

## Breathlessness Support

# Mindfulness

The information given below is designed to help you manage your stable long term breathlessness. If your breathing is getting worse or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling, it is important to seek medical advice from your GP.

### **Mindfulness**

When we are worried or stressed, perhaps by a chronic illness, family worries, financial worries or other difficult circumstances, it is very easy to spend most of the time thinking about the past, dwelling on things that have gone wrong or worrying about the future and being fearful about things that might happen.

The body responds to worry and stress by increasing the production of stress hormones which lead to the fight or flight response as described in Leaflet 5: Managing Thoughts. Increasingly, research has suggested that reducing the level of stress hormones can help us to cope better and feel better. One way of reducing the level of stress that we feel is by learning how to practise a technique called 'mindfulness'.

Mindfulness is when we are able to adopt a 'mindful awareness of the present'. Most people are aware that if they see (or think about) something they enjoy, such as chocolate, even the very anticipation of eating it can bring pleasure. The explanation for why this occurs lies in the internal chemistry of the brain; the experience of pleasure results from chemical changes in the brain.

The change in the chemical reaction in the brain can also reduce anxiety - this is the way that anxiety-reducing drugs work. By practising mindfulness we can reduce the amount of stress we feel and the impact of the stress on the brain. However, it does take a bit of practice.

Listening to a mindfulness meditation on a CD or an app on your phone or tablet can be very helpful. This is best used with the same regularity as you might take a medicine. Initially we would suggest that you practice it daily in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.

After a couple of weeks of practicing mindfulness regularly, you may start to notice that worries or concerns seem to come into your mind without making you feel anxious.



We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on NHS Tayside sites.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 848 484.

## Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information.



Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

## Acknowledgement

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