

# Keeping your mind and body healthy in isolation

## Acknowledgement

This resource has been directly adapted and copied from the resources:

Centre for National Resilience, Northern Territory Government, Top End Health Service, (n.d.)

- Keeping your mind and body healthy in isolation.
- Relaxation techniques

The Allied Health Team at Centre for National Resilience are acknowledged for the development of the original resource.



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## Mindfulness: The Benefits of Mindfulness



How to Live in the Here and Now (and why You should).

As we try to find ways to manage stress and anxiety, Mindfulness is becoming increasingly popular as a form of meditation as it can be done anywhere and anytime and you don't need any special tools or props to do it.

Mindfulness is not about you thinking what is going to happen tomorrow. It is not about you thinking what occurred yesterday. Mindfulness is about the here and now. It helps you become aware of your surrounding - the sounds, the smells, the sights, the feeling of the surface you are sitting on or standing on, how you are feeling physically, and more.

You can do this activity at any time that seems right. You can do it as you prepare for your day, before you open that laptop for work, on your veranda, in your room, on your bed, anywhere.

The goal is to get you to focus on the here and now to remove the clutter in your thoughts of what has happened and what might happen. It helps remove self-doubt and negative thoughts.

Here are some benefits of mindfulness:

- Lowered cortisol levels
- Boosted willpower
- Increased productivity
- Better emotional resiliency, which helps cope with difficult situations
- Decreased anger and rumination
- Lowered blood pressure and enhanced immune system functioning
- Slowing of the ageing process and more.

## Mindful Breathing: Focus on your breath.



A big part of mindfulness is the focus on breathing. We breathe out of necessity, but breathing properly gives us strength and relaxation when we need it most.

Once You're sitting or standing in a safe place, close your eyes and take in a deep breath, expanding your abdomen, hold it for a few seconds and then let the breath slowly leave your body. Repeat this a few times while bringing your attention back to the breath every time it wanders. Dwell in the moment and fully experience every aspect of breathing deeply.



## Mindfulness awareness: Live in the moment.



Living in the moment is something we may think we're doing, but mindfulness living in the moment is different. Living in the moment means thinking about what you are experiencing right then and there.

Are you brushing your teeth? Sitting on your bed? Sitting on the chair on your veranda? Taking your laundry to the laundry room? What do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? What

do you smell?

Take the time to absorb what your senses are telling you, blocking thoughts of what you were doing just before or what you must do next.

## Mindfulness observation: Pay attention to the details.



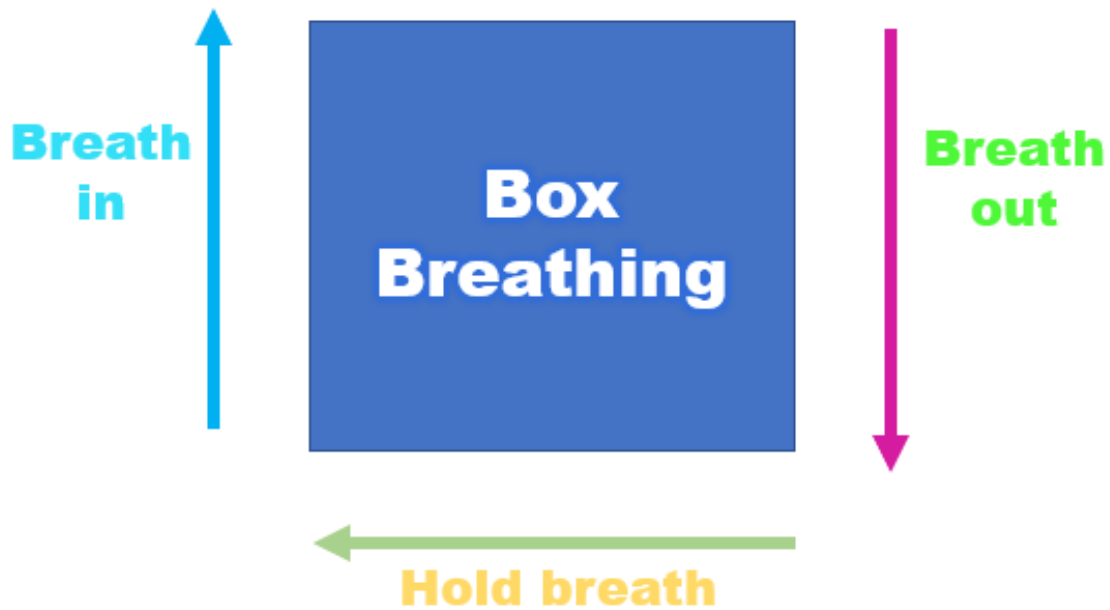
If you're biting into a sandwich, how does it taste? What textures can you feel in your mouth? Is it sour, sweet or both? You are sitting on your veranda and looking at a tree. How does the tree appear to you? What are the colours and shapes that you see? Are the leaves swaying back and forth in the breeze? Can you hear any birds singing?

Mindful observation is an easy exercise you can incorporate into even the smallest moment of Your everyday quarantine life.

## Mindful immersion: Pay attention to your actions.

Whether you are cleaning your room, washing your hands or brushing your hair, immerse yourself in the activity. Pay attention to the details. Note how the activity makes your muscles feel, how your hands are working and the sounds you hear. By paying attention to the activity, your mind is less likely to wander.

## Breathing exercise



Box breathing, also known as square breathing, is a technique of taking slow, deep breaths to use as a powerful stress reliever that can help provide a sense of calm and relaxation in the mind and body.

Before you get started, make sure you are seated upright in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Keep your hands relaxed in your lap with your palms facing up, focus on your posture. You should sit up straight as this will help you take deep breaths.

Step 1: Slowly exhale through your mouth, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs.

Step 2: Slowly inhale deeply through your nose to the count of four in your head. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen.

Step 3: Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 4: Exhale through your mouth to the count of four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen.

Step 5: Hold your breath to the count of four before repeating this process.

## Yoga



Yoga can help manage anxiety or depressive symptoms associated with difficult life decisions or situations.

Yoga can help improve general wellness by relieving stress, supporting good health habits and improving mental/emotional health and sleep.

Yoga can help relieve low-back pain and neck pain.

You can do your yoga on your balcony, maintaining social distance with your neighbours.

Keeping your mind and body healthy in Isolation

Talk to your health care provider if you have any pre-existing injuries that you are worried about. Modify the exercise to suit you.

- Provide links to online free yoga apps

## Music and art



Studies show that art and music therapies boast a whole host of benefits, including improving mindfulness and lowering anxiety and depression. It's also a good way to distract yourself and to pass some time.

Try setting time aside to listen to some music, pick out a few of your favourite songs and listen to them. Make a playlist of music that makes you feel good.

Drawing, writing or colouring can also be a good way to distract yourself, keep busy and in turn make you feel more relaxed. Staff can provide pens, pencils, paper and colouring in work if you need these.

## Visualisation techniques



Another way to engage the body's natural relaxation response is to use visualization exercises. These techniques rely on using mental images to create a sense of well-being in the body, which can reduce stress and can help with people who are struggling to fall asleep.

Body scans are a type of visualisation that feature a slow, focused attention to different parts of the body. Once you're lying comfortably in bed, try these steps for a body scan:

1. Start by taking a few deep breaths, to get your body into a relaxed state.
2. Bring your attention to your feet, noticing any sensations in your toes and if you're holding any tension in this part of the body.
3. If you notice discomfort here, acknowledge it and try to let go of any thoughts you have. Visualise the tension leaving the body through your breath.
4. When you're ready, move your focus to your calf muscles, repeating the process of noticing sensations, letting go of thoughts, and visualising the tension leaving through your breath.
5. Move your attention to each part of your body, one-by one, moving from your feet to your forehead until you've scanned your entire body.