



ARC Counselling and Information Service

Factsheet

Mindfulness for young people

Young people live in a fast-paced world that sometimes feel confusing. The expectations that parents, school and society place on students can be extremely high.

Stress versus pressure

You probably think of stress as being bad or negative, but there are times when some stress can actually help you. Some people call this 'pressure', rather than stress. For example, the tense or 'wired' feeling before an exam or a race, when your body is full of adrenaline and actually needs that adrenaline to perform well.

However, if you have too much adrenaline in your body or you don't use it up, then you begin to feel stressed – the feelings become too much and they decrease your ability to perform well.

Symptoms of stress

Are you feeling tired, exhausted or like everything is getting on top of you? Do you lay awake at night and go over and over in your head what happened today or do you worry about what will happen tomorrow?

These signs are clues your body is giving to you as a warning that you need to change something. Other signs are listed below.

Physical	Emotional
Inability to sleep	Depressed
Nausea	Anxious
Asthma	Panicky
Headache	Angry
Increased or decreased appetite	Worthless
Racing heart	Overwhelmed

So what can you do about it?

- Step 1. Learn to recognise your own warning signs
- Step 2. Work out what is causing your stress
- Step 3. Find ways to help you back to a more relaxed state
- Step 4. In a calmer place, and possibly with support, put some changes in place

The sorts of things that might be causing you stress can include peer pressure, bullying, relationships and break ups, parents and brothers and sisters, homework, exams or lack of money.

Sometimes there may be so many things causing you stress that it can feel like you have no control, but you do! What would it feel like to give your mind a rest and feel more present in the moment?

How to help reduce or prevent feelings of stress



You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf! Jon Kabat-Zinn

To be able to step back and appreciate yourself for who you are, and to be able to stop the plates spinning, is a gift. Mental well-being – feeling good about things, calm and in control – is at the centre of being able to achieve this.

There are a number of different ways in which you can help achieve this from exercising regularly, having a healthy diet (always eating breakfast, lunch and dinner) and making sure you have enough sleep or time-out. You can also try practicing yoga or meditation. 'Mindfulness' is another way to improve your well-being, and is all about slowing down the mind to enable you to see things more clearly. This will help your mind and body to feel more relaxed.

One technique to find your 'inner calm' is through the **Three-Minute Breathing Space**, where all you need is to take three minutes out of every day, wherever you are. This exercise will help you feel more relaxed and in control, but you need to do it every day and you need to keep it up.

1. Stop what you are doing and sit or stand comfortably. Notice your posture and make adjustments so that your spine is straight and your feet are flat on the floor. If you're standing, stand with your feet shoulder width apart, with a straight back, your shoulders relaxed and your arms hanging loosely down by your sides. You can have your eyes open or closed.

In your mind ask yourself, "How am I? How do I feel? What are my thoughts?" Just notice how you feel and what your thoughts are, without trying to change anything. Just accept what is there, even if it is unwanted. Do this for about one minute.

2. Next, take your attention to your breathing. Just notice each breath in and out. Notice how the in-breath is cooler than the out-breath.

As you notice your breaths, say in your mind "in breath" then "out breath." If you prefer, you can slowly count to four on the in breath, then four on the out breath. Do this for a couple of minutes. This kind of breathing will clear your mind and create an inner stillness.

3. Once you are relaxed, take your attention to the rest of your body. Notice any tension or aches and pains – mental or physical – and then focus on these sensations as you breathe in. As you breathe out, let go of any pain. Just let it just soften and disappear. If you can, take this awareness of your body into the next few moments of your day.

Another technique is to just sit and do nothing for a few minutes – no music and no texting, just sitting and being – and **Just Breathe**. If it helps you to concentrate, put your hand on your tummy and feel it rise and fall as you breathe. Just notice how you feel. Is there any pain? Are you tired? Are you happy?

As you breathe you can say to yourself something like "Breathing in peace, breathing out tension." If any thoughts come into your mind – which they probably will – just imagine them to be passing clouds and watch them float away, taking your attention back to your breathing. Do this for about a minute.

If you **want to talk to someone** about how you're feeling, contact your school counsellor.

Alternatively, you're welcome to speak to one of our counsellors. Call to arrange an appointment on **0118 977 6710** or email us at counsellor@arcweb.org.uk.

If anyone else is interested in finding out more about mindfulness, including schools and parents, please contact ARC. We would be happy to help you explore this way of achieving your goals.