

Why Mindful Practice?

Why practicing mindfulness is home can help during COVID-19.

If I were relaxing at home and having a nice meal with friends, and then a bear jumped in the window and threatened to eat one of us, it is likely I would forget the good conversation, the food, and the relaxation, and focus on the bear. My fight/flight and freeze response would trigger, diverting blood to the muscles and organs to help me stay alive. My cortex – the thinking part of my brain – would get less blood and oxygen, as they would be diverted to my muscles and organs to help me fight the bear, run from the bear or play dead and hope the bear runs past me. Afterwards, I would likely have more memories about the bear than about what I was eating, or the good conversation being shared. This is because the amygdala, whose job it is to trigger the fight/flight/freeze response to keep me alive and safe, also saves the information it believes I will need to stay safe in the future.

With COVID-19 we have a ‘bear at the window’, and it isn’t going to go away very quickly. In our counselling practice as we have been speaking with many clients, and we are seeing understandably heightened states of anxiety.

Mindful practice is simply being present in the moment, the one you are in here and now. Mindful practice assists with regulation, allowing us to manage our anxiety and live in the present moment. It is not a ‘fix’; it is a practice, and one we may repeat many times throughout the day as we need. Mindful practice engages our parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for regulating the body after a trauma or stress response, lowering the heart rate, reducing blood pressure, and muscle tension. When we are hyper-aroused or anxious, we can feel the changes in our body. When we intentionally practice mindful activities, we can also feel the calming of our bodies.

It is our experience that for most people new to mindful practice, starting with a mindful activity is an easier way in. We hope these we share here may be of some benefit to you.

