



# THE EAP CONNECTION

## EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS

Life can be busy, hectic, and fast-paced at times. Balancing work, family responsibilities, home life, and hobbies can be a tricky act that leaves you feeling overwhelmed, discombobulated, and worn out. Incorporating a daily mindfulness practice can help you achieve greater inner calm and focus in your life.

So, what is mindfulness? At its most basic, mindfulness is drawing your attention to what is happening in the here and now. It is being entirely present in the moment by experiencing the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and sensations. Although it may seem counterintuitive, slowing down and taking time to be mindful can actually help you become a more productive and engaged person. It has also been shown to be effective in reducing stress and anxiety as well as managing pain and illness.

You don't need any fancy programs or tools to practice mindful living. Here are some ways to build mindfulness into your everyday routines:

- When you wake up in the morning, take a minute or two before getting out of bed to focus on your breathing, stretch your muscles, take in the warmth of the blankets, listen to the sounds of the world waking up around you, and express gratitude.
- During the day, take a minute or two to stop what you are doing and concentrate on what is happening. Notice the environment that you are in, the people who may be around you, the sun shining in the window, the conversations of coworkers or family members, the smell of dinner cooking, the hum of the television, and the slow, steady inhale and exhale of your breath.
- At mealtime, practice mindful eating by taking smaller, slower bites of food and focusing on the flavors, textures, and tastes. So often, food is shoveled into our mouths as quickly as possible in order to move on to the next task. Learn to enjoy the experience of eating as a mindful activity.
- When you're getting ready for bed, quiet the mind from the busyness of the day by focusing on the activities of your bedtime routine, such as brushing your teeth or washing your face. Take some time once you are in bed to focus on the stillness of the night, the weight of the blankets, and the steadiness of your breathing.

Many of us go about our days on autopilot, moving from task to task without really experiencing anything. Practicing mindfulness requires intentionally connecting with our environments, activities, and ourselves in the present moment. Being able to focus and quiet the mind is an invaluable life skill and a powerful tool in supporting mental wellness.

It may be tough to get started with a mindfulness practice, especially for those of you who are typically going a million miles a minute. Try starting out small and working up to greater levels. If you find that you're struggling to calm anxiety and develop inner peace, an EAP counselor can also help you address mental health concerns and better incorporate a mindfulness practice into your routine and mental wellness plan.

The practice of living mindfully is a unique journey for everyone, and there is no "right" way to do it. Just give it a try and see how you can work to positively impact your life and mental wellness through everyday mindfulness.

### HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

**ERC: Counselors & Consultants** is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website [ERCincorp.com](http://ERCincorp.com) or call 1-800-222-8590.