

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention and accepting what is happening in the present moment.

Have you ever driven to work or performed some other task with your mind on auto-pilot, remembering nothing about the experience? Have you been outside on a nice summer day but barely noticed the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors? Sometimes we are so distracted by our thoughts, fears, and worries that we fail to live fully in the present moment.

Mindfulness is about paying close attention to your surroundings and what you are feeling and thinking without being self-critical, judgmental, or reactive. It is a skill that takes practice but can have numerous physical and psychological benefits. Some studies show that practicing mindfulness can:

- Decrease feelings of worry, anxiety, and fear.
- Relieve stress.
- Lower heart rate.
- Enhance concentration and memory.
- Boost immune functioning.
- Foster general mental wellbeing and life satisfaction.

There are many ways to cultivate mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, and tai chi. However, just about any activity during the day can offer the opportunity to practice mindfulness, even for just a few minutes. For example, tips to be more mindful at work include the following:

- Focus on one task at a time and try to eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- Use breaks as an opportunity to stretch, take deep calming breaths, or go for a brisk walk if possible, paying full attention to your surroundings and sensations.
- Eat lunch away from your desk and take the time to enjoy your food.
- Take a few moments at the end of the day to tidy up and organize your work space, and review your schedule and to-do's for the next day so that you have clarity and direction the next morning.

Practicing mindfulness at home and at work can help you be more calm and productive, and improve your ability to cope with stress.

