We live in a society in which we are unfortunately trained to review the past over and over and over, often beating ourselves up for decisions we made and the consequences of those decisions. The past is every moment prior to this present moment. However, we can’t change the past. So, let it go.

We often get caught up in a similar way about the future, getting anxious, worrying, worrying, worrying, about days and moments that are not here yet, over which we have no control. So, let it go.

Mindfulness is the practice of bringing full awareness to the present moment.

What this means specifically is learning how to bring your focus to what is going on in this moment... not twenty years ago; not last year; not last week; not yesterday; and not even ten minutes ago... this moment. By letting go of the past, and not getting caught up in the future, we free ourselves up to be more fully present in this moment.

An example of mindfulness is at this moment, you are reading this informational sheet. You are trying to pay full attention to this material, noticing when your mind is wandering to other thoughts, and then gently bringing your attention back to the reading of this sheet. Distracting thoughts naturally come into our mind, yet we don’t have to chase after them. We can notice the thought and then bring ourselves back to this moment, the reading of this material.
Learning that the only moment we can control is the present moment is powerful, and freeing. Mindfulness training helps us through attentional activities and breathing strategies to bring greater calm, peacefulness, and focus to our lives. By focusing fully on the present moment, we can then release our emotional grip on the past and simply allow the future to come as it will. Our power is in the present moment.

- Let’s respect our past experience, learn from it, realize we cannot change it, forgive ourselves if necessary, leave the past in the past, and be kinder to ourselves in this present moment.
- Let’s remember that the future is coming, one moment at a time, and realize that our power to affect the future is in this present moment … and then the next… and then the next.
- There are many simple yet powerful mindfulness strategies that we can practice to help us improve focus at work, at school, at home, and in the community.
- One simple strategy is to check in with ourselves several times throughout the day and ask, “How well am I focused on what I am doing in this present moment?” When we notice that our attention has drifted to a distracting thought, simply breathe, let the distracting thought float on by like a cloud in the sky, and then return our focus to what is in front of us.
- With daily mindfulness practice, we can improve our physical health, emotional resilience, and problem solving.

Mindfulness Resources

Books:

*The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress... and Everything Else* by Holly B. Rogers, MD (2016)

*Wherever You go, There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2010)

Apps:

- Headspace
- Stop, Breathe, & Think
- Smiling Mind
- The Mindfulness App
- Insight Timer
- re-mindful

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