

Mindfulness

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

Our minds are designed to keep us safe. When situations become threatening, our minds can send us into fight, flight or freeze reactions. These reactions are normal, however when we live in those states 24/7 we are unable to respond appropriately and eventually, we may become ill, both mentally and physically.

Practicing Mindfulness can provide an alternative to these reactionary states. Mindfulness is the ability to bring our attention to the here and now experience. It enables us to cultivate a greater and more objective awareness of our emotional states and external circumstances. This awareness allows us to make choices more in line with what we value.

The following mindfulness tips may be helpful:

1. Build awareness and acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

Much of the time we are not aware of what we are thinking or feeling, which can result in feeling like we are spiralling out of control. As we become aware, we can learn to be curious about what is happening within us. With this new knowledge, we can learn to treat ourselves with kindness and begin to make more helpful choices. This practice may begin as simply as "I am noticing a feeling of..."

2. Defuse from unhelpful thoughts

This is not about determining if a thought is true or not. Many of our most unhelpful thoughts are true. For example, "The world is a dangerous place." This may well be true, however the real question is, "What does dwelling on this thought do for me? Does it make my life, rich, full and meaningful or does it leave me feeling stuck and struggling?" If it adds to your life, then no need to do anything, but if it leaves you feeling stuck and struggling, it would be helpful to get some distance from it. Some useful defusion techniques include – putting the thought on a cloud and watching it float away, repeating the thought over and over until it becomes a meaningless sound or singing the thought with a silly voice.

3. Connect with the present moment

When we notice our thoughts and feelings spiralling out of control it is helpful to use our body and our senses to anchor us in the present moment. We can use our body by pushing our feet into the floor, observing our breath or stretching. We can use our senses to experience the world around us - what can we see, hear, touch or smell. We can also become fully engaged in the actions we are doing, by bringing our mind and all our senses to the task at hand.

Connecting with the present moment is both a defusion technique and a way to bring us back into the present. The present is a powerful place because it is the only place where it is possible to control anything.

4. Focus on what you can control and commit to action

This begins with accepting that we have very little control over anything. The past is gone and despite our best efforts, anything could happen in the future. Even in the present, there are many things beyond our control - illness, economic conditions, the responses of others, even our thoughts and feelings. However, there is one thing that we do have some control of - our behaviour. We can learn to do things differently. We can begin by asking ourselves, "What can I do today that will improve life for both myself and others?" This begins the journey of mindfulness.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on [Mindfulness](#) or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsqa.org.au or call 6164 0200.