

Adult Day Self-Care Newsletter

January 2022

Living for Today: A New Perspective for a New Year

We are all hoping that 2022 will bring new delights and fewer burdens. While 2021 was difficult for so many people, Adult Day staff and family caregivers have been through many especially painful experiences. While we can't erase or prevent many of these challenges, we can acknowledge them with self-compassion and kindness. Gratitude for what we do have can go a long way towards helping us shift perspective. Learning to be present and mindful can bring peace and acceptance, as well as increasing our ability to cope with challenges. A mindful moment is when you are "paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally."¹ For example, have you ever had a moment when your attention was captured by a butterfly, a bird song, or the first taste of a delicious hot cocoa on a cold January day? When this happens, the world seems to disappear as you focus on your experience. At that moment, you are absorbed in the present, not rehashing what went wrong yesterday or worrying about what's going to happen tomorrow. Find and savor moments of joy. Note your difficult experience, but then let go to feel the positive things, too, for a healthy balance.

Research Supporting Mindfulness Approaches

Mindfulness is more a way of *being* than a way of *doing*. While there are benefits, such as relaxation and stress management, "The spirit of mindfulness is to practice for its own sake, and just to take each moment as it comes ... then work with that because it is what is present now."

Many research studies² show mindfulness is helpful for many people. It provides stress relief for family caregivers of people with dementia, improved mood and quality of life, and even relief from the negative emotional effects of the pandemic. Programs, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction demonstrate positive effects for people with a variety of health conditions.

Since researchers define mindfulness practice in different ways and measure different outcomes, it's difficult to draw clear conclusions. Experts agree that mindfulness has benefits but is not a cure-all.

¹ Definition (and other quotes) are from Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*.

² References available on request.



Am I doing it right?

Many people practicing mindfulness worry if they're doing it correctly. They can stay present only a second or two at a time. Focusing on the breath helps but, even so, the mind *will* wander. The ability to be still and present improves with regular practice. It gets easier to let thoughts go by, instead of reacting to them. "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf." Don't pressure yourself about making progress. Remember, mindfulness is not a performance.

Mindfulness Practice Activities

If you practice several times a week for a minute or longer, mindfulness feels more comfortable and provides more benefits. It's "simple but not easy" to do these practices.

Mindfulness at work

What does mindfulness look like for in an Adult Day Center that's under-staffed and working with individuals and complex needs? It might involve checking in with yourself throughout the workday. Notice what you are experiencing and feeling. Look beyond problems to become aware of what's going on that may be more positive. Yes, it's upsetting when someone shouts during an activity or refuses to eat, but being mindful may help us see and appreciate the support of our colleagues in that moment and the positive ways other participants help diffuse the situation or lift the mood.

Don't just do something, sit there

The most basic mindfulness practice is simply to be present: "doing non-doing." Notice your sensations—the feeling of the chair or the floor and the temperature of the air around you. Listen to the noises in the background. Focus on the sound and motion of your breath. You might repeat a word or phrase like "calm" or "I am breathing in, I am breathing out." You also can try focusing on sensations while you are walking or doing household chores.

Five-finger breathing

If it's hard to calm your mind by just focusing on your breathing, you might [try this](#).

Use two hands. Hold one hand out in front of you, palm facing you. Put the index finger of your other hand on the outside below the pinky. Trace up the outside of the pinky while breathing in, the down the inside of the pinky while breathing out. Continue for all of your fingers, then reverse.

For More Information

To learn more about mindfulness, there are many resources, including books, apps, online videos, and downloadable recordings. Here are a few that the COPSA staff use and recommend.

Take the Mindfulness Quiz and explore other resources at the [Greater Good Science Center](#):

Dr. Kristen Neff offers information, exercises, and [guided meditations](#) on self-compassion, which is based on mindfulness approaches. Try a 5-minute self-compassion break (a free download).

[Insight Timer](#), a free app with a huge library that you can sort by topic and by length.

The [UCLA Mindfulness Center](#) has an app and audio files in several languages that you can use to try out guided mindfulness meditation:

The [Self-Care resources](#) on our website are free, as always!

Upcoming Caregiver Education 2022

A New Perspective, A New Year: Living Your Best Caregiving Life
January 20, 2022 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register for January 20

Supporting Heart Health: Loving Yourself with All Your Heart
February 16, 2022 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register for February 16

Rest for Caregivers: Tools for Supporting Good Sleep
March 17, 2022 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register for March 17

For more info email Mary Catherine:
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visit our website www.care2caregivers.com for information on caregiver support groups

1-800-424-2494