

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE IN THE TREATMENT OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way of thinking and focusing that can help you become more aware of your present experiences. Practicing mindfulness can be as simple as noticing the taste of a mint on your tongue. There are some things you might do every day without even thinking about them, like brushing your teeth in the morning. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the feelings and sensations of these experiences.



While researchers have not yet studied the effects of mindfulness practice in helping trauma survivors diagnosed with PTSD, research has shown mindfulness to be helpful with other anxiety problems. It has also been shown to help with symptoms of PTSD, such as avoidance and hyperarousal. If you have gone through trauma, you may want to learn what mindfulness is and how it might be helpful to you.

Mindfulness practice has two key parts:

- Paying attention to and being aware of the present moment
- Accepting or being willing to experience your thoughts and feelings without judging them

For example, focusing on the inhale and exhale of your breathing is one way to concentrate on the present moment. Mindfulness involves allowing your thoughts and feelings to pass without either clinging to them or pushing them away. You just let them take their natural course. While practicing mindfulness, you may become distracted by your thoughts and that is okay. The process is about being willing to notice where your thoughts take you, and then bringing your attention back to the present.

How can mindfulness help reduce trauma reactions?

Mindfulness might increase your ability to cope with difficult emotions, such as anxiety and depression. Practicing mindfulness can help you to be more focused and aware of the present moment while also being more willing to experience the difficult emotions that sometimes come up after trauma. For example, mindfulness practice might help you to notice your thoughts and feelings more and to be able to just let them go, without labeling them as "good" or "bad" and without acting on them by avoiding or behaving impulsively.

Mindfulness is a practice, a continual process. Although it may be hard to do at first, regular mindfulness practice can help you notice your thoughts and learn to take a step back from them. Mindfulness practice can also help you develop more compassion toward yourself and others. You may be less likely to sit in judgment of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. You may become less

critical of yourself. Using mindfulness can help you become more aware and gentle in response to your trauma reactions. This is an important step in recovery.

Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure have been shown to be the most effective treatments for PTSD. In both of these treatments, you are asked to write or talk about trauma with the guidance of your therapist. Mindfulness can prepare you for these treatments by giving you skills and confidence that you can handle your feelings. As you learn to be mindful, you learn to observe what is happening in your body and your mind. You can learn to be more willing to cope with difficult thoughts and feelings in a healthy way. This will help you keep going when you are asked to think and talk about your trauma in treatment. In this way you may get even more out of the PTSD treatment.

There are several types of therapy that use mindfulness practices. These therapies have been used to treat problems that often affect people with PTSD, such as anxiety, depression, and substance use. The therapies may target specific problems such as:

- Difficult feelings and stress in daily living
- The stress of physical health problems, such as chronic pain
- Negative thinking patterns that can lead to repeated episodes of depression
- Trouble working towards your goals in life Urges to use drugs or alcohol

Summing it up

Mindfulness practices may be of benefit to trauma survivors. Research findings show that mindfulness can help with problems and symptoms often experienced by survivors. Mindfulness could be used by itself or together with standard treatments proven effective for PTSD. Learn more about specific PTSD treatments that work.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ©2016

CONQUER YOUR EXERCISE EXCUSES

You're too busy. It's raining. You need to make dinner.
You need to help your children with their homework.
You just don't feel like it.

"Our research shows that people who exercise somewhat regularly have more excuses for not doing so than those who don't exercise at all," says Bonnie Berger, Ph.D., professor and director of the School of Human Movement, Sport and Leisure Studies at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. "It's those who exercise every now and then, those who feel like they really need to be doing it more, who are the excuse makers."

To help yourself get moving, address that inner voice that lets you off the exercise hook. Here, we discredit three of the common reasons you may tell yourself you can't fit in exercise as often as you'd like -- and what you can do to take a step in the right direction.



"I don't have time"



By far, one of the most common excuses for not exercising is "I'm too busy." To that, you should ask yourself: Do I not have time to exercise, or am I simply not making time?

Consider: Americans, on average, watch three or four hours of television a day. "Surely we can find a half-hour among those three or four hours to exercise," Dr. Berger says.

Also, if you stay physically fit, no matter how hectic your schedule, you can feel like you have more time.

"You have more energy and your thoughts tend to be clearer because you've taken a mental break," says Dr. Berger, both of which can make you more productive and efficient at work and at home.

To parents who say they can't exercise because they have young children to attend to, she suggests squeezing in exercise time at the end of the day between work and home.

"The health benefits of exercising increase if you exercise for more than 30 minutes a day," says Dr. Berger. "Three 10-minute walks throughout the day go a long way toward keeping your heart healthy, reducing your blood pressure and improving your cholesterol levels. Everybody has time for that."

"I'm just too tired"



After a long day, it's tough to argue with the fact you may be too tired to feel like exercising. But if you work out anyway, or even just go for a walk, you're likely to experience a noticeable energy boost because exercise sends blood sugar to muscles.

The same holds true if you tend to be a before-work exerciser. Once you get moving, you feel more alert and energetic, which can carry on throughout your day.

"The weather is bad"



If you like to exercise outdoors, you can always blame the weather for not being able to work out. Unless it's a perfect day, there's bound to be some condition -- wind, rain, cold, heat, humidity -- that throws a wrench in your plan.

The answer is to have a backup plan for a stormy day, such as a workout video or a gym membership.

Overall, Dr. Berger suggests focusing on finding a fitness routine that works for you, whether it be working out with an exercise buddy or by yourself, in the morning or after work.

"Try to establish habits that feel good and fit into your life," she says. "If you do that, after a while exercise becomes more of a want rather than a should, which is the most powerful excuse-buster of all."

Krames Staywell

HAVE YOU HEARD? HOW TO STOP OFFICE GOSSIP

If you've been the victim of office gossip, you know it can be both cruel and destructive. Such malicious gossip has shattered many people's lives and careers.

Gossip is a type of verbal terrorism. "To destroy somebody's good name is to commit a kind of murder," says Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, author of "Words That Hurt, Words That Heal."

What is gossip?

Gossip is anything negative you say about someone to someone else -- whether the information is true or false. Some people, however, believe it's OK to talk about others if what they say is true.

While it's legal to spread truthful information about someone, it is gossip, and unethical.



Gossip ruins lives

Obviously, gossip causes damage because it can ruin a person's reputation. Spreading rumors about someone else's personal life can lead to the breakup of a marriage and family. Talking negatively about someone's job performance can be devastating to that employee's career.

Why people gossip

Spreading secret information, especially something negative, makes people feel important. It also adds a bit of intrigue to the same old boring workday.

"For most of us, exchanging critical evaluations about others is far more interesting and enjoyable than exchanging good news," explains Rabbi Telushkin.

Another type of gossip -- complaining

This type of gossip happens all the time at work. One employee gets mad at another employee, so the disgruntled person complains to a third party to vent his or her feelings.

This type of office triangle damages companies for the following reasons:

Nothing gets resolved between the two angry employees. A third person becomes involved and must take sides. Pretty soon the entire office gets caught up in an undercurrent of damaging gossip, with everyone choosing sides. The resulting tension lowers office morale and affects employee productivity.

What you can do about office gossip

If you're the target of gossip, or if office gossip is a general problem, ask your supervisor to create an office policy on it. Management should announce the policy at a staff meeting or in a written directive all employees must sign. The policy should spell out that:

- Gossip about anyone's personal life or work life is unacceptable.
- If two employees can't resolve a problem between themselves, they should each write down the problem and possible solutions and submit it to their supervisor. The supervisor can then meet with the two employees and help resolve the problem.
- An employee upset with a supervisor should talk directly with the supervisor and not with anyone else.
- Employees who violate the rules will suffer consequences, which should be clearly noted.

What if you've done it

Notice how often your talk unintentionally drifts toward discussion of other people. Next, notice how often you're a willing recipient of gossip. If you listen to gossip, you're guilty, as well. A listener must complete the gossip connection.

"If you have publicly said something cruel and regret it, call the victim of your remarks immediately and apologize," advises Rabbi Telushkin. "Gossip spreads like wildfire, and you have no control over which direction it heads or how much damage it leaves in its path."

Wellness Library Health Ink & Vitality Communications © 2016

SOME NEW INFORMATION ON ALCOHOLISM

Like cancer or heart disease, alcoholism is a chronic disease with its own symptoms and causes. The disease is progressive and often fatal if not treated.

Abusing alcohol can harm many of the body's major organs and systems. It increases risks for various cancers, cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, peptic ulcers, stroke, infertility, brain damage and memory loss.

Recognize the symptoms

Alcoholics have a reaction to alcohol that makes them crave more, and more drinking triggers more craving. Heredity seems to play a major role in alcoholism; studies show children of alcoholics are at greater risk of the disease. Other risk factors are family and social environment, personality and psychological makeup.

Some alcoholics start out as moderate drinkers, increasing their use and dependence on alcohol over time. Others crave more from the start. Moderate drinking is defined as one drink a day or less (or 7 drinks or fewer per week) for women; or two drinks a day or less (or 14 or fewer drinks per week) for men

Late-onset alcoholism often occurs when a moderate drinker suddenly experiences a stressful event, such as losing a job or spouse.

When you reach the point you lose control of your drinking, you have to say, "I'm an alcoholic."

Check your patterns

Few alcoholics will admit they have a problem. It's a characteristic to believe you're OK -- everything and everybody else are wrong. Those willing to face facts usually find plenty of clues that their drinking is out of control. You may suffer from alcoholism if:

- You have experienced problems on the job, with the law or with your family because of your drinking.
- You avoid parties or places where liquor isn't served.
- You look forward to a set time in the day when you can start drinking.
- You worry alcohol won't be available when you want it.
- You periodically try to slow down or stop drinking.
- You always have a "good reason" why you need a drink -- perhaps a tough day at work, an argument or stress.
- You experience symptoms of withdrawal with brief periods of abstinence
- Friends, family members and/or others have talked to you about your drinking.

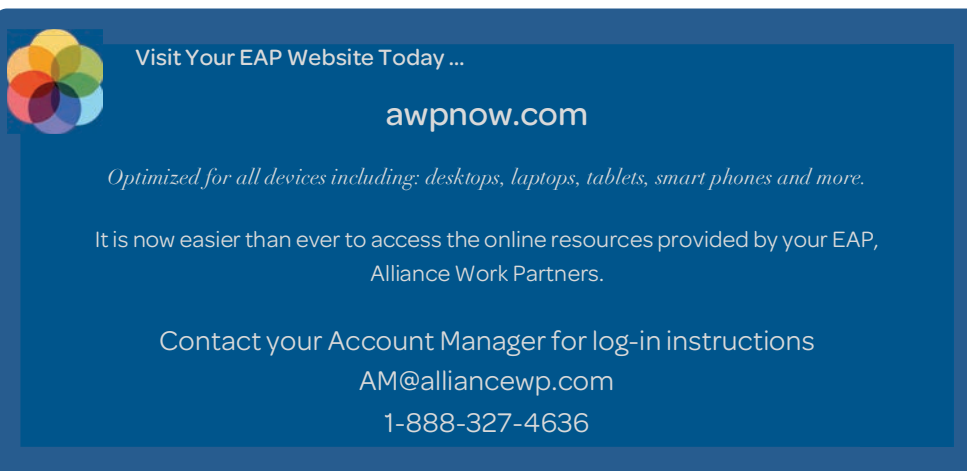
Get Help

Seek help if you abuse alcohol. Contact Alcoholics Anonymous, a hospital or nearby substance-abuse facility for information about programs in your area.

Quitting drinking is essential to recovery, but it's only part of the process. Treatment is a learning experience in which you build self-esteem, reduce stress and perhaps, develop your spirituality.

It's a matter of rebuilding yourself through small but positive changes. Step by step, you become strong enough to take control of your life.

Krames Staywell



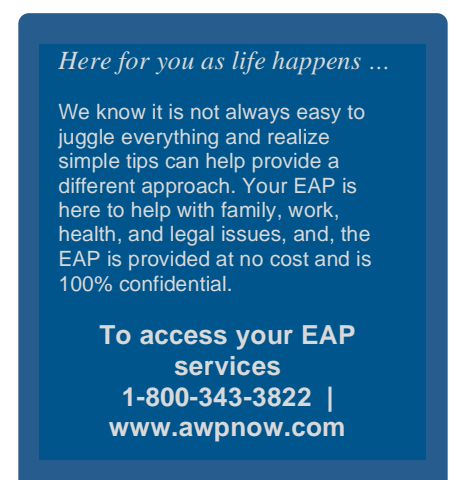
Visit Your EAP Website Today ...

awpnow.com

Optimized for all devices including: desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones and more.

It is now easier than ever to access the online resources provided by your EAP, Alliance Work Partners.

Contact your Account Manager for log-in instructions
AM@alliancewp.com
1-888-327-4636



Here for you as life happens ...

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything and realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, and legal issues, and, the EAP is provided at no cost and is 100% confidential.

To access your EAP services
1-800-343-3822 |
www.awpnow.com