

# Jon Dillow Counseling

Counseling, Coaching, and Seminars

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## Mindfulness

### What is Mindfulness?

All of us live busy lives. Running from one task to the next, from meeting to meeting, all while being bombarded by the noise of one or more of our electronic devices. Our lives are typically lived in the past, ruminating on what was, or in the future, anticipating whatever comes next, at times with a level of anxiety.

Mindfulness is about learning to live more in the moment. It allows a person to simply be present, enjoying what is going on *now* rather than dwelling on the past or fretting about the future. Practicing mindfulness even for a few minutes each day has been shown to lower anxiety levels overall and increase one's general satisfaction with life.

### The Practice of Mindfulness:

There are dozens of ways one can practice mindfulness and entire courses devoted to the topic. Below is a list of simple activities you can do to practice mindfulness. These exercises are useful both as a regular part of one's day and as a response to moments of anxiety or stress. Some of the practices may feel awkward at first but with consistent practice they can become comfortable habits.

- **5 minutes of mindfulness:** Set aside five minutes to sit quietly. You don't need to be in the lotus position or in a dark room :) You can do this anywhere. The goal is to get out of your head - the place where you live in the past or future, and instead be in the moment. Set an alarm to start your five minutes so you're not having to wonder about time. Then simply tune in to what's around you. Notice the colors and sounds. If there are people around, observe their posture, movement, or sound of their voices. Sense the temperature or movement of the air.
- **Mindful Meals:** Most of us rush through meals or spend them distracted by facebook, TV, or a book. Set aside a few moments at each meal to practice mindfulness. Slowly chew each bite, focusing on the sensations, flavors, and textures they bring.
- **Scan your body:** Spend a few moments listening to your body. What feelings and sensations do you notice? Start with your feet and slowly move to your head.

- **Mindful actions:** Choose to perform one action in a mindful way. Walk from your car to the store with focused attention on the movement and the world around you. Make your morning coffee with slow deliberateness. Clean the evening dishes with an awareness of each movement and sensation.
- **Mindful breathing:** All of us breath. We've been doing it since birth. Unless something is wrong with our breathing we do so without even noticing. Take a few minutes and notice your breath. Pay attention to the sensations of inhaling and exhaling. Be aware of the way the air feels moving through your nostrils, how your chest expands, the coolness of the breath as you inhale. Don't try to adjust your breathing, simply allow yourself to become aware of the sensations and movement.
- **Download a mindfulness app:** There are dozens of free apps that can lead you through mindfulness activities. Two that you could start with are "Headspace" and "Calm".