

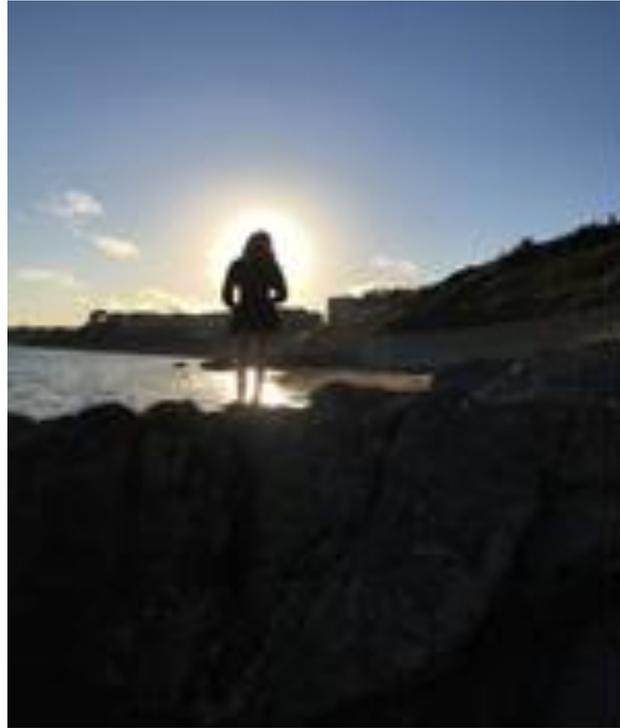


SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND
WELLBEING OF THE ARMED
FORCES COMMUNITY AND
CIVILIAN FAMILIES IN
CORNWALL



BETTER WELLBEING

We may be under biological stress in this pandemic, but let's keep our minds sane...and build and keep 'little islands of sanity' for ourselves and those around us, wherever we are, with whatever resources we have. Here's one way:



Mindfulness Meditation – 'Being in the Moment'

'Mindfulness is the awareness of what is going on in us and around us in the present moment'. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2014)

To achieve the above, we practice mindfulness meditation. This practice provides us with the space in our minds to be able to respond instead of react to stimuli, to observe how the mind 'latches' onto (thoughts, sensations and stimuli), to use the breath as an anchor and gain some control in response to the 'chatter' in our minds. It offers the opportunity to start a 'new beginning' after each breath and a process to relieve stress, anxiety and depression and to move out of 'clock-time' into appreciating 'moments of time'.

Mindfulness is a medication without negative side effects and a resource which we can dip into at any time. Buddhist monks have been practising mindfulness meditation for over 2000 years. Clearly, they knew they were onto a good thing; The West have only just discovered mindfulness and have done 1000s of research studies in order to prove its benefits. There is now significant proof that mindfulness can improve wellbeing in many ways.

Here are a few tools to take away and practice. These tools can then be used at any time of the day, enabling us to be more mindfully aware of the moments that make up our lives. Don't worry if the benefits are not immediately obvious the challenge is to practice daily, and the benefits will soon speak for themselves.

3 Minute Meditation

Practice – at any time of day (3 minutes),

- 1) YOUR SPACE - Find a place to sit quietly. Keep your back straight, place your hands on your knees, head gently tilted forward slightly and closing your eyes, or find a position that is comfortable for you.
- 2) INTENTION- think of the intention for your practice.....to slow down, for new beginnings, to change a thought pattern or to just relax, reduce stress, depression, anxiety.
- 3) AWARENESS - Become aware of, recognising, acknowledging thoughts, emotions & sensations. Visualise these thoughts, emotions and sensations knocking at the door of your mind, let them in.....see them float across a movie screen.... Watch them come and go...observing your mind.
- 4) ANCHOR to Breath – now bring your attention to the feelings of the breath in a particular place in the body (the coolness as it enters your nose, the sensation of it lifting your chest) If your attention latches onto some thought, just lead it back gently to the breath and that place in the body, over and over again. The BREATH is always available to us.
- 5) EXPAND this awareness. Imagine the breath moving throughout your body using the sensations of the breath as an anchor and perceive the experiences these bring.
- 6) After three minutes, gently opening your eyes and becoming aware of your surroundings. This new breath can signify **new beginnings**, that is, a new way of looking at one's experience, trauma, vulnerability, or patterns of thinking.

There are many different mindfulness meditation practices of different durations and there are no right or wrong ways to do them. I have copied a few of these here. Try them and see which ones feel right for you, persevere. Take a little time each day for yourself, to develop the habit of mindfulness.

Included in the following links are the Walking, Sitting and Stretching meditation which are all free to download.

<http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

<https://www.guilford.com/companion-site/Mindfulness-Based-Cognitive-Therapy-for-Bipolar-Disorder/audio>

The most important thing is to keep practicing so that being mindful becomes an oasis of calm in your day. Start experiencing the power of the 'moment'.

Going forward, try to identify a prompt, a routine and most importantly, a reward

for practicing mindfulness, and it will become a habit. For example, eating, brushing your teeth, or showering mindfully, once a day. Obviously, you need to stay safe and so mindful driving or operating power tools is not recommended!!!!

The aim is to practice being mindful so that our days can be filled with mindful moments, and thereby, sustaining 'islands of sanity'.

Further reading:

- 1) The Mindfulness Survival Kit by Thich Nhat Hanh (2014)
- 2) Awareness and Freedom by Itai Ivitzan (2015)

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