

Everyday Mindfulness

Donna Krug

District Director, Cottonwood District

Debra Bolton, Ph.D., CFLE

Extension Specialist, Southwest Research and Extension Center

Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Ph.D., CFLE

Extension Specialist, Family Studies and Human Services

This lesson is designed to help participants give more attention and awareness to their thoughts and feelings in the present moment of everyday life. Mindfulness practice increases awareness of thoughts and feelings and has been documented to impact positively physical and emotional health and relationships with others. It emphasizes a process of growth and behavior change that helps individuals deal with the stresses of everyday life. The lesson objectives help participants: 1) understand what the practice of mindfulness is and is not as well as its possible benefits; 2) practice beginning mindfulness exercises that focus on the breath, the mind, and the body; and 3) discuss how everyday mindfulness can be incorporated into their lives. If the group is interested, a final objective is: 4) discuss and plan appropriate activities to support the practice of mindfulness in community activities.

Remember, to increase impact of this lesson, you may choose to break the exercises into three or four additional lessons: 1) Mindful relaxation, 2) Breathing techniques, 3) Imagery and body exercises, and 4) Do-in exercise. When you break this lesson into three or four exercises, it may be necessary to reiterate the "Seven Principles of Mindfulness" at the beginning of each session.

Audience

This lesson targets an adult audience.

Preparation

- » Read through the entire teaching guide (MF3425) and accompanying fact sheet (MF3424) before you present the lesson. Try to present the lesson in your own words without reading the materials. Practice the exercises given in the fact sheet and the imagery exercise given in this leader's guide.
- » Prepare yourself by mentally thinking about people's reactions and how you will lead the discussion.

- » Obtain copies of the fact sheet to distribute to participants.
- » Make a copy of the evaluation survey in this lesson guide for each participant. Have available a pen or pencil for each participant to complete the survey. Optional: Prepare a note card for each participant with the word STOP written in large letters on each one.

The Lesson

Refer to the fact sheet and present in your own words the following sections:

- » Introduction
- » Mindfulness Definitions
- » Seven Principles of Mindfulness
- » Benefits of Mindfulness
- » Mindfulness in Work and Social Settings
- » Mindfulness Resources
- » Beginning Mindfulness Exercises, include the imaging exercise given only in this leader's guide.

Brainstorm with participants on how they can incorporate everyday mindfulness into their lives. Summarize their responses when you are ready to bring the discussion to a close.

Optional: Brainstorm how the group can plan activities to support the practice of mindfulness in community activities. Summarize their responses and decide on action steps if the group is receptive.

Closing: Prior to asking participants to complete an evaluation form, conclude the lesson with the following (*Note: you could hand out note cards with STOP printed in large letters*):

Try STOPping

STOP, a mnemonic, provides an easy way to practice being mindful in the face of stress. When an event triggers stress or negative emotions, which lead to a negative reaction, follow the steps below.



- » Slow down
- » Take a breath
- » Observe: Bodily feelings, thoughts, and possibilities
- » Proceed, considering multiple possibilities.

It helps to bring an attitude of kindness to this practice, accepting thoughts and feelings as they are. It also helps to bring curiosity to explore the situation with new eyes and an openness to new possibilities. These practices target a sense of well-being and can be practiced in small moments to develop skills ready to be used for more challenging crises.

Source: Louise Delagran, MA, MEd. "Taking Charge of Your health and Wellbeing." University of Minnesota

Guided-Imagery Script: A Walk in the Country

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You're giving yourself some time to quiet your mind and body. Allow yourself to settle comfortably, wherever you are right now. If you wish, close your eyes. Breathe in deeply, through your nose, expanding your abdomen and filling your lungs; and pursing your lips, exhale through your mouth slowly and completely, allowing your body to sink heavily into the surface beneath you...And once again breathe in through your nose and all the way now to your abdomen,, and then breathe out slowly through pursed lips-letting go of tension, letting go of anything that's on your mind right now and just allowing yourself to be present in this moment...

Imagine yourself walking along a peaceful old country road. The sun is gently warming your back...the birds are singing...the air is calm and fragrant...

With no need to hurry, you notice your walking is relaxed and easy. As you walk along in this way, taking in your surroundings, you come across an old gate. It looks inviting and you decide to take the path through the gate. The gate creaks as you open it and go through.

You find yourself in an old, overgrown garden-flowers growing where they've seeded themselves, vines clinging over a fallen tree, soft green wild grasses, shade trees.

You notice yourself breathing deeply...smelling the flowers...listening to the birds and insects...feeling a gentle breeze cool against your skin. All of your senses are alive and responding with pleasure to this peaceful time and place...

When you're ready to move on, you leisurely follow the path out behind the garden, eventually coming to a more wooded area. As you enter this area, your eyes find the trees and plant life restful. The sunlight is filtered through the leaves. The air feels mild and a little cooler...You savor the fragrance of trees and earth...and gradually become aware of the sound of a nearby stream. Pausing, you allow yourself to take in the sights and sounds, breathing in the cool and fragrant air several times...And with each breath, you notice how refreshed you are feeling...

Continue along the path for a while, you come to the stream. It's clear and clean as it flows and tumbles over the rocks and some fallen logs. You follow the path easily along the creek for a way, and after a while, you come out into a sunlit clearing where you discover a small waterfall emptying into a quiet pool of water.

You find a comfortable place to sit for a while, a perfect niche where you can feel completely relaxed.

You feel good as you allow yourself to just enjoy the warmth and solitude of this peaceful place...

After a while, you become aware that it is time to return. You arise and walk back down the path in a relaxed and comfortable way, through the cool and fragrant trees, out into the sun-drenched overgrown garden...One last smell of the flowers, and out the creaky gate.

You leave this country retreat for now and return down the road. You notice you feel calm and rested. You feel grateful and remind yourself that you can visit this special place whenever you wish to take some time to refresh yourself and renew your energy.

And now, preparing to bring this period of relaxation to a close, you may want to take a moment to picture yourself carrying this experience of calm and refreshment with you into the ordinary activities of your life...And when you're ready, take a nice deep breath and open your eyes.

Evaluation Form

Thank you for participating in our program! To help us improve this program, we would like to gather your responses to the questions below. Your participation is voluntary. This information will only be used for evaluation purposes, and you will not be identified in any way by the information you provide.

For each of the items below, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

After participating in this program, I gained knowledge about:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The definition of mindfulness					
2. The benefits of mindfulness					
3. The seven principles that serve as the basis for mindfulness					
4. Places where mindfulness can be used effectively					

5. As a result of this program, I have also learned: _____

As a result of this program, I will:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. Practice mindfulness on a regular basis					
7. Tell someone else what I learned					

8. If you agree above, please describe the actions or changes planned: _____

	Check one			
9. Overall, how valuable was this program to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very valuable	<input type="checkbox"/> Valuable	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat valuable	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all valuable

Demographics:

10. I am an adult: 18–29 years 30–39 years 40–49 years 50–59 years
 60–69 years 70+ years

11. I am a youth under age 18.

12. My gender: Male Female Prefer not to respond

13. My race: American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Prefer not to respond

14. My ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Prefer not to respond

15. Marital Status: Single Married Single, living with partner Separated or Divorced
 Widowed Prefer not to respond

16. For office use only: Coded identification number _____

Thank you for completing this evaluation! We greatly appreciate your feedback.

Please return this form to: _____

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Authors:

Donna Krug

District Director, Cottonwood District

Debra Bolton, Ph.D., CFLE

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Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Ph.D., CFLE

Extension Specialist, Family Studies and Human Services

Reviewers:

Elizabeth Kiss and Rebecca McFarland

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