

MINDFULNESS TIPS

Vanessa Pettijohn, MSSW, LCSW

1. **Take a moment to focus on your breathing.** Taking slow, deep breaths focus on the sensations you feel when breathing- how your lungs expand, how your belly rises and falls, the feeling of relaxation this brings. If any thoughts or feelings come to mind, simply take note of them with an attitude of self-compassion and non-judgment. You may silently label them such as: “that is a thought about work”, or “that is a feeling of worry”. Once it is noted bring your attention back to your breath.
2. **Devote some time in your day to being mindful of your senses in the moment.** Silently listing off everything you physically feel. For example, “I can feel the floor beneath my feet”, “I can feel my hand resting on my leg”. Then move on to what you hear, then to smell, then to what you taste and lastly, what you see. If your mind wanders, that is okay. Notice the thoughts or emotions that arise with kindness and without judgment. Then bring your focus back to your senses.
3. **Listen to music** and spend time noticing the different instruments you hear, the words being sung, the vibrations and how the music makes you feel.
4. **Check in with your body noticing areas where you may be tense.** Breathe slowly and deeply. Focus on relaxing tense muscles. Notice the difference in how it feels once the area is relaxed. This can be helpful in moments of stress when we often tense up.
5. When we are feeling stress or anxiety we are often focusing on things that happened in the past or things that could happen in the future. **With mindfulness we can take a step back when feeling stress or anxiety and focus on the present.** Notice with a curious, open, non-judging attitude what thoughts you are having and what emotions you may be feeling. Label the thoughts or emotions. Then take some time to bring your attention to your present. Maybe you are doing an activity, maybe you are eating or maybe you can take a few moments to focus on your present breathing.
6. **Take a walk** and bring your awareness to your senses during the walk. Notice any sounds, sights, smells or anything you feel. For example, do you feel the wind against your skin? Do you hear people around you?
7. **Start your day with a mindful moment of gratitude.** Spend time before the busyness of the day thinking about one or two things you are grateful for today. It could be something small or something big. Then think of one thing you are looking forward to today.