Home Practice of Mindfulness Meditation

 The practice of Mindfulness Meditation is a very important part of your treatment plan. It is a skill that develops gradually, with practice, over time. It is important to practice on a regular basis; ideally six out of every seven days will suffice, however feel free to practice more if you are able. Frequency of practice is more important than duration; i.e. if you can practice only for 5 minutes, than practice for 5 minutes. Practicing 5 times a week for 10 minutes is far more beneficial than practicing only once a week for 50 minutes. Studies show significant effects on performance in professional sports and other high-stress professions; the subjects practiced 20-30 minutes per day, 6 days per week. They were significantly improved within 90 days. Generally practitioners of Mindfulness Meditation find the best time to practice is in the morning or after work. Others find it helpful to practice before sleeping, and report more restful sleep as a result. As with any attempt to change behavior, monitoring your practice is vital and will greatly increase the likelihood of success. A practice log is provided on the reverse side for your convenience (or if you prefer to use a calendar or planner jot down briefly the date, time, duration and your experience of your practice). This will help to develop the healthy habit. Please bring the log to each session.

 Initially Mindfulness Meditation may seem rather difficult. The mind tends to wander, …mindlessly and frequently. It is common to all who begin to meditate. Be patient with yourself. An essential component of mindfulness is that it must be done non-judgmentally. Do not criticize yourself. Every time the mind wanders, gently escort it back to the focal point taught in the various techniques (the breath in the nostrils, the rise and fall of the belly, the specific muscle group, etc.). You may become frustrated; however please understand this feeling is natural and everyone experienced the same difficulties disciplining their mind. If your mind wanders 100 times in a 10-minute period, then escort it back 100 times to the focus of attention. This IS meditation, this is how everyone began, and this consistent repetition is how you will reign in your wandering mind and gain some control over what you are thinking and when you are thinking it.

 Ideally you should try to make the relaxation experience at home parallel closely to your experience in the sessions. Choose a place that is quiet, a place you will be undisturbed for 10-30 minutes. Choose one of the positions taught in session; a position of ‘relaxed dignity’: Upright, un-supported by a backrest, knees below hips, and a natural lumbar curve. Once you find a good system, stay with it. If it is uncomfortable or you fall asleep, change your position and/or time of day of practice.

 In the beginning many have found that they are more successful using the CD recording given in session (on their smartphone or other device). Eventually, it is important for you to learn to meditate on your own.

 Always begin with three slow, deep breaths. Follow the instructions for the given technique(s) taught in session. When you are finished arouse yourself gently by counting backwards from 5 to 1. On the count of 3 move your fingers, toes, then hands and feet slightly. On the count of 2 slowly open your eyes. On the count of 1 you should be alert and fresh, yet calm and relaxed

Good luck on your practice!

**Mindfulness Meditation Formal Practice Log**

Each time you do a formal meditation practice, fill out the following log. As you fill it out and as you look back over the previous week’s practice, think about how your practice has been going. Do you notice any patterns about what works best for you? What changes could you make to sustain the discipline?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date and Practice | Time | Thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arose during this practice and how you felt afterward. |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |