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Think Outside The Box

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Technique 1 : Mindfulness

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Mindfulness and Meditation

The first technique we'll consider to help boost our personal resilience and help combat stress is mindful awareness. It has been used for thousands of years by different cultures, and so it is worth looking into, as something that may be helpful to you as well.

Mindfulness has long been in the repertoire of healers and therapists, who understand the importance of the mind/body connection. There is a wealth of information available for the casual student of mindfulness, and several different schools of thought in Eastern philosophical traditions that emphasize different aspects of this practice.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "EXPLORABLE" in a large, bold font and "Quiz Time!" in a smaller, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

- Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2** (Image: A pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck)
- Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2** (Image: A fan of colorful pens)
- Quiz: Flags in Europe** (Image: A Ferris wheel at sunset)

At the bottom right of the banner, there is a link that says "See all quizzes =>".

Mindfulness vs. Worry

For the purposes of everyday stress and worry, it's largely sufficient to approach mindfulness as a method that promotes tranquility, awareness and a sense of calm detachment from the chaos of the mind.

What Is Mindfulness About?

Common to all traditions is the root understanding that the mind is not the self, and that thoughts about reality are not to be confused with the actual reality. This fundamental principle opens a space in which stressful, overwhelming or irrational thoughts can be seen for what they are, and let go. As you can imagine, this framework is highly compatible with other psychological treatment modalities, such as cognitive behavioral therapy.

How to Apply Mindfulness?

To foster a more resilient sense of awareness, people are encouraged to meditate or engage in other exercises that deliberately ask the person to become aware of the present moment and all the contents of their mind. This is often the first step to being able to moderate and control thoughts.

Let's Imagine It!

A common analogy is to imagine that the mind is clear and unchanging like a blue sky, and thoughts are merely clouds and weather passing through – in other words, they will both pass. The principle of non-attachment asks practitioners to stop identifying with temporary thoughts as this only causes suffering. Instead, a sense of peace is achieved and some distance gained, even when thoughts become difficult and unpleasant.

Mindfulness Can Help You Focus

Mindfulness exercises can also bring the wandering mind back to the present moment, which works well because a stressed and anxious mind often lives in either the past or the future. Simple breathing meditations keep focus and awareness of the breath, the sensations of the body in the present moment as it unfolds, and the fleeting thoughts that enter into and leave the mind.

Why Should You Try It?

Ultimately, the goal is to create the ability to access a calm, alert and aware state of mind throughout life. Anecdotal reports suggest that anxiety responds well to mindfulness practice, and research has backed up some of these claims. Those who meditate have been shown to have less stress and report a greater sense of balance and wellness.

You Can Practice Right Now!

Close this browser or your laptop completely, then take a moment to become aware of everything around (and inside!) you.

- Notice the weight of your limbs and how it feels for your body to touch the chair.
- Listen to the sounds around you and notice what thoughts you have about them.
- Try not to judge any of those thoughts, just let them come and then go again.
- Become aware of any aches, pains, tension or strange pulls in your body. You can choose to relax these if you like.

- Notice thoughts that come up and watch them as though somebody else was having them. Notice how easy it is to get carried away with and distracted by some thoughts. Let them go anyway.
- Come back to your breath. Notice the rhythm. Simply be aware.

Success Will Follow

You may only be able to tolerate a few moments of this, and that's OK. You don't need to sit on a cushion and chant, and you certainly don't need to berate yourself if you find you're incredibly distracted or even bored. The important thing is that you keep trying! Your sense of alert awareness will grow with time.

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