

Be Mindful, More Relaxed



By Jane Finch, LCSW

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Mindfulness is a meditation technique for evoking a relaxation response and reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety. Based upon the concept of being "mindful", or having a heightened awareness of the present, it is easy to learn and can be practiced anytime, anywhere (no incense, chanting, or body contortions required). It involves being aware of the present moment and simply observing without judging, reflecting, or thinking. Paying attention to sounds, breathing rhythms, inner feelings, and our reaction patterns to specific situations are all part of being mindful.

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the author of several books on this topic, explains:

"If you are experiencing a distressing thought or feeling or actual physical pain in any moment, you resist the impulse to try to escape the unpleasantness; instead, you attempt to see it clearly as it is and accept it because it is already present in this moment." However, he adds that acceptance "does not mean passivity or resignation." On the contrary, by fully accepting what each moment offers, you open yourself to experiencing life much more completely and make it more likely that you will be able to respond effectively to any situation that presents itself.

Acceptance offers a way to navigate life's ups and downs--what Zorba the Greek called "the full catastrophe"-- with grace, a sense of humor, and perhaps some understanding of the big picture, what I like to think of as wisdom. For more on mindfulness, check out Dr. Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living* or *Wherever You Go, There You Are*.