

## Mindfulness Star



Mindfulness is a word we're hearing quite a lot these days, but what does it really mean? Mindfulness is the art of staying in the moment and cultivating more acceptance. Sound a bit too airy-fairy or even too difficult to do? Well actually, chances are you already use this skill a lot in your job. Your mindfulness – your ability to accept and meet each patient exactly where they are at – helps *them* to be mindful. When we give our full attention to someone, when we are really listening, and noticing all the feelings and thoughts that come into play – theirs and ours – we are being mindful. And we all know just how lovely it is to be really listened to and appreciated.

The Mental Health Foundation describes mindfulness as, '...a mind-body approach to life that helps people to relate differently to experiences. It involves paying attention to thoughts, feelings and body sensations in a way that can increase our awareness, manage difficult experiences, and make wise choices.'

### **Imagine this...**

One HCA converted an old smoking room into a multi-sensory retreat room with soothing sights, smells and sensations.

According to psychotherapist David Richo, the five keys to mindful relationships are: Attention, Acceptance, Appreciation, Affection and Allowing. Richo says that by giving and receiving these five A's, relationships become deeper and more meaningful, and they become a ground for personal transformation. Many patients (and staff) have access to these and other important qualities through their spiritual beliefs and practices - from going to a church or mosque, to appreciating the beauty and tranquillity of nature.

There are so many ways HCAs can help support patients' recovery through mindfulness. Learning what makes each patient feel calm, safe and good is essential here, and that's what

the Mindfulness Star is all about. Doing a jigsaw puzzle with a patient for example, can help ease their busy and troubling mind and help them feel grounded and focused. In times like these few words are required but you are providing an important space for them to feel absorbed and comforted. Likewise, facilitating a guided meditation or relaxation session can help patients to safely pay attention to their inner world and gain more insight and clarity. Another example is listening to music with patients. Listening to music is a simple but wonderful calmer. In the words of one of the most amazing pianists, Keith Jarrett: “Music is what feelings sound like”. Sharing music can be a way for patients to express how they are feeling in a safe and contained way. And giving patients quality time to express themselves (verbally, creatively or otherwise) lets them know that it’s okay to share their difficult thoughts and feelings.

**Imagine this...**

One HCA downloaded some free guided relaxation sessions which she burns off onto a CD for patients and plays each week in the ‘Head Space’ group.

Another skill that can work hand-in-hand with mindfulness is mentalising. Mentalising is our capacity to be aware of our own and others’ thoughts and feelings and particularly to recognise that the other person’s experience is different from our own. Both mindfulness and mentalising are words that imply being aware of our present-moment experience – as well as that of other people.

Inpatient mental health stays coincide with extremely difficult experiences and through having and showing attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection and allowing – through creating mindful relationships – hospital stays become opportunities for growth, healing and recovery. That’s what this Star is all about!

## **Related Wardipedia features and examples**

### **12. Mindfulness and silence**

- Night staff have a half hour relaxation group at 9PM

### **13. Bingo and jigsaws**

- The ward manager identified a budget for jigsaw puzzles incorporating inspiring nature and outdoor life images. An HCA spent time with a group of patients who picked out the puzzles they most liked from a brochure.

### **14. Multi-sensory**

- Sensory groups for elderly patients e.g. food tasting i.e. cheeses; different fruits; smells boxes (recognising different familiar smells e.g. mown grass, Vick's).

### **15. Sanctuaries**

- The ward has a room that provides tranquillity and relaxation during times of distress. Patients have helped decorate this room.

### **16. Spirituality**

- The Therapeutic Liaison Workers create displays on different seasonal festivals (like Diwali) and organise ward-based events with cultural food etc.

### **17. Music**

- Offering a choice of music for relatives visiting a very quiet (even asleep!) or distracted patient.

### **18. Landscape pictures**

- Patients painted murals in the music room

### **19. Gardening**

- Garden plants and green house is now in situ. Last year we grew tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers in the garden.

### **20. The really great outdoors**

- Patients suffering from depression and anxiety are on a gentle exploration of local woodlands and parks. This helps them explore nature, overcome their anxieties, make new friends and reduce social isolation.

### **21. Art**

- Patient's design the hospital Christmas card each year.

### **22. Smoking**

- Emergency supply of cigarettes available for new admissions or in exceptional circumstances.

### Some of the ways patients may benefit from the Mindfulness Star:

- Learning new or enhanced ways of relaxing, lowering anxiety and agitation
- Feeling accepted and safely and compassionately held in mind
- Feeling listened to and understood
- Quality relationships with staff
- Enabled to express themselves
- The ward is a space which enables growth, healing and recovery

### Resources

- <http://www.wardipedia.org/mindfulness-2/>
- <http://www.wardipedia.org/15-sanctuaries/>
- [www.bemindful.co.uk](http://www.bemindful.co.uk)
- *Mindfulness for Beginners* CD by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Coming To Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness* by Jon Kabat-Zinn.
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>
- *The Chimp Paradox* by Steve Peters
- *F\*\*k It - The Ultimate Spiritual Way* by John Parkin (Typing in the full name could crash the NHS IT system, but the book is superb, especially for patients experiencing high anxiety.)