

## Palliative Care Team

### Breathlessness Intervention Service

## Fact sheet seven: Mindfulness

When you are worried or stressed, perhaps by a chronic illness, family worries, financial worries or other difficult circumstances, it is very easy to spend most of the time living mentally in the past, dwelling on things that have gone wrong for you or worrying about the future and being fearful about things that might happen.

The body responds to worry and stress by increasing the production of stress hormones. Increasingly research evidence has suggested that reducing the level of stress hormones can help people cope better and feel better. One way of reducing the level of stress that you feel is by learning how to practise a technique called 'mindfulness'. Mindfulness is when you are able to adopt a 'mindful awareness of the present'. Most people are aware that if they see (or think about) something they enjoy such as chocolate, even the very anticipation of eating it can bring pleasure. The explanation for why this occurs lies in the internal chemistry of the brain; the experience of pleasure results from chemical changes in the brain.

The change in the chemical reaction in the brain can also reduce anxiety - this is the way that anxiety-reducing drugs work. By practising mindfulness you can reduce the amount of stress you feel and the impact of the stress on your brain by non-chemical, nonpharmacological means. However, it does take a bit of practice. The CD, which you have been given, is best used with the same regularity as you might take a tablet.

Initially we would suggest that you use it twice a day. The CD only lasts nine and a half minutes; it is most helpful when you can be in a quiet place and not disturbed. We recommend that you use it in the morning and the late afternoon at a time when you can arrange not to answer the telephone and when it is unlikely that you will have to answer other people's needs. It is fine to use it late at night, but if you fall asleep quickly after starting to use it, it will not give you as much training in experiencing the mindfulness that will help you manage stressful situations. We have found that some people like to use it with their husband, wife, partner, child or carer so that they can both get the benefit from it. You may prefer to use it separately.

After a couple of weeks of using the CD regularly, you may start to notice that worries or concerns seem to come into you mind without making you feel anxious and disturbed. You may also find that you start to relax and get more pleasure from the small things in your life – music, trees blowing in the wind, a friend's smile.

If at the end of using the CD for a while, you would like to take mindfulness training further, please do not hesitate to ask one of us for details of how you can do this.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

### Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



### Document history

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