



賽馬會「樂天心澄」
靜觀校園文化行動

Jockey Club "Peace and Awareness"
Mindfulness Culture in Schools Initiative

Workshop on Mindful Coping with Academic Stress



Facilitator's Manual

Organised by



Faculty of
Social Sciences
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學社會科學學院



Funded by



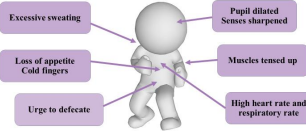
The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

Rundown

Objectives of the Workshop

- To understand our reactions to stress
- To learn some simple mindfulness practices
- To cope with stress and take good care of ourselves

Fight or Flight Reactions



1. Mindful stretching



2. Mindful breathing



The Benefits of Mindfulness

- Calming down
- Living at the present moment
- Reaction vs. Response

3. Mindful sitting



Mindful Coping With Academic Stress



4. Three-step Breathing Space (AGE)



- 1 Awareness of the present moment (emotions, thoughts, bodily sensations, urges)
- 2 Gathering the attention to the breath
- 3 Expanding the attention to the whole body

1. The Objectives 3 mins

2. Reactions to stress: 15 mins
how the body and mind feel

3. Mindful stretching: 10 mins
the attitudes of mindfulness

4. Mindful breathing: 10 mins
how the body and mind feel

5. The benefits of mindfulness 5 mins

6. Mindful sitting 7 mins

7. Video and Q&A 7 mins

8. Three-step breathing space 3 mins



Background

The facilitator's manual for this workshop is designed by Professor Shui-fong Lam from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Hong Kong. It was first released in the Fourth Chinese Mindfulness Application Conference 2020 (2020年第四屆華人正念靜觀應用大會). Part of the content is extracted from the facilitator's manual of the "Mindfulness and Self-Care Workshop", which was developed by the Jockey Club "Peace and Awareness" Mindfulness Culture in Schools Initiative (JC Panda). JC Panda, funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, was launched in 2019. Professor Lam is the director of JC Panda, as well as the designer of the two resources packages.

Objectives of the workshop

This workshop serves as a platform for students to manage their stress through simple mindfulness practices, especially in the face of academic challenges.

Teaching materials for the workshop

- 1. Facilitator's manual*
- 2. Presentation slides (ppsx file)*
- 3. Worksheet*
- 4. Four audio guides on mindfulness practices*
- 5. A five-minute video clip*

Host of the workshop

*The workshop can be conducted by teachers or counsellors in schools, who should have a basic understanding of mindfulness, e.g., having completed an eight-week MBCT, MBSR, or **.b Foundations** Course. If teachers or counsellors who have no training in mindfulness and yet would like to conduct this workshop to help their students, they are welcome to contact JC Panda (jcpanda@hku.hk) for training. Before the project is closed in 2025, we would be happy to host a talk on mindfulness at their school and demonstrate how to conduct this workshop. . Then we will make all teaching materials available to those who have completed the training. The basic training on mindfulness takes eight weeks while training mindfulness teachers takes years. Teachers or counsellors conducting the workshop are not considered as mindfulness teachers. They only practise mindfulness with their students according to the resources offered in the workshop, including the audio guides.*

Target participants and format of the workshop

The target participants of the workshop are secondary school students. The workshop can be either an in-class tutorial or an after-school group activity. The number of participants can vary from five or six to thirty. It should not exceed thirty. Otherwise the needs of the participants cannot be sufficiently catered for.

Duration of the workshop

It takes approximately an hour. The third mindfulness practice may be skipped or the Q&A session may be extended, depending on the needs of the students and the time available.

Use of the resources

JC Panda welcomes colleagues from the education and social welfare sectors to run the workshop for students on pro-bono basis. However, we do not wish to see anyone, in any format, commercialise the resources for profit making.

Format of the facilitator's manual

There are handouts under each slide of the facilitator's manual. Instructions to facilitators are in italics while facilitators' instructions to students are in regular font.

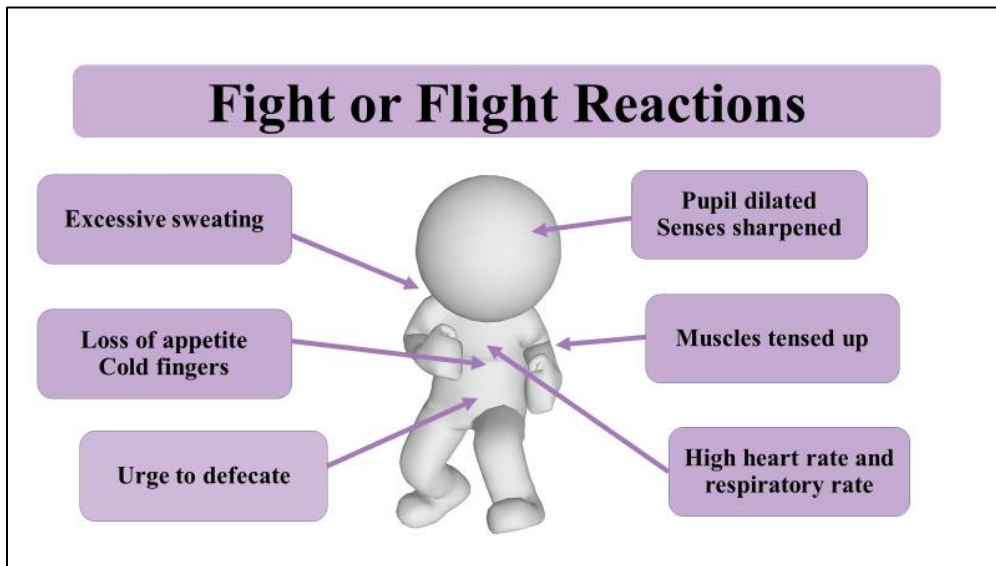
Objectives of the Workshop

- To understand our reactions to stress
- To learn some simple mindfulness practices
- To cope with stress and take good care of ourselves

Introducing the workshop to students

Many students may feel stressed out after entering secondary school. The stress may come from school, family, or peers. Stress can plague us, leaving us feeling tired, helpless, and anxious. We may not be able to sleep well, eat well, and concentrate on our school work. Let us learn how to cope with stress and take good care of ourselves with mindfulness practices and attitudes in this workshop.

[Click to proceed to the next slide]



Explaining stress reactions to students

To deal with stress, we first need to recognise how we react to stress.

How does your body react in times when you are nervous and anxious, for example, when giving a speech on stage, fighting an enemy in an e-sport arena, entering an exam hall, or fighting an opponent in a judo match?

Listening to what the students may say. They may mention muscle tension, a racing heart, and cold hands and feet. After that, the facilitator may summarise their sharing with this slide and show bodily reactions one by one with each click.

Our pupils dilate to give us a clearer sight. Other senses also become more sensitive to react quickly the attacks from enemies. *[Click]*

Blood flow in muscles increases. The muscles are tensed up, getting ready for action. *[Click]*

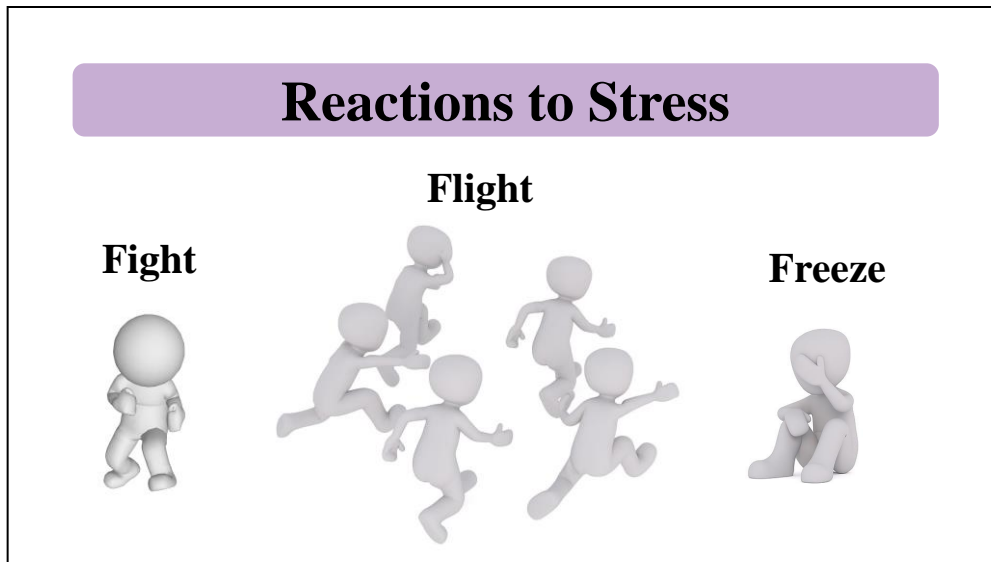
Heart rate and breathing rate speed up to deliver oxygen to the body's big muscles, such as the thighs and arms, to be ready to fight or flight. *[Click]*

Stomach ache and the urge to defecate may emerge, after which the body will be lighter and can run faster. *[Click]*

We lose our appetite as the blood in digestive system flows to thighs and arms to be ready to fight. Meanwhile, the blood in fingers also flows to our big muscles, which is why our fingers become cold and stiff. *[Click]*

We sweat a lot to cool our bodies. Moreover, when our skin is slippery, our enemies are less likely to catch us. *[Click]*

The above physiological reactions prepare us to... *[Click to the next slide]*



Fight!

[Click]

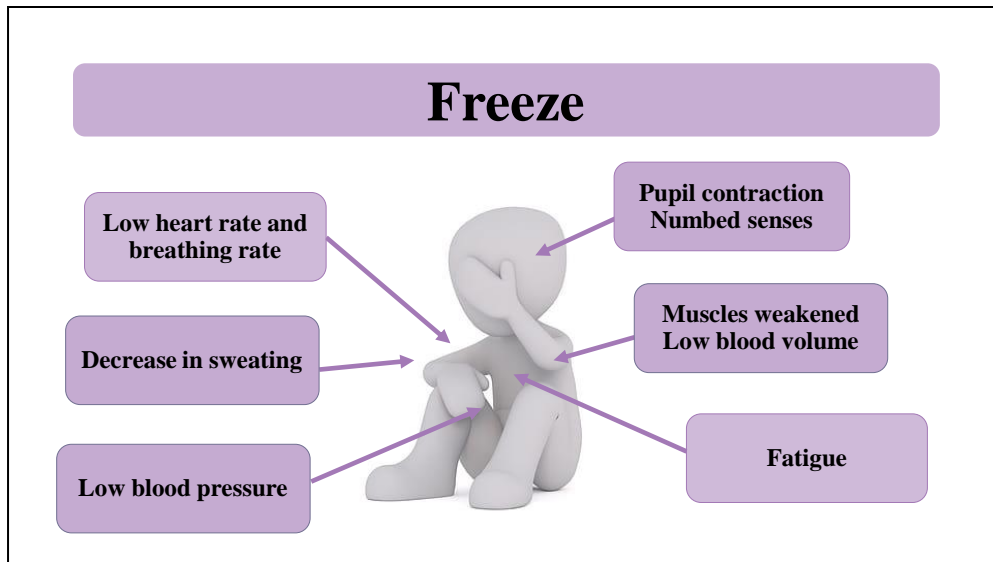
And flight!

The physiological reactions above are all about preparing us to fight or flee in events of danger. This is a self-defense mechanism that humans have possessed since ancient times. In case of an attack by beasts, our ancestors either fought back with all their might or desperately ran for their lives. These physiological reactions help us fight and flight.

Meanwhile, other than fight and flight, we sometimes freeze! *[Click the mouse]*

That means, we are stunned, immobile at all. Some people may even pass out.

[Click to the next slide]



When freezing, the reactions of our bodies are the exact opposite of those when we are fighting or fleeing. *[Click]*

Our pupils contract, and our senses of sight, hearing and touch are numbed. *[Click]*

Blood flowing to muscles decreases so they are weakened. *[Click]*

Body feels fatigued. *[Click]*

Blood pressure drops. *[Click]*

Sweating decreases. *[Click]*

Some may even pass out and lose consciousness. *[Click]*

The physiological reactions of fight-or-flight help us survive, so aren't the reactions of freezing detrimental to our survival? No. It in fact helps us get out of danger. When we freeze, our enemies are less likely to spot us. For example, when a teacher asks you a question that you do not know the answer, it is likely that you keep your head down and stop moving, hoping that the teacher will not spot you and ask you. Besides, passing out resembles being dead. When the enemies think that you are dead, they would stop attacking.

Therefore, the physiological reactions of fight, flight, and freeze help us survive. Although stress reactions make us uncomfortable, they are our indelible defence mechanisms.

However, when the evolution of human body cannot keep up with the transformation of society, problems arise!

[Click to the next slide]

Stressors



In ancient times, when our ancestors live in caves, what were their greatest threats or sources of stress?

Let students express their thoughts. They may talk about natural disasters or beasts. After they have finished, click to show the lion.

Exactly, beasts are one of their main stressors. When encountering a beast, our ancestors must fight, flee, or freeze and pretend to be dead. However, what are your stressors nowadays? Still beasts?

[Click to the next slide]

Stressors



School work is very likely to be your main stressor. Exams are not beasts. Can you fight back? Whom to hit? Teachers? Can you escape? But to where? How about freezing? Will your performance be better after freezing?

In the face of pressure from modern societies, the reactions of fight, flight or freeze alone are no longer sufficient nor appropriate. For example, before exams start, our fingers become cold and stiff as blood flows away to the big muscles. Yet, at that moment, the most important thing is to think with our brain and write with the small muscles of our hands, instead of fighting or escaping by using our big muscles such as arms and thighs.

Therefore, we need to learn skillful ways to cope with the stress of modern societies. Mindfulness practices can help us step out from automatic reactions, calm our emotions, and allow us to take good care of our bodies and minds.

To take care of our bodies and minds, we must first understand the states of them at this moment.

[Click to the next slide]

Body and Mind

- My body feels...
- My mind feels...

Guide students to pay attention to the present state of bodies and minds

Please distribute the worksheet to the students and invite them to write down how their bodies and minds feel at the present moment. When the students are done, invite them to share briefly. If you choose not to use worksheet, you may invite them to share directly.

How do your body and mind feel? Is anyone willing to share?

Invite a few students to share how their bodies and minds feel. They may express feelings and emotions such as tired, tense, sore, worried, nervous, impatient, curious, expectant, excited, etc.

Yes, with so many different states of the body and mind, how do we practise mindfulness to take care of our bodily sensations and emotions?

[Click to the next slide]

Four Mindfulness Practices

1. Mindful stretching
2. Mindful breathing
3. Mindful sitting
4. Three-step breathing space

Introducing the four mindfulness practices

In today's workshop, we shall learn four mindfulness practices. Each practice does not take long. It is around five to six minutes. The last one even takes only one to two minutes. In addition, we will learn the attitudes of mindfulness as well as the rationales and benefits of mindfulness. Finally, we shall share and discuss together how to use mindfulness to cope with stress.

Now, let's start with our first mindfulness practice: Mindful stretching! [*Click to the next slide*]

1. Mindful Stretching



Practicing mindful stretching with students

We will do this practice in a standing position. Please find a position where you can raise your arms without clashing with the classmates next to you.

Press the speaker icon on the slide to play the instructional audio. The audio is embedded in the slide. Just in case where the audio cannot be played normally, you may save all the audio files in a thumb drive and bring it to the classroom. When the audio is playing, please practise together with your students, not just observe on the side. Students will feel that the facilitator is being with them when they see him or her practising with them. Practising together can reduce the estrangement among one another. Moreover, this is an opportunity for you to take care of yourself.

The practice takes around six minutes. When the practice is over, ask the students to sit down properly, and then guide them in the discussion.

What's the difference between the mindful stretching we did just now and the warm-up exercise we usually do in Physical Exercise (PE) lessons?

Listening to students' responses. They may suggest that the warm-up exercises in PE lessons are faster, do not require closing their eyes or paying attention to bodily sensations, etc. Here, you may draw their attention to the difference in attitude.

Yes, the mindful stretching we just did was slower. Sometimes, we do it with eyes closed, and we pay attention to our bodily sensations. However, what is the difference between the two in terms of attitude? *[Click to the next slide]*

The Attitudes of Mindfulness

- Respect our limits
- Non-striving
- Attend to the present moment experiences
- Take good care of ourselves
- Be kind to ourselves

Discussion on the attitudes of mindfulness

Listening to what the students say about the attitudes. Some may say not comparing themselves with others during mindful stretching, not striving to break through their limits, etc. Here, you can click the mouse consecutively to illustrate the attitudes of mindfulness.

In the mindful stretching just now, *[Click]* we respected our limits, *[Click]* did not strive to have a break-through, *[Click]* attend to the experiences of the present moment, *[Click]* take good care of our own needs, *[Click]* and be kind to ourselves. These are the attitudes of mindfulness that help us take good care of our bodies and minds, as well as reducing stress.

You may wonder: why do the attitudes of mindfulness include respecting our limits and non-striving? Aren't those too passive and lazy? In general, being enterprising is good, yet it may not be helpful sometimes. For example, when we cannot fall asleep at night, the more we force ourselves to fall asleep immediately, the more anxious we will get and the less being able to fall asleep. Another example is when our mood is low, the more we force ourselves to be cheerful, the sadder and more helpless we would become. When facing these situations, accepting ourselves, letting ourselves to relax, and letting go will make it easier to fall asleep and calm down.

The mindfulness practice we just did was physical. However, mindfulness practice can also be in static forms. Next, we shall practise together in a sitting position, withholding the same attitudes: respecting our limits, non-striving, attending to the present moment experiences, taking good care of our needs, and being kind to ourselves.

[Click to the next slide]

2. Mindful Breathing



Practicing mindful breathing with students

This is a mindful breathing practice. While doing this practice, we sit on a chair. Please pay attention to your posture, keep some distance between your back and the back of the chair, so that your back is naturally up-right and self-supporting. Please sit comfortably with dignity, just like the demonstration on the right.

Press the speaker icon on the slide to play the instructional audio. You should practise together with the students, not standing by. However, in order to maintain the order of the class, you can choose to keep eyes open and gently look at the floor in the front. The practice takes around six minutes. When the audio is over, you can click to move on to the next slide.

[After playing, click to the next slide]

Body and Mind

- My body feels...
- My mind feels...

Pay attention to the present state of the body and mind again

When the mindful breathing practice is over, invite students to, once more, write down how their bodies and minds feel in the worksheet. When they are done, invite them to share briefly. If you choose not to use worksheet, you can invite them to share directly.

How do your body and mind feel at this moment? How are they different from those when you first filled out the worksheet?

Invite a few students to share how their bodies and minds feel. They may express feelings and emotions such as calm, relaxed, comfortable, quiet etc.

It turns out that such a simple practice of mindfulness can soothe our bodies and calm our emotions.

[Click to the next slide]

The Benefits of Mindfulness

- Calming down
- Living at the present moment
- Reaction vs. Response

Discussion on the benefits of mindfulness

Now, let us look at the benefits of mindfulness. At the beginning of the workshop, I mentioned that mindfulness can help us take good care of our bodies and minds. However, do you wonder why such a simple practice, merely paying attention to our breaths, is beneficial? Can you guess?

Listening to students' responses. They might express that it can help us relax, concentrate, calm emotions, etc. Depending on their replies, you can elaborate as the following:

Yes! The practice just now can calm us down. *[Click]* When we pay attention to our breaths, we can live at the present moment. When we are worried about things in the future or regret about things in the past, we are not living at the present moment, but in the future or the past. Anxiety is worry about the future, while depression usually involves rumination about the past. When disturbing images of the future or the past constantly haunt our minds, we cannot sleep well, eat well, or concentrate. Metaphorically, learning to focus on the breaths allows us to have a reliable anchor to settle emotions.

[Click] Only when we settle our emotions, can we not be controlled by automatic reactions. When we feel restless, we do not have sufficient capacity to think clearly. Subsequently, we would react automatically according to our habits and impulses, without thinking clearly, making us regret for it later. Yet, if we are calm and settled, we can think clearly and have the capacity to make responses freely. Reaction is impulse beyond our control, while response is our choice with freedom.

[Click to the next slide]

The ABC of Mindfulness

Awareness

Being with

Choice

The process of mindfulness can be summed up in the acronym “ABC”. A is “Awareness,” B is “Being with,” and C is “Choice.” Through mindfulness practices, we can be aware of our own emotions, bodily sensations, thoughts, and impulses. That is “Awareness.” Then, “Being with” is that we live with these experiences at the present moment, maintaining a calm and accepting attitude without simply reacting. In this way, we will have the capacity to make wise “Choices.” This is why mindfulness can help us cope with stress. When we have the capacity to make choices, we cease to be at the mercy of automatic stress reactions such as fight, flight, and freeze. We are then free to respond as appropriate.

[Click to the next slide]

3. Mindful Sitting



Since mindfulness brings many benefits, let us learn one more practice today. During mindful sitting, we pay attention to how the body feels.

Press the speaker icon on the slide to play the instructional audio. You are encouraged to practise together with your students. The practice takes around six minutes. When the audio is over, you can click to the next slide.

However, if time is running out and the students are too tired, you may skip this practice and proceed to the next part. It is up to you to decide whether to skip this practice or not.

[After playing, click to the next slide]

[If you decide to skip this practice, click to skip to the next slide]



Playing video

If the duration of the workshop is more than one hour, you can play this five-minute video. The video clip has been embedded in the slide. You may click on the slide to play the video. You may also play the video with the YouTube link below:

<https://youtu.be/0o26v1w2AcM>

The video briefly provides an overview of the stress reactions and demonstrates a short petal exercise. This is a great opportunity for the students to revise the content of the workshop.

However, if time is running out, there is no need to show this video as it is important to reserve some time for discussion with students.

[After playing, click to the next slide]

[If you decide to skip this practice, click to skip to the next slide]



Discussion with students

If this is a one-hour workshop, the discussion should take around seven minutes. However, if time allows and the students need more time to seek help from the facilitator, the discussion can be extended. Before the workshop ends, please reserve three minutes to do a brief three-step breathing space practice.

[Click to the next slide]

4. Three-step Breathing Space (AGE)



1 **Awareness**
of the present moment (emotions,
thoughts, bodily sensations, urges)

2 **Gathering**
the attention to the breath

3 **Expanding**
the attention to the whole body

The three-step breathing space practice

Before the workshop ends, let us do a very brief mindfulness practice. This practice helps us calm down and be focused when we feel distressed, for example, before a competition, an exam, or a presentation. This practice consists of three steps. The first step is to be aware of the present moment (Awareness), noticing emotions, thoughts, bodily sensations, and impulses at the moment. The second step is gathering the attention to the breath (Gathering). The third step is expanding the attention to the whole body (Expanding), or even the place where we are in. To consolidate our memory, we can use the acronym “AGE”. Its structure resembles an hourglass. Attention is widened at the beginning, gathered in the middle, and widened again at the end. Let’s stand up and practise together.

Please invite students to stand up. Press the speaker icon on the slide and do the breathing space practice with your students.

More Resources



JC Panda App

Contact us

 Room 9.30, 9/F, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

 (852) 3917 5176

 (852) 2517 0806

 jcpanda@hku.hk

 www.jcpanda.hk

Before the end of the workshop, please remind the students to download the JC Panda App with the QR code on the worksheet, so that they can practise at home. Then you can say goodbye to them and conclude the workshop.

JC Panda App

The mobile app launched by JC Panda is now available in the Apple App Store and Google Play. It contains mindfulness practice audio guides, practice timer, introductory videos to mindfulness and related information. Download and explore!

Join Friends of JC Panda



jcpanda.hk

Opportunities for further study in mindfulness

Listed on the last page of the facilitator's manual are some bibliographies for facilitators to further study mindfulness. However, the mastery of mindfulness cannot be accomplished in one stroke, nor by merely reading. Facilitators who would like to take an 8-week mindfulness course are welcome to join "Friends of JC Panda" (www.jcpanda.hk/joinfriend). We conduct free mindfulness courses at nine resources schools in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories, on a regular basis.

Safety notice

Anything that is powerful can be harmful. A scalpel can either save or harm people, and so is mindfulness. The safety of mindfulness practice hinges on three conditions. First is the nature of the practice. Second is the state of participants. Third is the capability of the instructor. Generally, short practices are relatively safe, while practices with bigger dosages, such as those that are continuous and last for several days, must be led by qualified mindfulness teachers. Even brief practices may also be inappropriate for certain populations, such as those who have traumatic experiences, or have severe emotional issues. However, they can still practise mindfulness led by instructors with professional qualifications in psychotherapy. Therefore, should there be any difficulties, school teachers hosting this mindfulness workshop should consult an experienced mindfulness teacher or a counselling psychologist for assistance or referral.

FAQs about pressure and mindfulness

What is stress?

Stress is the experience of physiological and psychological discomfort. Encountering changes or demands exceeding our capabilities triggers biological, psychological, and behavioral reactions. These reactions of physiological and psychological discomfort are stress. The changes that trigger stress can be external, such as transferring to a new secondary school, and internal, such as acne emerging on face during puberty. These changes can be negative, such as failing an exam, or positive, such as getting into the school that you have longed for. Any changes that require us to mobilize our physiological and psychological resources to cope can be stressful. In fact, life changes happen all the time, so we need to learn how to cope with stress.

Should we suppress the stress reactions of fight-flight-or-freeze?

In the face of challenges and threats, it is natural for us to have the stress reactions of fight-flight-or-freeze. These are defense mechanisms that help us survive and are useful in many situations. For example, firefighters react in fighting mode in dangerous fire scenes, pedestrians flee when a car is about to hit them, and soldiers freeze when they do not want to be discovered on a battlefield. It is important to make the right reactions at the right time. However, we often do not react according to our will. For example, when we need to calm down and think clearly during exam, our automatic reaction prepares us to fight or flight by bringing blood to thighs and arms. Mindfulness can calm us down, allowing us to respond, not to react.

What is mindfulness?

Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as awareness that arises from paying attention to the present moment purposefully and non-judgmentally. It is the awareness of the internal and external experiences of the present moment. An internal experience can be your breath, bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts. An external experience can be the surrounding environment, people, and things. Mindfulness is being mindful of the present experiences non-judgmentally. Being judgmental elicits emotional interference, and consequentially we are unable to calm down and observe clearly.

Is mindfulness practice the same as emptying the mind or not thinking at all?

Being mindful is not emptying the mind. During mindfulness practice, we pay full attention to a specific target. It can be our breath, bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, or difficulties encountered, and it will not be nothing. We are not “mindless” but “mindful”. However, if we pay attention judgmentally, it is easy for us to become biased and emotional, and thus we cannot see or think clearly. Mindfulness is composed of three elements: A, B, and C. A is “Awareness.” B is “Being with.” C is “Choice.” Only when being aware of the present moment non-judgmentally, can we calm ourselves down, see clearly and make wise choices. The Chinese Confucian Classic “The Great Learning (*Da Xue*)” offers a notion similar to ABC: “*When you know where to stop, you have stability. When you have stability, you can be tranquil. When you are tranquil, you can be at ease. When you are at ease, you can deliberate. When you can deliberate, you can attain your aims.*” Only when one is calm, can one think clearly and make the best decisions.

Why can mindfulness help us cope with stress?

Mindfulness allows us to calm down and make appropriate choices, by liberating us from automatic stress reactions.

Why practice mindfulness?

There are different reasons for people to practise mindfulness. Some enjoy practicing mindfulness as it allows them to pause and breathe in a busy day. Some studies revealed that attending a formal 8-week mindfulness course helps people cope with anxiety, stress, depression, etc. Other studies found evidence that practising mindfulness boosts one's positivity and kindness. Furthermore, some found that practising mindfulness improves attention and memory, as well as academic, music, and athletic performance. What we have learnt today is not a formal 8-week mindfulness course, but several short practices. As such, the benefits might not be as powerful as shown in the research findings. Nonetheless, these short practices still offer a break-time and concrete methods to calm us down and take good care of ourselves.

Is mindfulness the same as Zen practice in Buddhism?

The practices provided in the facilitator's manual are secular. Different religions may have their own practice of mindfulness. For example, Buddhists refer to mindfulness as "Zen" or "Sati" while Catholics and Christians refer to it as "Hesychasm" or "Spiritual Formation." Some Christians and Catholics practise mindfulness to calm their mind before praying. As such, one does not need to view mindfulness as exclusive to a particular religion. In fact, mindfulness is a cultural heritage shared by different races, cultures, and spiritualities for thousands of years.

Is mindfulness the same as sitting meditation?

The practice of mindfulness can take different forms. Sitting meditation is only one of them. You can practise mindful sitting, standing, or even lying down. Mindful stretching is also included in the facilitator's manual. You may learn more forms of practice in an 8-week mindfulness course.

Is practising mindfulness just a way of relaxation?

Although mindfulness practices do help us relax, that is not the only purpose they serve. In fact, mindfulness is also a life attitude which helps us learn to live at the present moment, to savour the good things in life, and to respond skillfully to the difficulties we may encounter. However, the current facilitator's manual only provides some short mindfulness practices that do not go deep to the level of life attitude. A formal 8-week course will explain more on how mindfulness practices offer not just relaxation but a life attitude.

Does the longer the mindfulness practice have the better outcome?

Some may enjoy doing a 45-minute mindfulness practice every day. Others may prefer to join a week-long mindfulness retreat and continuously practise throughout the entire retreat. For beginners, we recommend starting from short practices. This facilitator's manual offers short practices of only one to two minutes, or longer practices of six to seven minutes. Actually, short practices can also be effective. For example, the three-step breathing space is short but still has a calming effect. Nonetheless, it takes practice to reach the desired outcome. Practising mindfulness is similar to learning any sport: regular practice leads to better outcomes.

Is practising mindfulness safe?

Like most sports, the benefits of mindfulness are derived from progressive practice. If you have not tried mindfulness before or feel particularly vulnerable at the moment, we would not recommend you to undergo long or intensive mindfulness practices. In general, short practices allow you to explore mindfulness safely. Nonetheless, if you feel uncomfortable during the practices, please do not continue.

Are mindfulness practices suitable for everyone?

Although the mindfulness practices in this facilitator's manual are not long and are quite safe, mindfulness practices are not for everyone. For example, for those who have experienced trauma, the traumatic memories may flashback during the mindfulness practices. In this case, insisting on practising does not help. Even if they wish to continue trying, they should only keep practising under the supervision of a mindfulness facilitator with psychotherapy training and experience.

What should I do if I can't concentrate while practising mindfulness?

It is normal if your mind wanders. When your mind wanders, please do not blame yourself or think that you have done something wrong. Being aware of your wandering mind is also an awareness! You should celebrate your achievement. When you find yourself getting distracted, please be aware of where your mind has gone. Then, gently but firmly bring it back to your focus of attention. No matter how frequently you are distracted, you simply bring it back to the present moment. With repeated practice, you will learn to embrace yourself with an accepting, open, loving, and firm attitude.

What if I feel bored and irritated while practising mindfulness?

If you feel bored and irritated during practice, please pay attention to your feeling at the moment. See if you can observe the anxious feeling without trying to get rid of it. Please breathe with the feeling without judgment. This is a great opportunity to experience how to focus on the present non-judgmentally with love and firmness.

What if I feel sad while practising mindfulness?

If you feel sad while practising mindfulness, please observe these feelings with love and acceptance. However, if these feelings are too intense that the practice does not help, please do not continue. More importantly, if you are facing huge difficulties, please talk to someone, may it be your friends, family members, or helping professionals. Please share with others and don't bear it alone. Having a companion is helpful.

If I want to learn more about mindfulness, which books can I read?

林瑞芳：《靜觀自得：生命的祝福》(香港：皇冠出版社，2021年)。

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). *Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment and Your Life*. Boulder: Sounds True. [With CD (Audio)]

Williams, M., & Penman, D. (2011). *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in A Frantic World*. London: Piatkus.

Teasdale, J., Williams, & M., Segal, Z. (2014). *The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress*. [With CD(Audio)]. New York: Guilford.



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