



## **Understanding Mindful Awareness\***

Mindful Awareness is:

- Moment to moment awareness of one's physical, emotional, and mental experiences.
- A particular orientation toward one's experience in the present moment that is characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance.

Mindful Awareness has scientific support as a means to reduce stress, improve attention, boost the immune system, reduce emotional reactivity, and promote a general sense of health and well-being.

### **A Mindful Awareness Practice - Meditation**

Meditation is a mental exercise that improves the mind (like physical exercises improve the body). There are many kinds of meditation, of which mindfulness is one. Learning to meditate is like learning to ride a bike; as you practice, your skill improves.

Meditation tools can be integrated into your everyday life – at a red light, while walking from one room to another, eating, while waiting 'on hold' during a phone call – as well as during quiet periods you designate to 'practice'.

### **A Simple Sitting Meditation**

- Sit comfortably on a cushion on the floor or on a chair.
- Close your eyes and bring your attention into your body. Notice any body sensations like heaviness, pressure, or contact with the floor.
- See if you can feel your body breathing. Tune into the sensations of your breath in your abdomen, chest, or nostrils. Pick one of those three places

and try to feel your breath as your abdomen or chest rises or falls or as the air goes in and out of your nostrils.

- When you notice your mind lost in thought, that's normal for most people. Don't try to get rid of the thoughts. Just notice your thinking, relax, and then gently but firmly return your attention back to your breathing.
- Practice this daily meditation daily for 5-15 minutes, gradually increasing as it fits into your life.

\*Handout created by Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC), part of the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior.

MARC offers mindfulness classes, workshops and events. For more information and guided recorded meditation practices, go to [www.marc.ucla.edu](http://www.marc.ucla.edu).