

Becky's Corner: Being mindfully mindful of mindfulness

By Becky Ruppert, RN, MS, OCN, Salem Health Radiation Oncology

mind·ful·ness

/ 'mīn(d)f(ə)lnəs/

Noun: *mindfulness*

1. *The quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.*
"Their mindfulness of the wider cinematic tradition"
2. *A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.*

Mindfulness is a common term in our society today, but it does bear a review, especially now that we are emerging from the COVID situation. Some of us feel like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Wow! The freedom!

With our activities curtailed during COVID, we may have experienced mindfulness more than ever before. Now that COVID is hopefully moving to past tense, don't abandon your mindfulness activities.

Activities such as meditation, guided imagery, relaxation techniques, deep breathing and literally taking time to put yourself fully in the moment, can be powerful for overall health and wellbeing.

In our culture, we tend to multitask, run from one thing to another and don't really stop to think about what is around us at the moment. Sadly, we miss a lot.

Just stop what you're doing for a moment. Sit quietly. Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Focus your mind on the here and now. Experience your senses fully.

The challenge for most of us is to turn your mind off of all the chaos. It would be nice if we could just flick a switch, but life doesn't work that way. It takes practice, but it is, as they say, practice makes perfect. Give it try and keep trying.

Many years ago, I was on a retreat and had the privilege of working on a mindfulness activity with a practicing Buddhist. She shared with me a simple exercise.

The task: Bed making

- As you gather the new linen, think of all that went in to making the linen. People tilling the earth, planting the cotton, nurturing the cotton, tending the cotton, and finally harvesting the cotton.
- As you pull off the old linen, think of the warmth and comfort the linen provided. Think of the rest it provided.
- As you place the new linen, think of all the people who had a hand in making the linen. Think of their hours of work, their skills, and their commitment.
- Think of the comfort the new linen will provide. Think of its freshness, it's clean smell. Think of the beautiful colors or patterns.
- As you make the bed, think of who taught you to make your bed. Give thanks for them.

Before you know it, you've made the bed and are wondering where the time went!

In doing such mindfulness exercises, you may end up with a totally new perspective and possibly will feel refreshed.