



MINI-MINDFUL TOOLKIT FOR WORRY

The mini mindful toolkit contains this article and three audio-files.
The goal of the mindfulness toolkit is to help client's manage worry and anxiety.

WORRY AND ANXIETY

To a certain extent everyone worries. What makes worry problematic is when a person constantly worries, incessantly replaying his or her fears. This replaying of concerns rather than the content of one's thoughts is a major factor that can cause psychological issues. For example, for someone who is not prone to anxiety the thought of losing their job, albeit unpleasant, may be fleeting as the non-anxious person can then continue with their day as their worry recedes to the background. However, a person with an anxiety issue may focus on worrisome thoughts incessantly not letting them go.

Defining Mindfulness

Mindfulness in brief, is non-judgmental observation of an experience in the present moment. For example, driving mindfully in part, is driving without any distractions. No phone. No radio and no talking. When driving mindfully you strive to pay attention to the sound of the tires hitting the road. You listen to sound of the engine and the car as it moves. You pay attention to your hands on the wheel, the car in front of you and in back of you. You notice how your foot feels on the pedal and the tension it creates when you touch the brake. You feel your back against the car seat.

BEING MINDFUL

There are several components of mindfulness. Whatever mindfulness task you engage in whether it is mindful driving, eating or breathing you attempt to **focus solely on that task**.

When being mindful you **observe in a non-judgmental way**. If you are mindfully eating instead of saying good or bad (Which are judgments) you observe and describe the food using a neutral or factual framework. You would say sweet, sour or tough or tender. Labeling experiences as good, bad etc. prevents a focus on what the experience is and interferes with being present.

Notice distractions and return back: When attempting to focus on a task you will get distracted, that is normal. Do not try to block out distractions. These distractions may be worries, concerns or external disturbances. Notice the distractions and label them. You may find yourself judgmental toward the mindful task saying this is "stupid". You may also develop judgments towards your performance regarding being mindful. Notice these judgments and distractions without judging them and gently return to the task.



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APPLYING MINDFULNESS TO WORRY

Accept thoughts but do not amplify them Trying to stop worried thoughts will not make them go away. Saying I am not going to worry will likely be unsuccessful. For example, if someone tells you to avoid thinking of a pink elephant this will likely cause you to think of a pink elephant. When you have a worried thought recognize the thought, label the worry as a thought. Thoughts are not facts they are temporary experiences.

Non-Judgmental Stance When you have a worry thought do not judge the thought as bad. Welcome the thought in with open arms. If you demonize the worry thought you make it stronger and will have anxiety about it when it occurs. For example, if you start to worry and then judge yourself for worrying, you will in essence be worried about worrying. Not judging and accepting the worry can be helpful.

Use the mountain metaphor To further build on accepting and not amplifying thoughts think of your self as a mountain. A mountain is thousands of years old and persists throughout various weather conditions such as rain, snow and sleet. Think of your thoughts and feelings as weather conditions. The weather comes and goes. As you imagine yourself as the mountain keep in mind you are not your thoughts or feelings. You are not the weather. Don't ignore the feelings or thoughts (weather) but do not fuse with them becoming the rain, snow or sleet. Again, you are the mountain not the weather it experiences. When you have anxiety think of your anxious thoughts as weather that will pass.

THE AUDIO FILES

The audio files are designed to help you improve your mindfulness skills. By improving your capacity for mindfulness you will more effectively train yourself to manage your attention. This will help you to let go anxiety by noticing it as just a feeling that you can watch (without ignoring or without amplifying) and can gently detach and shift away from. The ocean and walking task audio file require you to focus on just one thing at a time. This task may be easier and it is suggested you start out with these exercises. The walking exercise is designed for a phone or i-pod and you should walk while doing it.

The multiple sound audio file is more advanced and builds on the skill of sustaining and shifting attention. It consists of 4 sounds occurring simultaneously. You are asked to direct your attention mindfully to do just one of the sounds. This is difficult because as you focus on just one sound you will still hear the other sounds. However, in time you will be better able to put the other sounds in the background. Your capacity to focus and sustain and shift your attention will increase as you practice. You can then apply this skill to your anxiety and worry. When anxious you may hear your worrisome thoughts but will learn how to shift away from them and sustain your attention on what is important and most relevant. You will learn to modulate your attention shifting away from worry and anxiety.

LISTEN TO AUDIO FILES ON WEBSITE