



November Wellness Tip:

Mindfulness

If you knew of a simple practice that can take ZERO minutes and yet gave tremendous results would you do it? This practice is effective for dealing with:

- stress
- anxiety
- pain
- depression
- insomnia
- high blood pressure (hypertension)

Furthermore, this practice improves attention, improves sleep, and decreases job burnout. So what is it?

It's called mindfulness (or mindfulness meditation).

mindfulness = awareness

Too often we are focused on the past (regrets, guilt, resentments, etc.) or on the future (worrying – the most useless emotion we have!) and we miss living in the **present**. That's where mindfulness comes in because it means we are focusing 100% on the HERE and NOW.

When I first went to Africa, I was in an area of extreme poverty and despair yet people were so joyful. I was perplexed. How did they have such an amazing spirit of life? Their eyes looked alive, which was very unlike many eyes I saw at home. What made them so alive and happy?

I came to realize it was for a few reasons (some I will share in future wellness tips) but one of the main reasons was because they were focused on the present.

Whatever is around them at the time is what their awareness is focused on. Being completely engaged with the people in front of them, rather than there in body but the mind wandering, is something they are good at. Whatever task they are doing, they are fully present. They sing, dance, and drum with such enthusiasm and energy because their body, mind, heart and soul are all in the moment.

In the here and now, all is good. There is no worry because that is a future-oriented concept. There are no bad feelings about the past because the mind and heart are in the present.

So how do we, in our future-focused culture, engage in mindfulness?

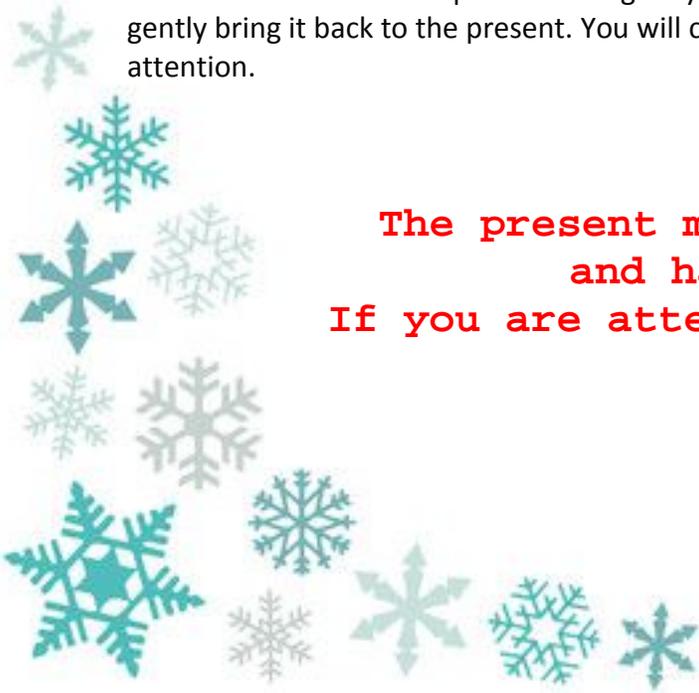
One way is the traditional meditation where the body is still. Focus is on the breath, relaxing the body and calming the mind. Great for some, but many others say they don't have the time (really that means they don't value it enough to take the time), or they don't like to sit still like that.

Wonderful news! We can practice mindfulness in a way that takes absolutely no time. Just go about your regular day, but be in the present moment. Engage your five senses. What do you see? hear? smell? feel? taste?

Walk down the hallways at Corbett Hall noticing the lighting, the colours, who you see (yes, look at them in the eye and smile!), the smells, the temperature of the air, whether it feels humid or dry, how your body moves down the hallway, etc.

Practice washing dishes by feeling the temperature of the water, smelling the soap, feeling the texture of the dishes, noticing the weight of the items, etc. You may find this task to actually be kind of enjoyable (or at the very least calming!).

Have a conversation and practice being fully present with the person. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the present. You will create deeper connections with this simple shift in attention.



**The present moment is filled with joy
and happiness.
If you are attentive, you will see it.
- Thich Nhat Hanh**

Merna Schmidt
Wellness Coordinator