

(From Commonwealth Government Website)

## **“Mindfulness” as a Pressure Reduction Technique**

People under stress often find themselves wandering in thought. They find that they are less able to concentrate on work, conversation and activities of daily living and live a lot of their day in the past or pondering problems they have little control over.

Mindfulness is the key to creating space within which we can respond wisely to any circumstance. Without it we simply respond to circumstances on automatic pilot driven by our past experiences and conditioning.

Mindfulness (Awareness) is experiencing something as fully and consciously as possible. It involves:

- ? Paying attention in a relaxed, yet alert manner to what is being experienced.
- ? Being totally present in the here and now.
- ? Perceiving things simply as they are without making more of it in the mind.
- ? Letting go of wanting things to be a certain way or wishing they were otherwise.
- ? Not judging the experience as good or bad, right or wrong.
- ? Accepting what is happening rather than denying it or pushing it away.
- ? Being patient and kind with yourself.
- ? Not needing to change anything. Change happens when the time is right.

## **Practicing Mindfulness**

### **1. Have a regular practice period**

Set aside two or three sessions of five to ten minutes each day to sit quietly and be mindful of your breath moving in your abdomen. Notice that thoughts also come and go, but keep coming back to the sensation of the breath moving in your belly.

### **2. Be mindful of the ordinary things of life**

- ? Having a shave
- ? Brushing your teeth
- ? Drinking your coffee or tea
- ? Using your tools
- ? Washing the dishes
- ? Driving the car
- ? Answering the phone
- ? Walking to the shop

**Notice the physical sensations first**

What is happening in your body? What do these actions feel like?

**Become aware of what you are thinking or feeling.**

Remember not to judge or at least notice when judgement is there.

Practicing with ordinary things builds your ability to be more mindful when something challenging happens. At first you will still react. However you will recognise what has just happened much sooner and can then use your mindfulness to regain your composure and some degree of calmness and clarity.

An example applicable to CSA circumstances is having to deal with an angry client. You may find your heart rate increases, blood pressure increases, sweating occurs and you may hyperventilate. You may find that for the rest of the day you are snappy at others or you just retreat into your cave, shutting off from everything or everyone.

After practising mindfulness for a few weeks you may find that your response to the next angry client changes. Your body may begin to activate the stress response but simultaneously you can recognise the symptoms and then choose to focus your awareness on your breath, breathing slowly and deeply, slightly emphasizing the outward breath.

This allows the stress response to abate and allows you to continue with your day feeling pleased that you coped with the situation better than you had in the past. With greater practice you will become more and more desensitized to your stress triggers and have a lower aroused state in tense situations.

Practicing mindfulness can be used at any time, any place or in any circumstance.

**ACTS, August 2003**