

## MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

### WHAT IS MINDFULNESS MEDITATION?

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that trains us to be present in each moment with awareness. Mindfulness practice raises our awareness of the present moment, of our bodies, and our environment and allows us to connect with these more deeply. Mindfulness meditation is not a breathing exercise; it is really an exercise in training your awareness and in focusing attention. By practicing mindfulness you learn to observe your breath, your body, your emotions, and your mind. It quiets the mind, and when times are difficult it can allow us to have more courage to experience what life sends our way.

Keep in mind that meditation is not always an easy thing to accomplish; it calls for commitment and practice. By doing it over and over again, your meditation practice begins to train you how to stay in the here and now wherever you happen to be.



### TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

As you follow the instructions on the recording, here are some tips to help you stay focused and in the present moment:

#### GETTING STARTED:

- o You may want to begin the meditation by first doing a body scan or progressive muscle relaxation (available from HCS' library of recordings). This will allow you to connect with your body and will support you in being present while you meditate. The stilling of your physical body will help a great deal in the quieting of your mind
- o Before you begin the meditation, find a stable and comfortable seating posture so that you can become aware of your body in the present moment. You can sit on a chair with your feet firm on the ground or you can sit on the floor. Allow your shoulders to drop and your hands to rest on your lap or rest one hand inside the other on your lap
- o Keep your belly soft to allow the breath to travel freely to your diaphragm
- o Open your chest

- o Gently close your eyes
- o As you start the meditation, bring your awareness into the present moment. Become aware of your environment, the sounds around you, and what your body feels like (any physical sensations or tensions within your body). Take a few deep breaths and relax
- o As you follow the instructions on the recording, focus your attention on your breath. Remember to breathe normally



### IF YOUR MIND STARTS TO WANDER ...

- o One of the first things you will notice in this meditation is how often the mind wanders off. In fact, meditation can be thought of as the process of becoming mindful of the fact that your mind has wandered, and gently bringing it back to focusing on the breath
- o If your mind wanders, just notice where it has gone, and what it is doing and silently within yourself, name what it is doing: “thinking, thinking” or “planning, planning” or “remembering, remembering.” You may also notice your feelings, your emotions, your expectations, and your memories
- o Each time you catch your mind wandering, just notice it and bring it back to the breath. This may happen many times during a sitting – it doesn’t matter how many times it happens, just notice it and bring it back
- o Remember to be gentle and not to judge – just notice, name it, and go back to focusing on your breath
- o Try thinking of the mind as a factory of thoughts. This is what the mind does but we don’t have to buy into these thoughts, or get hooked by them, we just notice them
- o Do not beat yourself up if your mind wanders a lot. It is like teaching a puppy to obey a command. When you train a puppy, you tell it to stay, but in a few seconds, it just walks away. You then gently bring the puppy back and tell it to stay. This is what you do with your mind; you gently bring it back every time it wanders
- o Initially, you may spend most of your meditation back and forth, but remember that as you train your mind, it will little by little begin to learn to stay focused where you tell it to