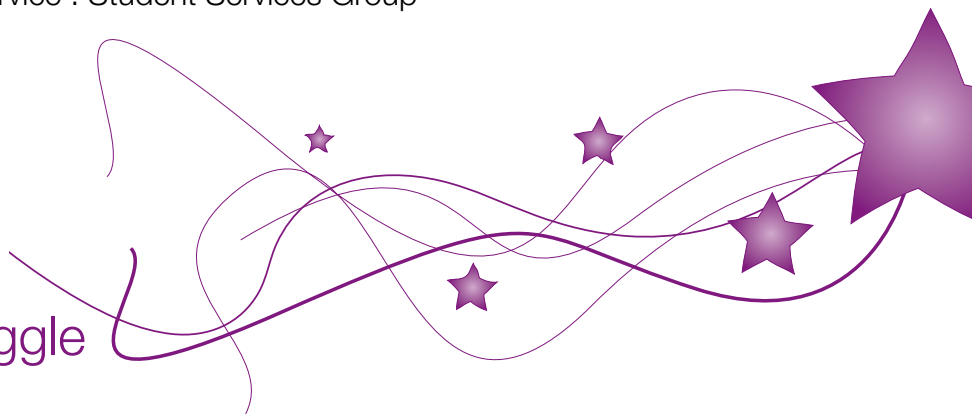


# Mindfulness

## Accepting Stress and Letting Go Of Struggle



Stress is a normal part of life. The practice of **MINDFULNESS** enables you not to eliminate stress from your life, but rather to manage your reactions to a stressful event, or situation, or problem.

We all have automatic thoughts that occur when we are worried or under pressure. Thoughts such as “I’m not good enough”; “Why does this happen to me?” ; or “I’m going to fail no matter what I do”, etc. So how can we better manage this automatic reaction? Often if we try and suppress our thoughts, or try not to worry, this may work for a short period of time, but very often the worrying or self-blaming thoughts will jump back, like a jack-in-the-box. For instance, if I say “don’t think of a pink elephant” what do you find yourself thinking?

Instead of trying to control those automatic worrying thoughts, take a step back from them and observe them from a distance. For instance, observing in yourself the disturbing thought, “I’m not good enough” allow the thought to be present; notice it without judging or blaming; and now let it go.

With each step away from the thought, the stress associated with it may ease a little. You **unhook**, or **detach** your mind from the stress-inducing thought or belief. This is called a **defusion technique**. Other similar defusion techniques include:

- Viewing your thoughts like passing clouds in the sky.
- Or like cars on a motorway.
- Imagine that each anxious thought you have is inscribed on a leaf that falls into stream and floats away.

So instead of investing energy into suppressing your anxious thoughts, or buying into your anxious thoughts, you can teach yourself to sit back and let your thoughts go by. Acknowledge they are there. Yes; but be aware you don’t have to be attached to them, or carried away by them. If you choose to try this, you are taking your first steps in the practice of **MINDFULNESS**.

With this skill, you can observe your worrying, anxious or depressing thoughts [which everyone has!] without feeling overwhelmed or controlled by them. It takes practice, but once you’ve mastered it you will become aware of a greater freedom of choice, rather than being controlled by your automatic thoughts. Also you will find that you develop greater compassion for yourself!

Acknowledge that these thoughts and feelings may arise again at times of stress, such as exam time. Accept that it is exam time and it’s normal to experience anxious thoughts, or fearful thoughts.

Stop struggling with the feelings. Accept them and continue to do what is important to you. Accept that you are having troubling thoughts, and that these thoughts will actually pass. Look at what it is you want to achieve, and take one small step in that direction - whilst breathing and accepting.

