

MINDFULNESS AS A TOOL TO HANDLE STRESS

Did you know there are strategies you can implement into your daily life to manage the Covid-19 situation? One of them is mindfulness, which means a focus on the here and now, or attention to one's thoughts.

Mindfulness is a scientifically proven tool that can help prevent and combat stress, anxiety and depression. It also has its physical benefits, such as better control of blood pressure, pain, reflux and headaches, among others.

This technique also helps to better manage emotions, stress and concerns – to live in the present and not be continually worrying about past mistakes or what may happen in the future. If you learn to manage your emotions, relax and focus on the here and now, the way you see life will change. For example, you will be able to better appreciate the beautiful moments, such as a sunset, a rainbow, a good meal, or an “I love you,” thus giving you a higher level of optimism. By looking at life from a more optimistic perspective, you can better cope with moments of adversity.

Mindfulness consists in training your mind to focus only on what is happening at that very moment. Many people have the idea that mindfulness is the same as practicing yoga or meditation, and all kinds of excuses are made for why it won't work for them – they'll get bored, can't empty their minds, or have already tried it.

Like any exercise, this requires practice. The reality is that while meditation is a technique used in mindfulness, there are many other activities that can even be done as a family.

Usually, we live busy lives, performing multiple tasks at once (known as multitasking). Many people are even proud of that, as society sees it as a measure of success. However, the reality is that multitasking deprives you of enjoying yourself or appreciating the tasks or activities you are doing.

One patient (let's call her Ana) proudly told me that even though she worked fulltime in the pharmaceutical industry, she never missed a single one of her son's soccer games. It's true. She attended all the games. But did she really watch them? Did she enjoy them? Did her son truly appreciate her going to all the games? The reality is that Ana, while at the game, used her laptop to attend virtual work-related meetings.

Her attention was not focused on either activity. This caused her a lot of anxiety, as she felt she was failing her son and her job. Stress overwhelmed her in such a way that it was already affecting her physically. She made some changes, managed to reschedule some meetings, and talked to her son about which games she should attend. Her son was happy because, even though she no longer went to every game, he finally saw his mom clapping and yelling more than anyone else. At work, she was better able to focus on her meetings and be even more productive. She no longer felt guilty that she was failing anyone.

Mindfulness is a lifestyle that focuses on living in the present and enjoying the little things. It's sitting quietly with that cup of coffee in the morning and enjoying its aroma and flavor. Working on a puzzle with the family is another example of mindfulness. At that moment, the only thought is looking for that piece. This practice enables the body and mind to relax, in addition to the added benefit of family time.

You can also go to MCS's social networks at @MCSPuerto Rico to follow the activities of the “Stay at Home with MCS” initiative. You are not alone!

These are just some brief recommendations that don't substitute a mental health consultation. If you are continuously anxious, depressed or already have a mental health condition, call MCS Solutions at 1.866.627.4327.

At MCS, we're here to provide the necessary support during these moments of uncertainty.

Together we'll defeat this virus!

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