

Texas DPS Fitness Wellness Unit

Wellness Tips
April 2019

April 5, 2019

Mindfulness Techniques and Benefits

If the topic of mindfulness has you thinking about where you can add this into your day, you are in luck. This week we will discuss some simple techniques you can use to experience mindfulness in your life. Mindfulness does not have to be complicated, and nobody has to know you are doing anything out of the ordinary. It's simple. There are many different resources out there; the main thing is to make it simple and to figure out how it can fit into your existing habits (like walking, driving, and eating). A few techniques you can try include:

- Control the breath for one minute: Breathing in for five seconds and out for five seconds for six long slow deep breaths will be about sixty seconds. There are breath pacers [like this one](#) to help keep a pace. This is the time where you become more aware of experiences, or emotions. Not judging them just being aware. Sometimes just resetting in the moment is what is needed.
- Mindful eating: Try to eat mindfully, maybe the whole meal or at least one bite. Notice the food, where did it come from? What did it take to get this food to you right now? How does it smell, feel, look? Notice textures as you bite into it and don't rush to get it to your stomach. Enjoy each bite... chew... the party is in your mouth! This is a time to listen to your body, and decide when to stop eating because you are satisfied. This can be done by slowing down and tasting the food.

Benefits of mindfulness from research (Davis and Hayes PhD) includes: Stress reduction, boosts to working memory, focus, less emotional reactivity, more cognitive flexibility, relationship satisfaction, and more. These benefits have been demonstrated with even just one minute of mindfulness. Start slow, take one minute of your day to take some deep breaths, a tactical pause if you will. This will enable you to feel the wonderful benefits of this brain practice.

Source: Davis, Daphne M. PhD., Hayes, Jeffrey A. PhD., "What are the benefits of mindfulness." *Monitor on Psychology*. V 43, No. 7, 2012, P64

April 12, 2019

Sitting too Long is Hazardous to Our Health

According to the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, "sitting is the new smoking". This phrase refers to how prolonged sitting is associated with an increased risk of several chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

The Heart Foundation reports that the average adult sits more than half of their day, an estimate of 15 hours. The 15 hours per day calculates to about 80,000 hours spent sitting over a lifetime. With so many hours sitting, the phenomenon has been coined as "Sitting Disease" as it is defined as a condition of increased sedentary behavior associated with adverse health effects (Sharifi, Ava. University of Washington, *Staying Healthy* 2018).

Furthermore, the American Cancer Society found in their study that lasted 13 years, women who sat more than 6 hours per day and were inactive, were 94% more likely to die than those who were physically active and sat less than 3 hours per day. They also found in the same study men who sat over 6 hours and were inactive were 48% more likely to die than those who stood. (2010, American Journal of Epidemiology).

Easy Preventive Measures

Begin by being aware of the amount of time you sit during the day as well as your posture and bodily movements. The following are some easy actions to add to your day.

Stand some while watching television, for example, wash dishes or iron clothing.

Do a plank challenge during commercials.

Wash your car by hand instead of using the drive-through car wash.

Walk or move around while checking text messages/receiving phone calls.

Park your car further away from the your destination (stores, friend's house, work,..)

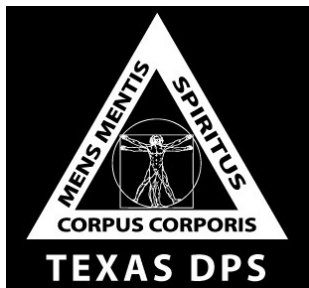
If you travel, plan regular breaks to stretch and walk for a few minutes.

Get up and stretch every 30 minutes

Schedule a walking meeting

Take the stairs every chance you can (hotels, work, airports,...)





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Hungry? Did you sleep well?

Is the lack of sleep making you hungry? According to PLoS Medicine¹, individuals with short sleep duration were shown to have reduced leptin levels and elevated ghrelin levels. These hormones have a high correlation to hunger. Leptin is a hormone produced in the body that suppresses appetite. Ghrelin is a hormone produced predominantly in the stomach that stimulates appetite.

The aforementioned study found “habitual sleep duration below 7.7 hours was associated with increased BMI”¹. Habitual short sleep showed decreased levels of leptin thus reducing appetite suppression. Acute short sleep was found to increase ghrelin levels causing you to feel hungry.

As a result, if you not getting enough sleep for one night you may feel the urge to overeat the following day due to the increased levels of ghrelin, the body’s hormone that stimulates appetite. If you are not getting ample sleep on a regular basis, you may feel the urge to overeat on a regular basis due to the decreased production of the body’s appetite suppression hormone, leptin.

Just as important as being mindful of the quality and quantity of food you are consuming, it is important to get ample sleep to aid you in controlling appetite and maintain a healthy weight. The current sleep recommendations are 7 to 9 hours for adults, according to Sleep Health².

References:

Taheri, S., Lin, L., Austin, D., Young, T., & Mignot, E. (2004). Short Sleep Duration Is Associated with Reduced Leptin, Elevated Ghrelin, and Increased Body Mass Index. *PLoS MEDICINE*, 1 (3), 210-217.

Hirshkowitz, M. P., Whiton, K. M., Albert, S. M., Alessi, C. M., Bruni, O. M., DonCarlos, L. P., . . . Adams Hillard, P. J. (2015). National Sleep Foundation’s sleep time duration recommendations: methodology and results summary. *Sleep Health*, 1(1), 40-43.





April 26, 2019

Where to start a weight loss journey

Weight loss can seem hard in today's world. Everywhere we look there are different diets, pills and potions being advertised that swear you will lose weight. Even the neighbor has a diet that worked that they want you to try.

If weight loss is a goal, the next few weeks we will cover some tips and tricks from people who have successfully maintained weight loss. Of these people, 98% modified their eating habits and 94% have increased their physical activity, specifically walking.¹ To make successful modifications like the aforementioned examples, one of the first steps is to set goals to help you go from where you are today to where you want to be.

Set realistic goals:

Sometimes setting smaller short-term goals can end up being more achievable and keep you on track towards a long term goal. Make sure the goals are SMART goals, not just "I will lose weight by August" in which you haven't set forth any of the details of how you will achieve the goal. SMART stands for:

S: Specific, what specifically will you do to help yourself lose the weight. Example: "I will add one serving of vegetables to my dinner daily"

M: Measure progress, how will your efforts be logged each day. Example: My Fitness Pal app, Lose It app or a journal

A: Achievable, making sure you are physically capable of safely accomplishing your goal based on where you are today. For example, if you do not eat any vegetable currently, yet are planning to set a goal of adding five servings of vegetables daily, this may not be appropriate or achievable for you based on where you are currently. Whereas it may be more achievable to have a goal of adding one serving of vegetables daily.

R: Realistic, make the goal something that you realistically will be able to commit to and achieve. Example, "I will steam vegetables Monday through Friday for lunch" If you don't have a steamer or don't like steamed vegetables this is not a realistic goal. On a 10 point scale of confidence in achieving your goal, where 1 is no confidence and 10 is 100% certainty, you should land in the 7-10 zone. If confidence is less than a seven, ask yourself how you could change the goal to make it something more realistic that you are confident you would actually do.

T: Time, set a time commitment. Pick a date and time to implement your goals. Example: "I will make myself a nutritious lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays"

Making small changes can elicit big results, especially when you add onto those changes in the future as you increase your readiness to do those things. However, all changes require you to start by doing something. So if you are ready to work on improving your health, take a few minutes, and write three SMART goals for the upcoming month. Then, evaluate how you did at the end of the month. If you did great, maintain these changes you have made towards a healthier lifestyle and make a few more SMART goals for the following month. If you had difficulty with your current goals, look at how you might reformulate them to increase your success and continue working on those, then add to them as you are ready. Successful weight loss is about forming different habits, and to form a habit it takes time. If you would like additional assistance, please reach out to our [Fitness Wellness Unit](#) to discuss different ideas.

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