Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment and accepting it without judgment. The goal of any mindfulness technique is to achieve a state of alert, focused relaxation by deliberately paying attention to thoughts and sensations without judgment. This allows the mind to refocus on the present moment.

- **Basic mindfulness meditation**—Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing or on a word or mantra that you repeat silently. Allow thoughts to come and go without judgment and return to your focus on breath or mantra.
- **Body sensations**—Notice subtle body sensations such as an itch or tingling without judgment, and let them pass. Notice each part of your body in succession from head to toe.
- **Sensory**—Notice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. Name them “sight,” “sound,” “smell,” “taste,” or “touch” without judgment, and let them go.
- **Emotions**—Allow emotions to be present without judgment. Practice a steady and relaxed naming of emotions: “joy,” “anger,” “frustration.” Accept the presence of the emotions without judgment, and let them go.

Mindfulness can be cultivated through mindfulness meditation, a systematic method of focusing your attention.

- **Go with the flow.** In mindfulness meditation, once you establish concentration, you observe the flow of inner thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without judging them as good or bad.
- **Pay attention.** You also notice external sensations such as sounds, sights, and touch that make up your moment-to-moment experience. The challenge is not to latch onto a particular idea, emotion, or sensation, or to think about the past or the future. Instead you watch what comes and goes in your mind, and discover which mental habits produce a feeling of wellbeing or suffering.
- **Stay with it.** At times, this process may not seem relaxing at all, but over time, it provides a key to greater happiness and self-awareness as you become comfortable with a wider and wider range of your experiences.

Mindfulness practice involves accepting whatever arises in your awareness at each moment, and being kind and forgiving toward yourself. By accepting your experience during meditation, it becomes easier to accept whatever comes your way during the day.

Have you tried these practices without success? Do you feel an overwhelming sense of worry and stress? It may be time to call your Employee Assistance Program – we can help.

Reference: