What to Know About Mindfulness

Have you ever experienced a time while driving where it felt like suddenly you had just arrived without any recollection of the details throughout your travels? Hoping you didn't run any stop signs unintentionally? Have you ever sat down to watch TV with a box of cookies or a bag of chips and within minutes realize all of the contents are gone without any memory of how it tasted? If so, you are not alone. These are common ways we get distracted and lose focus of our actions. In fact, it is easy to fall mindlessly into the motions of everyday routine and daily activities that become second nature. It is common to get lost in your own thoughts at times. This is often referred to as daydreaming, autopilot or mindlessness.

Some may spend days, months even years in this state of mindlessness without realizing it. Life can pass by and individuals may have difficulties feeling completely engaged in the daily events going on in life. Humans are creatures of habit which means once we get comfortable in a predictable routine, it becomes difficult to change it up. One may suffer from anxiety, depression, and emotional numbness or find themselves stuck in cycles of procrastination, disappointment or resentment. A lack of focus during tasks can cause unintentional actions during those tasks. The many distractions such as social media can one to lose track of time and miss out on precious opportunities for a deeper connection with family and friends in real life.

Mindfulness is a practice used to become more aware of what one is thinking, feeling and experiencing without judgment. It involves attending to details using the five senses during daily activities in the present moment. Mindfulness also involves focus on one's physical sensations during various activities. Mindfulness can also be practiced during moments of rest or through meditation. Focusing on heart rate, breathing rate, muscle tightness and gastrointestinal sensations can help connect thoughts, feelings and behaviors to the body.

Practicing mindfulness regularly can liberate people from old habits such as smoking, overeating, and other mindless self-indulgences as well as see their thoughts and physiological experiences from a new

perspective. Practicing mindfulness has also shown to have many health benefits such as decreased heart rate, lowered blood pressure, improved concentration, improved focus and self-control as well as improved emotional intelligence and empathy when relating to others.

Incorporating mindfulness into therapy has been shown to help individuals experiencing chronic pain, bereavement, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress and much more. Practicing mindfulness can ease the acceptance of daily events and allow for a deeper connection with others and appreciation for life.

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