



Simply Mindful
CANBERRA MINDFULNESS CENTRE



Mindfulness for mental health carers

6: How mindfulness works for me: carers sharing tips

Mindfulness is about you living each moment in your life as fully as possible. It's about becoming more present and aware in your own life. It is also a place of refuge and rest, a way of nourishing and caring for yourself in daily life.

How can you adapt mindfulness to fit your life and needs? Here are some tips from carers

I'm very time poor. I've been taking little moments to practice mindfulness. When I take the dog out into the garden, I now sit and listen to nature, feel the grass under my feet and feel calmer. It's achievable even when I'm time poor.

I like the breath practice. It really helps me to feel calmer. I'm trying to do it every day

I'm going to try journaling each day. Doing a brain dump, to get things out of my head and become more aware of them.

I found the session on emotions really helpful. I'm more regularly acknowledging and working through emotions. They are not building up so

When I'm showering I really feel the water and let all my stresses run down the drain with the water.

I've become very mindful of my self-talk. I think it's very important as carers to be kind to ourselves. Don't devalue your achievements or minimise what you do as a carer. Sometimes you might not get acknowledgement from others. I say things to myself like 'I am worthy', I'm doing the best I can'.

I think the way we treat ourselves matters. When things are hard I take a quiet moment and I put my hand on my heart. I say self-affirming, encouraging words and tap into my own good heart.

When going to sleep, I say to myself: 'it's ok to go to sleep, if I'm needed I will wake up. My carers instincts will wake me up.

I imagine just sitting in a boat and letting go. I take a cloth and gently wipe out the inside of my brain. All my worries go into the river water and I sit in that empty space. I can do this really quickly now and it is very soothing.

Breath practice

Sit in a comfortable upright position and let your attention settle on your breath. Tune into the sensations of breathing. Feel the breath moving in and out of your body like the ebb and flow of the ocean on a calm day.

Noticing the in breath coming in as it's happening and the out breath going out as it's happening.

See if you can be with each breath unfolding, one breath at a time.

Anchor your attention in the place in your body where you feel the sensations of breathing most strongly. If your mind wanders off or you get distracted, it's ok, just gently come back to this place in the body and start over.

You can find and download audio recordings of all the mindfulness practices over the 6 sessions on the Carers Australia website:

<https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/coronavirus-information/caring-through-covid/>

Kindness to the body practice

This is a self-compassion practice focused on working with your own body. Settle into a comfortable seated or lying position. Let your attention rest on the breath.

1. When you're ready, bring to mind a part of the body or a bodily function (being able to hear or see, walk or breathe for example) that you like, or that you can easily appreciate or that functions well. This is not about this part of the body being perfect, but rather about you being able to appreciate it easily.

Hold this part or function in your heart and mind and repeat in words that are meaningful for you, the phrases that resonate for you such as:

- *May you be safe and protected from harm*
 - *May you be as strong and healthy as you can be*
 - *May you get the care and support you need, the nourishment you deserve*
 - *May I be a good friend to you*
 - *May you have ease*
 - *May I appreciate you and all that you do for me*
2. Bring to mind a more neutral part of the body. A part or function of the body that you don't particularly like or dislike. It may be a part that you rarely think about or become aware of because it functions just fine (for example, your spleen, elbow, little toe) and hold this part or function of the body in your heart and mind, repeat the phrases above in words that are meaningful for you.
 3. Bring to mind a part or function of the body that you find difficult, or don't like. It may be because there is an injury or vulnerability here, or it is painful or has troubled you in some way. Holding this part or function gently in your heart and mind and repeat the phrases above in words that are meaningful for you.