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FIVE MINDFUL SUGGESTIONS TO HELP WITH EVERYDAY LIFE

BY CHRIS WALLWORK (MBACP)

If you've been watching the latest series of Cold Feet, you will have seen Pete's struggles with depression play out over the series. From his friends and family noticing how he was feeling, through diagnosis and prescribing of anti-depressants, right through to the shocking scenes last week where he imagined his own suicide.

Powerful imagery from a TV show which is billed as a comedy(!)

Thankfully, the character of Pete now seems to be feeling more like his old self. This followed a defining moment of bonding with his son, and realising that he has the support of family and friends.

Pete has also seemingly embraced Mindfulness, a therapeutic approach that helps us to non-judgementally centre ourselves in the present. Yes, it's a TV show, so there were comedic elements to how mindfulness was portrayed, but it is a quick and simple way to help you notice where you are emotionally, and to ground yourself. In the UK, NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) have clinically approved Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) as a 'treatment of choice' for recurrent depression.

Whilst it may seem it on the surface, Mindfulness itself isn't a religious exercise, however it can form part of a meditative process whether you have a faith or not.

Here are five ways that Mindfulness can be used to help you in everyday life:



Mindful breathing

This is as simple to achieve as it sounds. Anyone who is familiar with a 'grounding' exercise will have likely already encountered mindful breathing. The process is straightforward, simply notice your 'in' breath and your 'out' breath. Name them in your head as you inhale and exhale...in...out...in...out. This will help to move attention away from your regular thinking, and will help you to stop thinking about the clutter that may generally exist within your head. Then you can evolve the process. You can learn to enjoy your breathing. Breathing in can represent inhaling life giving resource, being thankful for life. Breathing out can symbolise the removal of negative thoughts from your body, pushing your worries away.

Mindful concentration

In Cold Feet, Pete played the 'raisin game'. This is where you take an object, in this case a raisin, and study it, marvel at it. See it as if you had never seen it before, and notice every detail. Firstly, visualise – what can you see? Second, touch – what do you notice about how it feels? Use the moment to explore the object with each of your five senses. Why? This will help to ground you in the present. It's a great distraction technique for those who suffer anxiety and stress-related 'panic attacks', as it can serve to remove the 'go to' response we use at present, and allow us to be objective in our approach to the moment.

Improve decision making

Not only does mindful concentration help to reduce bodily anxiety, it can help in the workplace too. Sometimes our heads are so 'busy' that we can rush to make decisions, invariably making bad ones. Adopting a mindful approach to working can help to clear your thought process from 'chatter' in order to help you deal with complex decisions

Become more creative

Adopting a mindful approach to life even if we are only talking in small amounts, can aid creativity. Why? Mindfulness can bring us so much in to that present moment that we can start to see things in and around our environment that we may not have noticed before. Ever left the car park, walked to work and completely missed the sound of wildlife, ever not noticed that someone is trying to attract your attention? Maybe you are focused so much on where you are going, that you are missing the portion of life that you



find yourself in right at that moment. Allowing a more 'present' state of mind can enable you to fully explore your senses, heightening creativity in the mind.

Mindfulness helps, even when you're not being mindful!

It's true. Your brain's capability to benefit from emotional processing continues long after you may have finished meditating. Essentially, mindful activities such as breathing or concentration actually help to exercise the amygdala (the part of the brain which controls emotions), making it fitter. Even once the mindful activity has ended, the amygdala's response to emotional processing has changed. What does this mean? Mindful activities can positively impact your life, not just for a short period of time – but can have long lasting benefits to everyday living.

Mindfulness is an activity which when practiced, can almost become second nature. If you would like to learn more about how it can help you, why not connect with Cornerstone, and we can walk you through some steps.

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