

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



YOUR WELLNESS TIPS

## MINDFULNESS — TRANSFORMING YOURSELF

In today's go-go-go, 24/7, constantly-checking-our-smart phones society, it seems we're rarely alone with our thoughts. While mindfulness is not "new" – it has Buddhist origins dating back 2,500 years or more – it is the realization of today's continual "busy-ness" that is no doubt helping fuel the growing mindfulness movement. What is mindfulness? As opposed to our minds being too FULL of activity, worries, and concerns, mindfulness is the state of being conscious, aware of, or "mindFUL" of one's surroundings. Additional definitions of mindfulness include:

- ❖ The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and feelings;
- ❖ The process of calmly accepting, acknowledging the present moment and the feelings, thoughts, and bodily perceptions and sensations that exist; and
- ❖ Mindfulness is the gentle effort to be continuously present, according to scientist, writer, and mindfulness guru Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD.

The purpose of mindfulness is an awareness of being "in the moment" and the directions we give our mind to stay fully present in our experiences.

### Anxiety is Rampant in Today's 24/7 Society

Chronic anxiety is especially troublesome. It can be identified as:

- ❖ A higher intensity that has become alarming;
- ❖ There is no real reason or evidence why anxiety should be present;
- ❖ It lasts for weeks, and even months at a time ... well beyond typical bouts of anxiety;
- ❖ Detrimental signs result in painful and damaging living; and
- ❖ Frequently masked by withdrawal, alcohol or other drugs, abuse of food, lost work performance, and somatic symptoms.

### Mindfulness is an Important Ally ...

- ❖ Balancing distortions, moving from hyperarousal and chronic stress to calm and relaxed attention – an opportunity to "let go";
- ❖ Reducing fight-or-flight responses, activated stress hormones, immune deficiencies, worsening depression, memory impairment, and possible breakdown of disease-fighting repair;
- ❖ Checking chronic stress that becomes a debilitating barrier frequently associated with depression, panic and anxiety disorders, and mood regulation;
- ❖ Lessening the dependence on alcohol and drugs that interfere with life (the need for self medication); and
- ❖ Restoring balance, needed especially for combat veterans and others suffering from PTSD, traumatic grief, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and individuals with social anxiety.

### Jon Kabatt-Zinn's 7 Stepping Stones about Mindfulness

1. Non-judging (Not having preconceived notions about others or our surroundings);
2. Patience (This has always been a virtue, but in a "gotta-have-it" now or "have-to-know-it" society, this seems to be especially true today);
3. Beginner's Mind (This is the idea of looking at things for the first time, not unlike a child);
4. Trust (Confidence, faith, hope, and assurance ... as opposed to disbelief, doubt, uncertainty and mistrust);
5. Non-striving ("This is not supposed to be work," says Kabatt-Zinn. "If you think it is just one more thing to do, don't do it. Mindfulness involves being, not doing.")
6. Acceptance; and
7. Letting go.

*Adapted from article by: Elaine M. Schachelmayer, MA, NCC, CCTP, LPC, is a clinical psychotherapist, community advocate, and Herzing University educator.*

## HEALTHY RECIPE: COUSCOUS & FRUIT SALAD

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped shallots
- 2 cups cooked whole-wheat couscous
- 1 cup chopped nectarine
- 1 cup mixed fresh berries, such as blueberries and raspberries
- 2 tablespoons toasted sliced almonds

### Directions

Whisk oil, orange juice, vinegar, and shallots in a large bowl. Add cooked couscous, nectarines, berries and almonds; gently toss to combine.

**Tip:** To toast sliced almonds, heat a small dry skillet over medium-low heat. Add nuts and cook, stirring, until lightly browned and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes.

### NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Calories per serving: 259, Carbohydrates: 40 g., Protein: 7 g., Sodium: 146 mg., Fat: 7 g., Saturated fat: 1 g.



## HOW IS NUTRITION MINDFUL?

Our stomach acts like a “second brain.” As a result, the “brain-gut connection” is powerful. Bad food is addictive, just like gambling, drugs, or anything else. Be mindful, pay attention.

### Nutritional 9-1-1

- ❖ Don't skip breakfast!
- ❖ Add one nutrient dense food each day for 30 days. This is as opposed to trying to change your diet too much at one time. Add one “banana,” then one “apple,” etc. Before you know it you are eating a much healthier diet.
- ❖ Make each meal “right” – in other words, the proper amount of protein, carbs, (low) fat, etc.
- ❖ Move it or lose it – the need for daily exercise.

Each of these points are expounded upon in the following sections.

### Don't Skip Breakfast

- ❖ You are literally “breaking the fast” you incur from a full night's sleep.
- ❖ Breakfast is the most important meal of the deal, but it's not the meal, it's the food you eat. Good breakfast foods include wholegrain cereals, whole fruit, and eggs.

### Add One Whole Food Each Day

- ❖ Each day add a whole food to your diet and/or meal.
- ❖ Don't replace, add to it.
- ❖ It is not cumulative.
- ❖ What will begin to happen is that you will find you like, and your body needs, these foods.
- ❖ You will crowd out the bad stuff (non-nutrient dense).



### Make Each Meal “Right”

- ❖ Protein, carbohydrates, fats at each meal.
- ❖ Essential or not?
- ❖ The good, the bad, the ugly.

### Movement

- ❖ Move it or lose it!
- ❖ Bad conditioning can even lead to loss of memory, depression, and discontent.

### Summary

Socrates had this to say about mindfulness: “You should learn all you can from those who know. Everyone should watch himself throughout his life, and notice what sort of meat and drink and what form of exercise suit his constitution, and he should regulate them in order to enjoy good health. For by such attention to yourselves you can discover better than any doctor what suits your constitution.”

*Article written by: Health Coach Frank Alvarez, Lt. Col. United States Air Force (retired). For his story, blog, videos, and more, visit [www.franklynutritious.com](http://www.franklynutritious.com).*