothing ever stays the same. Even in difficult situations, we can trust that things will shift and change.

One way to remember to use mindfulness when things get difficult, is the STOP practice.

Stop what you are doing - even if only for 10 seconds

Take a deep breath

Observe your environment - bring your attention to what you can hear,
see or feel

Proceed with your activity



Quick and easy mindfulness activities

When caring for someone else, life is full and busy, but you don't need a lot of time to bring mindful moments into your day. You can build them into the activities you already do.

- When doing any chores bring your full attention to that chore.
 - If you are washing dishes, bring your attention to what it feels like to have the running soapy water on your skin
 - When folding laundry focus on how the material feels in your hands, and what it feels like to move your arms while folding.
 - When cooking, observe the colors of the food and the sounds and smells it makes when you prepare it.
- When you hear a siren, or traffic noise or cell phone ring, stop and listen to the sound - it's quality, it's volume, how it changes over time and the quiet left after it has gone.
- When you sit down in a chair, take a moment to feel your thighs on the chair and your feet on the floor.
- When brushing your teeth, bring your focus to what it feels like in your arm holding the brush, or in your mouth with the bristles on your teeth, gums and tongue. You can also experiment with holding the toothbrush in the other hand to your usual hand when brushing and see how that feels.

Homework exercise

When something challenging comes up for you this week, pause and use a mindfulness technique (noticing your breath, using STOP, feeling your feet on the ground, etc.). Afterward, note if anything changed compared to what usually happens in difficult situations. Did you feel different? Did it change how you spoke or acted?

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