

# PRACTICING MINDFULNESS

Feeling overwhelmed and stressed is a common reaction to life events. Several studies suggest that the practice of mindfulness leads to a decrease in stress and anxiety as well as an increase in overall emotional well-being.

## WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to what is happening to you from moment to moment. To be mindful, you must slow down and bring awareness to your thoughts, feelings and actions, without attaching judgment to them. When we feel stressed, it is easy to focus solely on problems and simultaneously be blind to any positive experiences. Taking notice of simple sensations, like taste, helps stop this line of thinking.

## SIMPLE WAYS TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS:

- When you get up in the morning, *bring your attention to your breathing*. Instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, take mindful breaths. Focus on your breathing, and sense the effects of breathing throughout your body.
- In the shower, *notice how the water feels on your body*.
- Take the opportunity of brushing your teeth to *pay attention to all the sensations and tastes involved*.
- On your way to work or school, *pay attention to how you walk or drive or ride the transit*. Take some deep breaths, relaxing throughout your body.
- When you arrive at your destination, *take a few moments to orient yourself*; breathe consciously and calmly, and relax your body.
- When sitting at your desk or keyboard, *become aware of the subtle signs of physical tension* and take a break to stretch or walk around.
- Use the repetitive events of the day—the ringing telephone, a knock on the door, getting food—*as cues for a mini-relaxation*.
- As you go to sleep, *let go of today and tomorrow*, and take some slow, mindful breaths.

Source: Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Mass General Hospital and Brown University

“EVERYONE THINKS OF CHANGING THE WORLD, BUT NO ONE THINKS OF CHANGING HIMSELF.”

— Leo Tolstoy

