

## **Getting Started With Mindfulness...**

You can get started with mindfulness through either formal practice such as sitting mindfulness or through informal practice such as paying attention while washing the dishes or any other daily activity. Below are some exercises to try to develop your formal mindfulness practice. It may help to dedicate a small corner of a room for your sitting practice, that you can make comfortable and free of distraction. It may also help to find the same time each day to practice to help develop your routine. Find a sitting position that is comfortable and stable and begin.

### **Mindful Breathing**

The exercise is simply to identify the in-breath as in-breath and the out-breath as out-breath. When you breathe in, you know that this is your in-breath. When you breathe out, you are mindful that this is your out-breath. Just recognize: this is an in-breath, this is an out-breath. Very simple, very easy. In order to recognize your in-breath as in-breath, you have to bring your mind home to yourself. So the object of your mindfulness is your breath, and you just focus your attention on it. Breathing in, this is my in-breath. Breathing out, this is my out-breath.

Each time your mind wanders, just notice it and then bring your attention back to your in breath and your out breath. The practice is simple recognition of the in-breath and the out-breath. That is good enough. It will have a powerful effect.

### **Counting the Breath**

You can also practice by counting your in breaths. Just before each in breath mentally count it, starting at one and going all the way up to ten. If your mind wanders then start again at one. You could easily spend the rest of your life practicing this as you work your way up to ten.

### **Awareness of Your Body**

Another type of mindfulness practice you can try is scanning the body and noticing areas of tension. As you notice any tension in the shoulders, neck or hands for example you can just tighten and release these areas with your in breath and out breath. It sometimes helps to do this by starting at the top of the body and working your way down, or going down the left side and coming back up the right side. This can be a very relaxing mindfulness exercise and helps us pay more attention to feedback from our bodies.

### **Walking Meditation**

If you get tired of sitting and practicing mindfulness you can always bring it in to your walking, by bringing the same awareness of body into each step. You may notice how different parts of the body feel as they assist you in walking. Your toes, your foot's arch, your heel, your ankles your knees, your thighs and on and on and on all play a vital role in our walking and by slowing down and paying attention we can tune in to our bodies and develop our mindfulness practice.