Name:

Period:

*What is mindfulness?*

Mindfulness is an awareness of the self and the present moment. Mindfulness is an active attempt to be aware of your impact and to be in tune with your surroundings. It is you being attentive to what is happening in front of your eyes, and slowly taking time to understand and appreciate it for all that it is. In addition mindfulness is recognizing that you are usually missing things, something or a lot of somethings slipped passed your perception and were not a part of your lived experience. These things certainly were a part of someone else’s lived experiences. Being humble enough to accept that you do not know everything and being open to receiving feedback are also common related practices that are intimately connected to mindfulness. Mindfulness will grow as you feed it. The more you practice the more your brain is trained to be aware alert and patient with the present moment.

Each day we interact with countless individuals. We have countless opportunities to increase the happiness of others, or decrease it- countless opportunities to contribute joy or pain. Once you become more mindful and begin to see the world through a compassionate yet critical perspective, you are able to increase your positive impact on others. You also begin to decrease your negative impact.

*Why mindfulness?*

Mindfulness teaches us to be present. Mindfulness teaches us to take in each second of each moment until the seconds feel like minutes. When you recognize each moment and smile into each moment, no matter how horrifying terrifying or nauseating, each moment becomes a gift. That gift is entirely your own. Your eyes, your heart, you mind, and your intuition combine into a perspective that is uniquely your own- a reality that you create from the story that you perceive. Mindfulness teaches us to become balanced, to observe and analyze carefully and without hasty judgment, as we carefully piece together our perspective. The more carefully we perceive each moment, the more we can increase our positive impact and decrease our negative impact. It takes time to become mindful in every moment. However, the more I think about trying to be mindful, the more mindful I am, and the more my brain is trained to be mindful. When I am mindful of the moment I create enough quiet “space” to be more equipped to observe and reflect. If you willingly and intentionally practice mindfulness, it will grow as much as you feed it. Mindfulness helps me remember nothing is permanent, the good moments and bad moment do not last forever and in each is a lesson.

*How to be mindful?*

Mindfulness can begin in your breath. Doing small practices of mindfulness can help increase your awareness.

*Mindfulness practices:*

* At the end of the day, close your eyes and say out loud “I am grateful for\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”. If you are lucky, sometimes you get to share that with someone you care about. Make a list of all of the things you are grateful for.
* Bring your attention and awareness to your breathing. Follow your breath, notice the inhale and the exhale. Notice how your body feels as life giving oxygen flows through your pipes and is streamed to your cells. Notice how you exhale carbon dioxide, your cells’ waste product, so that you may live again.
* Carry rocks. People always say “what does that rock do?” and they write little cards explaining the properties of that rock. We each interpret these words differently on different days of the year. We make these words mean what we need them to be in the moment we meet them. So, we are drawn to stones that we think will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ us. To believe that the rock is, on its own, causing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to happen, is a bit outside of my interpretation. Although I do recognize that each rock vibrates relative to its structure and each carries specific properties. For me, its more tangibly about deciding what a rock means to me or what/who it reminds me of. It could be because of it’s color and the chakra it matches. Maybe the words on the card from the vendor caught my attention. Maybe the rock reminds me of the person who gave it to me or the person I got it for. Whatever the meaning I assign, simply assigning the rock that meaning means it is beginning to make me more mindful of that meaning. By carrying a rock that you have intentionally assigned a meaning, each time you are aware of the rock, you are mindful of the meaning. If it is in my pocket, slipping my fingers into my pocket and brushing up against the rock reminds me of the meaning. Sometimes when they are in my back pocket and I sit down, I get an extra strong reminder of its’ meaning, the meaning I chose. The same rock could have a different meaning from day to day or carry the same meaning for the years that you share together. The rock could be one you found at that special place, or one that you saved up for. Regardless of price, or what it looks like to someone else, rocks are a small, or big tool in helping you practice mindfulness.
* When you are breathing, think about breathing. Think about the rise and fall of your breaths. Think about the ebb and flow of the paired inhale and exhale. When you are ready, add in counting and various breathing techniques.
* If you are brushing your teeth, think only about brushing your teeth. Don’t think about what they look like, or how they compare to someone else’s. Think about the motions and movements of brushing your teeth. Think about doing that task to the best of your ability.
* If you are putting on your shoes, think only about putting on your shoes. Not how they look, what they cost or how you want new ones, just carefully move your body, be aware your body and each movement that is required to put on the shoes. Notice how your hands carefully, as if on their own, move the strings or the straps to complete the process.
* Tell someone, one person a day, an affirmation or appreciation.
* Talk slower. Take time and think before you speak. Questions your impact before you act.
* Listen to the words as they leave your lips and tongue.
* Analyze your role. Take time to think before you speak.
* **Stop** **talking** and listen.
* Listen to music
* Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.
* Respond instead of reacting.
* Slow down.
* As thoughts enter your mind, let them leave, don’t fixate.
* Allow yourself to feel each emotion, don’t push it away or down. “I am sad and this is happening.”
* Recognize it is impermanent.
* Compartmentalize and honor your emotions. Take time or create time to analyze and reflect. Don’t try to squeeze it in.