

### Mindfulness Activities

Science has shown that stress can damage physical health and the ability to be productive. The challenge is finding the time to manage the stress. Mindfulness activities can make all the difference and can be incorporated into most daily routines.

- **Mindful walking** - Enjoy a walk during lunch or before or after work. It doesn't have to be long; just ten minutes will help the mind relax and disengage. Don't worry about that checklist of tasks awaiting; the subconscious mind will continue to work while you get your oxygen pumping throughout the body. Use a calming playlist and get outside whenever possible. Engage all the senses by noticing the changes in the foliage and landscape, concentrating on the colors all around you. Smell freshly cut grass. Feel the wind or sun on your skin. Use the time to be aware of your body, feel the blood pumping, notice your respiration, and enjoy the movement. Smile, take a deep breath, and enjoy a good stretch upon completing the walk.
- **Mindful gardening** - Being in nature with hands in the soil is therapeutic. As you work, smile and be aware of the sensory experiences you're having. Work, slowly and calmly and remember to "stop and smell the roses"!
- **Mindful eating** - Mindful eating encourages you to slow down and truly experience all the sensations of eating. Focus on the textures and tastes of the food and chew slowly. Even if you live alone, set a place for yourself at the table and listen to calming music.
- **Mindful play** - Enjoy a puzzle, or coloring book or engage in some make-believe with children or grandchildren. Forget about work and laugh!
- **Mindful journaling** - Select a journal that appeals to you in touch and appearance. Choose a writing utensil that feels good in your hand. Schedule a regular time to write out your thoughts or feelings. A browser search of "mindful journal prompts" will give you many choices to get you started. As you write, sit in a favorite spot, write slowly and smoothly, and, as always, smile.

Many of the suggestions include the instruction to smile. Intermountain Health says, "When you smile, your brain releases tiny molecules called neuropeptides to help fight off stress. Then other neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins come into play too. The endorphins act as a mild pain reliever, whereas the serotonin is an antidepressant." Life is hard and stressful. Scheduling time to enjoy it is necessary. Stop now and schedule one or two of these activities into your weekly routine.

### References

*The Real Health Benefits of Smiling and Laughing.* (n.d.). [Www.sclhealth.org](http://www.sclhealth.org).

<https://www.sclhealth.org/blog/2019/06/the-real-health-benefits-of-smiling-and-laughing/#:~:text=When%20you%20smile%2C%20your%20brain>