

WEEK #1

Welcome to this 8 week Mindfulness Journey. As Discussed during the information session at the last staff meeting, you will be sent weekly emails containing various mindfulness practices. You are encouraged to read these emails and implement the practice into your daily routine for that week. Each week includes a weekly challenge or something to consider. This is something that does not need to be shared with anyone, but is for your own personal reflection and guidance. Take note of what practice or technique works best for you.

Also, do not forget about your daily 1 minute of mindfulness guided meditation before beginning your shift. This meditation is to be done after you have reported to your unit at your scheduled time and you have clocked in. If you prefer to use your own device, there are several free mindfulness smartphone applications that you can download. Some that I recommend are:

- Headspace
- Happy, Not Perfect
- The Mindfulness App
- Calm
- Stop, Breathe & Think

Use this 1 minute before you begin your daily tasks to:

- Recognize any negative stress that you are bringing with you from outside of work,
- Pay attention to your own emotions both negative and positive,
- Become aware of what's happening in the present moment,
- Acknowledge your own expectations for the day

Weekly Challenge #1: In addition to performing your daily mindfulness meditation, think about the triggers that cause you to feel stress. How does your body and mind initially react to stress? Do you already practice mindfulness or meditation? How do you prevent stress or calm yourself down once stress has already hit? In the coming weeks, when you recognize that trigger try intervening with this deep breathing exercise:

- Stop what you're doing and turn your focus to your breathing.
- Leave your eyes open and breath normally.
- Breathe in for 5 seconds. Notice how it feels to breathe in through the nostrils and feel your rib cage expand.
- Hold your breath for 5 seconds. Contemplate this in-between stage.
- Release your breath for 5 seconds. Exhale through your mouth.
- Repeat these steps for a full minute or longer if necessary.

WEEK #2

Mindful Eating.

For the first two bites of any meal or snack you eat, pay attention to the sensory experiences -Use all your senses to see it, touch it, smell it, and sense it.

As you put your first bite on your tongue, recognize the taste of it. Slow down, savor it and smile between bites. Purposefully slow down as you chew. Really pay attention to the flavor of it. What is its texture? How is the taste? How does it feel in your mouth? Let it linger and then swallow it. After you have swallowed, let your lips turn up slightly and smile. Now pick up another. Perform the same process for each piece you eat or bite you take.

Weekly Challenge #2: Try having a mindful meal this week with your family or friends. Eliminate distractions, enjoy the company you're in without your phone or TV. Be aware of your surroundings and of your interactions with the others whom you are sharing the meal.

WEEK #3

Take a mindful moment to give your brain a break instead of immediately checking your email/phone.

Instead of checking your email or phone in a spare 5 minutes between patient assignments or waiting for "that last blood pressure", spend a few seconds observing what's going on around you. If able to look out a window, watch the leaves fluttering on the big trees across the street... If you're in the PACU, look around the department. Make an observation of a pleasant interaction between a coworker and a patient. Notice all the equipment around that you might have never noticed before. Be aware of the various sounds that you hear every day but usually "tune out" – all of the monitors, phones ringing, talking, patients snoring. Pay attention to how a coworker laughs or smiles. What kinds of conversations are going on around you?

Use mindfulness to give your brain a break rather than filling up every tiny space in your day by automatically reaching to check your notifications on your phone or email. It's okay to not be in constant contact with the outside world all the time.

Weekly challenge #3: Make it a point to observe a positive aspect of one of your coworkers this week. Maybe you have never noticed how neat their handwriting is or how attentive they are to their patients. Let that person know, everyone loves a compliment!

WEEK #4

Clench your fist and breathe into your fingers.

Position your fingers and thumbs facing down. Now clench your fist tightly. Turn your hand over so your fingers and thumbs are facing up and breathe into your fist. Notice what happens.



Weekly challenge #4: Slow down time during an interaction this week. Choose a person who you would like to be more present with and use these three steps: Use your senses, do one thing at a time, tune in to your emotions, really listen to what that person is saying.

WEEK #5

Mindful breathing for one minute.

Lower your eyes and notice where you feel your breath. That might be the air going in and out at your nostrils or the rise and fall of your chest or stomach. If you can't feel anything, place your hand on your stomach and notice how your hand gently rises and falls with your breath. If you like, you can just lengthen the in breath and the out breath or just breathe naturally. Your body knows how to breathe.

Focus on your breath. When your mind wanders, as it will do, just bring your attention back to your breath. You might like to say 'thinking' when you notice your thoughts and just gently shepherd your attention back to your breath.

This can be done for longer than one minute. However, even for one minute it will allow you to pause and be in the moment. Or you might just like to breathe out stress on the out breath and breathe in peace on the in breath.

Weekly Challenge #5: Think back on the past weeks when you began implementing mindfulness into your life. What is working? Has it benefitted you? What other opportunities are you noticing in your life to become more mindful?

WEEK #6

STOP Exercise

Stand up and breathe.

- Feel your connection to the earth.

Tune in to your body.

- Lower your gaze. Scan your body and notice physical sensations or emotions.

Discharge any unpleasant sensations, emotions or feelings on the out breath.

Notice any pleasant ones and let them fill you up on the in breath.

Observe.

- Lift your eyes and take in your surroundings. Observe something in your environment that is pleasant and be grateful for it and its beauty.

Possibility.

- Ask yourself what is possible? What is new? What is a forward step? What is next?

Weekly Challenge #6: Be mindful of your technology usage this week. Take the opportunity to unplug. Leave your phone in another room for an extended period of time. In the time that you would usually spend checking your email or scrolling through Facebook, have a conversation with someone and find out something about them that you never knew. If no one is around, use that time to do something for yourself like go for a walk outside or think about something you accomplished today.

WEEK #7

Loving-kindness meditation.

For one minute, repeat ‘May I be happy, may I be well, may I be filled with kindness and peace.’

Now you can substitute “you” for “I” and think of someone you know and like, or just send love to all people.

Weekly Challenge #7: Reflect back on the ways that being more mindful has benefitted you over the last 8 weeks. Consider what is most important to you. How can mindfulness bring you closer into alignment with your values? What goals are you working toward that could be supported by being more present?

WEEK #8

Make Stress a Positive Part of Your Life.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that people experiencing high levels of stress but who believed that stress was good for them had among the lowest mortality rates. Whereas highly stressed people who believed that stress was bad for their health had the highest chance of dying. Your beliefs about stress clearly affect how they impact on your health and well-being.

Mindfulness can help you achieve this change in perception. The next time you're facing a challenge at work, notice how your heart rate speeds up and your breathing accelerates. Observe these responses and then switch your attitude—respond to your stress creatively rather than negatively. Be grateful that the stress response is energizing you. Note that your body is preparing you for your upcoming challenge and that a faster heart rate is sending more oxygen around your body. Be grateful that the process is sharpening your senses and boosting your immune system. By viewing the stress response from this perspective, you see your upcoming problem as a positive challenge and recognize your body preparing to meet it. This small change in attitude can literally add years to your life and improve your productivity and achievements in the workplace.

Weekly Challenge #8: What are your own natural responses to stress? Do you notice your heart rate increasing? Does your face get red and start feeling warm? Do you shake? Do you become flustered and unable to focus? All of these are common responses.

This week and in the future – Now that you have been practicing the act of being mindful, you will be more aware of your own responses to stress. When you feel your body start to react, intervene with one of the previously mentioned mindfulness exercises that you have learned about. What happens?