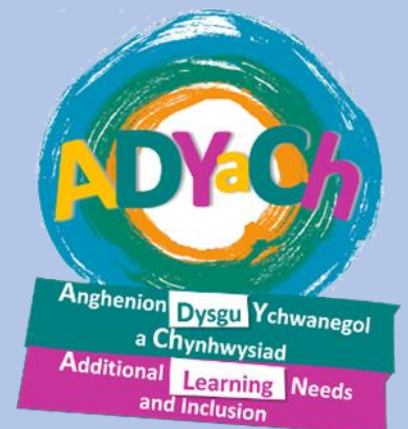




Mindfulness Workbook

Strategies and activities which will enhance your Mental Health and well being



Introduction

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

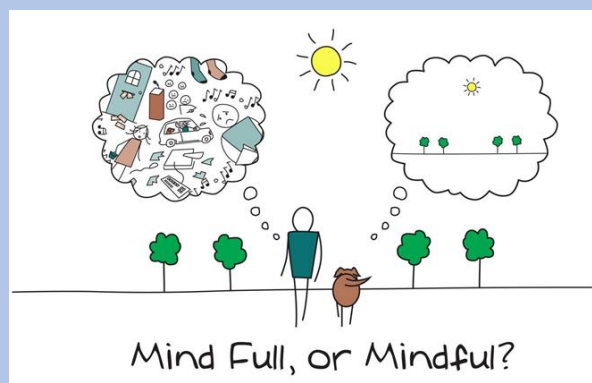
Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, it's not something you have to conjure up, and you just have to learn how to access it.

Practicing mindfulness can change our thinking in a lot of ways but will also help with feeling anxious. And it simply means paying more attention to yourself (your thoughts, emotions and how your body feels), others and the world around you.

There are many benefits of practicing mindfulness such as reduces stress and anxiety, enhances performance, increases happiness and satisfaction with life, can help you find the good in a bad situation, increases our attention to others well-being, increases insights and awareness through observing our own mind. Also practicing mindfulness allows us to feel more content within ourselves which will enhance our self-esteem and confident, help us limit judgement and approach our experiences with kindness- to ourselves but also to others around us.

Try these simple steps to practice mindfulness so you get an idea of what this workbook entails and the techniques, strategies and activities you will expect to come across:

1. Remind yourself to take notice (either in general or during a relaxation exercise).
2. Try setting a time of the day to practice (in the shower/bath, while eating or during an exercise like meditation for example).
3. Try something new and practice being mindful while you do it.
4. Be mindful of your thoughts (you have to do this to be able to challenge them!)
5. Name the emotions and feelings you come across during the day.



Wise- Mind

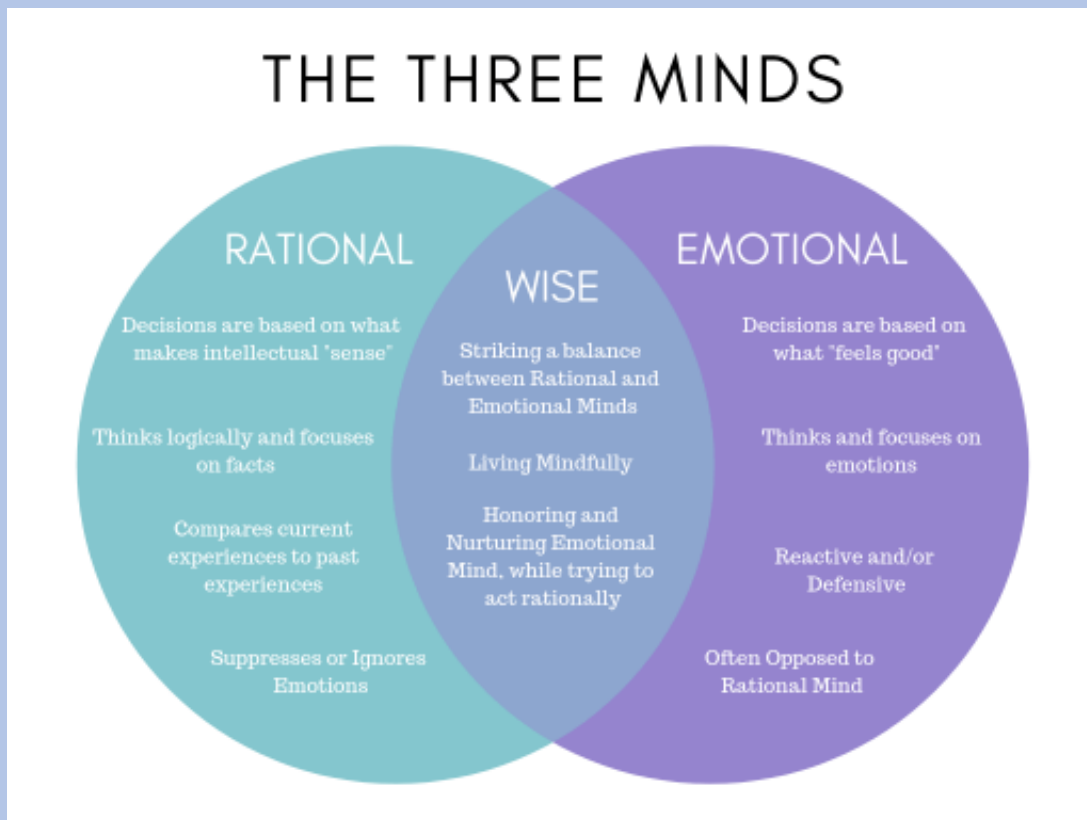
One way you could practice mindfulness is to be mindful of your 'mindset'. This means meeting of the emotional mind and reasonable mind. It is the synthesis of considering both emotions and rationality. The more we reflect on what wise mind has to say, the more likely we are to do what works, and be willing to tolerate any difficulties that arise along the way.

Are you using an emotional, logical or wise mind?

Emotional mind: This is when your emotions are in control. When anxiety is deciding what you do for example!

Logical Mind: This is when you ignore emotions and only focus on facts – decisions are made by logic.

Wise Mind: This is when we use both emotion and logic to make our decisions, to get things done and be mindful of our experience.



Being mindful about 'mindset' can help us figure out when our emotions are in control and start using a wise mind approach!

How to get in touch with your wise-mind? Try this simple technique:

Set a timer for 3 minutes (I love using this one on my iPhone). Take a few deep breaths and notice how you feel as you breathe. Simply just notice that you are breathing!

Mindfulness Breathing

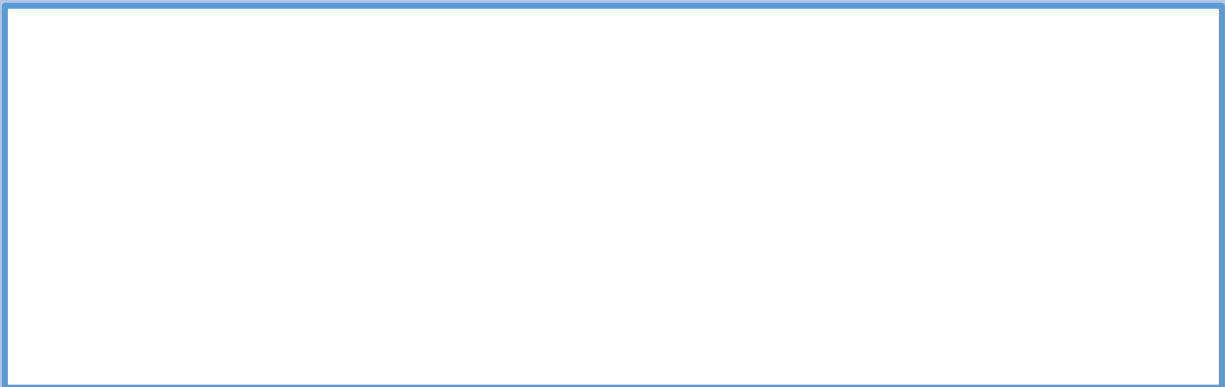
Mindful breathing is a very basic yet powerful technique used to have a healthy mindset and be in a state of mindfulness. The idea is simply to focus your attention on your breathing—to its natural rhythm and flow and the way it feels on each inhale and exhale.

While it sounds too simple to help, breathing exercises are one of the best ways to help our anxiety. Gaining control of your breathing will not only help your heart rate and heavy breathing, it will help the “butterflies” in your stomach and nervous shaking as these are linked to increased blood and oxygen rushing to other parts of the body.

Try some controlled breathing exercises. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, focusing on your body. If it helps, count breaths for 3-4 seconds before exhaling. Calm has a useful [‘breathing bubble’ tool](#) that can help.

Ymarferwch ychydig o anadlu dan reolaeth nawr a chymerwch eiliad i ysgrifennu sut rydych chi'n teimlo, eich meddyliau ac yn gyffredinol wedi ei cwblhau:

- Wrth gwblhau'r ymarfer, ceisiwch sylwi bod eich ysgyfaint yn ehangu, a'r amser rhwng pob mewn anadl ac allanadlu. Teimlwch eich hun yn ymlacio ar bob allanadlu, eich ysgwyddau'n gollwng, ac eich breichiau a'ch coesau'n dod yn drwm



Muscle Relaxation

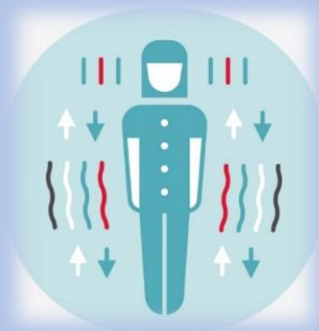
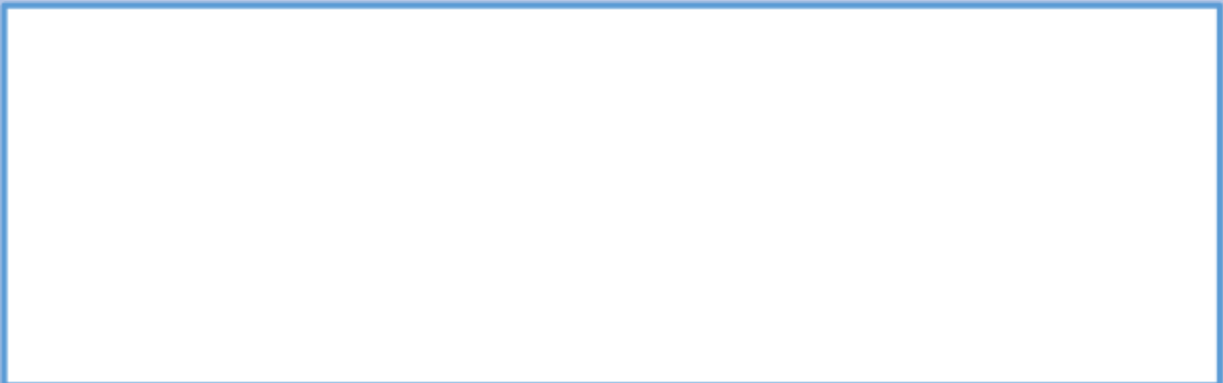
Muscle Relaxation is just like controlled breathing, it helps to reverse breathing too heavily and as a result it will relax our muscles which will help remove some of the tension in our muscles. This technique is used to help you focus on yourself, getting you to pull and relax your muscles as you mentally scan your body. This allows your body to fully relax and you can fully engage and be in the moment.

One of these exercises is to gradually relax muscles. Take the following steps:

1. Make sure you sit or lie down.
2. Take a deep breath.
3. Tense any body part (legs, arms, shoulders, stomach etc)
4. Breathe Out
5. Release the tension.
6. Repeat with a different part of the body.

You can do this from your face and all the way down to your feet.

Practice this with the areas of your body where you feel most stressed and note how you feel afterwards.



Meditation

Meditation includes elements of increased muscle relaxation and controlled breathing making it another useful tool to help relax the body and allow it to be in the present moment but also to reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety. Meditation also has other benefits such as being able to make better decisions, better emotional health and feeling less stressed.

Try to make a few moments of reflection to practice meditation;

1. Either sit or lie down, keep your spine straight (if sitting put your feet on the floor) and relax your arms. The important thing is to feel comfortable.
2. Manage your breath as you do with breathing exercises (count your breaths, holdings and exhalations if it helps).
3. Close your eyes or keep them open.
4. Let your thoughts and emotions come and go. Avoid repairing or 'removing' these and just testing them.

To help make meditation part of your routine, think about when you will do it (In the shower, on the bus to school, after brushing your teeth etc). Try to practice in a place where you are not disturbed or distracted if possible.

Tip: If this is something new to you and you feel uncomfortable start meditating only 2-3 times a week and then build on this.

Calm and Headspace have lots of useful meditation videos to suit everyone. You can find them on youtube or on their apps.



Gratitude Journal

Having a Thanksgiving Diary is an effective tool in being more considerate, appreciative and also aware of the good things in your life that can sometimes make the situations that disappoint you, sad, angry, seem less important. Also transmuting your thoughts into concrete language (whether verbal or written) has advantages over thinking the thoughts alone: It deepens the emotional impact.

It takes only 10 minutes of your day to practice this instrument (5 minutes in the morning and 5 minutes in the evening). There are many ways to practice gratitude journals - some do it every day, some have gratitude questions that they ask themselves each week / month, and along with the daily routine.

Try to answer these kind of questions as a daily routine: Try to give 3-5 points to each question.

Example 1: Daily practice questions



Today I am grateful for...



small victory I had today...

Example 2: Daily practice questions



I am grateful for...



Moment I appreciated today...

Example 1: End of the week gratitude questions

- List the things you have every day you can be thankful for but you rarely or never manage to appreciate. (for example- Sight, running / walking, music etc)

- A list of the people you are grateful for, not only the people you have in your life, but also the people you have never met but who have been able to inspire or teach you something through their stories or actions. (Suggestion- Teacher, best friend, Celebrity, Actor)

- List a moment in your life when you felt proud of yourself. (Hint - when you didn't give up, pass a test, get tough)

Example 1: 30 Day Gratitude Reflection

Think about these things at the end of the month and write them on a piece of paper or keep a diary (List around 3-5 things or more if you can- it's your diary to be free with to reflect your thoughts)

- My favourite moments
- My Thoughts
- What I learned
- Goals and intentions
- Things to improve
- Things you are looking forward to
- Find an affirmations that best represents the way you felt, feel for that month



Reflective Writing

Reflective writing is very similar to keeping a gratitude journal however reflective writing is more about answering questions that aid you to think of the positive things in your life which makes it easier to accept life's hardships. This is a form of gratitude journaling however it's more spontaneous in terms of the reflective questions- practicing this tools gives a range of benefits such as:

- Increase our happiness, self-esteem and overall well-being
- Nurture hope, optimism, and resilience
- Reduce envy, stress, anxiety, insecurity, and other draining emotions
- Intensify feelings of love, connection and empathy and consequently, strengthen our relationship

Example: Below there are few examples of reflective questions you can try answering on a separate piece of paper as these type of questions require a longer answer and are more based on answering in full rather than bullet points.

Try a few of these, it might be a bit hard at first however with practice it becomes easier:

1. Even though my life is not perfect now, I'm fortunate to.....
2. What do you most appreciate about your body and why?
3. Whats one thing that has change for the better since this time last year, and why are you grateful for that?
4. Though it is easy to take for granted, I appreciate that electricity enables me to...
5. What is your greatest strength, and what do you most appreciate about it? How has this strength brought you joy and fulfilment?
6. What do you most enjoy and appreciate about night time?
7. What is your favourite food or meal, and what do you enjoy most about it?
8. Which positive traits have you developed through hard times, and what do you appreciate about having these characteristics?
9. I appreciate that I have the ability and opportunity to create...
10. I appreciate sleep because...
11. What are some things you value that you wouldn't have if not for your greatest challenges in life?
12. Who is the most positive or inspiring person you know, and what do you most enjoy and appreciate about being around them?
13. I appreciate that I live in a part of the world where anyone can...
14. I appreciate tomorrow I'll get to...
15. I appreciate that I have people in my life to help me...

There are many questions above which you can work through in your time when you feel like it- try answering one of them a week at first and increasing it when you desire. You can find many of these questions online as well if you complete them all.

Mindful Colouring

Mindful is the practice of paying attention in the present moment- mindful colouring allows us to do this as we draw our attention into the present moment through colouring (in using a colouring book or colouring sheet). Mindful colouring has the same benefit at meditation and art therapy- it allows a person to take a much needed break and the chance to relax and refocus. Benefit includes:

- Lift mood
- Decrease anxiety
- Decrease stress

Below are three examples of mindful colouring sheets- these are easy to find online by searching 'Mindful Colouring sheets/pages' therefore if you want to give this tool a try it is very accessible.

