

## MINDFULNESS

What does mindfulness mean? It means to be completely connected to the self and each moment, to be totally present in the now. Fully focusing one's mind on whatever one is doing or experiencing. Mindfulness is the practice and the art of being so present within the wonderful perimeter of the self that only the present moment matters. One is neither being consumed by the past nor distracted by the future. Mindfulness is a state of being which understands that the past has gone and cannot be changed, and the future is determined by what one does today. If we let the moment called 'now' pass us by, then the sands of time literally slip through our fingers and with it the opportunity to positively influence our destiny. To be present, connected to oneself and each moment is to truly be alive. Mindfulness gives us access to inner peace, contentment, insight, balance and joy.

If you were reading this handout in a truly mindful way there would be total absorption in each word, sentence and every phrase. There would be more than an intellectual appreciation of the words drafted on the page, there would be an emotional, even spiritual experience as you unravelled and embraced the full force of what is really being presented to you. In the main, we are not fully aware of our own thoughts and where they are taking us. We have become 'driven', driven erratically towards a destination, often unsure where the destination is. Most of us are now so consumed by the pace of modern living we have forgotten where we are even going and why! Confusion and chaos reign. Before you can be clear about where you are actually going and whether it's worthwhile going there, you need to develop the art of watching yourself, connecting with yourself and taking back control (see Still Time 1 & 2 and Understanding Your Blind Spot). By taking the first steps towards mindfulness you will see how the drama of your life significantly and in many instances drastically changes.

You will find when you start practising single-minded awareness (focusing fully on whatever you are doing or experiencing) that your mind will often rebel against the channelling of your energy in this way. This will unquestionably interfere with your efforts to focus. Single-minded awareness takes regular practice and patience, so don't expect to overturn mental chaos without making concerted efforts. Having said that, to practice little and often will give enormous rewards quite quickly (within a few weeks). So, begin today by fully immersing yourself in this moment, then practise this for the rest of the day. However mundane your task there is a joy to be experienced when you are totally present in the moment. It is a joy missed by most of us because we are so busy thinking of something else as the moment slips through our fingers. Cup your hands together and capture the sands of time with the following simple practice. Give your full attention, your focus, to the moment and what you are doing. If you are listening to someone, really listen, really appreciate what it is that they are saying. Try and step into their world. This will give you a better understanding of the meaning behind their words and help forge a true connection. If you are nurturing and caring for anyone, do it with a real sense of the value and importance of such an act. There is always value and meaning in life but sometimes it is hidden. If you are doing that which is perceived to be mundane and ordinary, something probably taken for granted and undervalued even by yourself, look into the eyes of the moment and see the real significance of what you are doing. The more you practice being present the more you will see the meaning and significance of what is happening around you. Mindfulness makes you a true observer of life, a true traveller through time and means that you drive your life forward, rather than being driven by the force of circumstances.