



# THE DARK SIDE OF MINDFULNESS



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:

1CSQ-L1LB-P8HZ



## 1

### Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. What causes you stress?
2. What do you do to help deal with stress?
3. Have you, or anyone you know, ever had serious problems with stress? What happened? How was the stress managed?





## 2

**Ordering information**

**Part A:** You are going to read the article on dealing with stress. First, look at the following extracts from Part 1 of the article you will read. Number them from 1 – 8 in the correct order. The first one has been done for you.

**"The dark side of mindfulness" - Part 1**

- \_\_\_\_\_ meditation is the most common way to access mindfulness, there is a physical aspect to it too. Noticing how you feel, how
- \_\_\_\_\_ on the future leaving us feeling overwrought with feelings of trepidation. Mindfulness is the ability to cultivate a relationship with
- \_\_\_\_\_ can practise being mindful in their everyday lives, we are not required to be a certain type of person. There is scientific evidence that it reduces
- 1 In the modern-day world, we are constantly bombarded with information requiring us to remember the past and focus
- \_\_\_\_\_ stress, anxiety and depression, and it has even been shown to aid more serious mental health conditions, such as
- \_\_\_\_\_ bipolar disorder. Its easy accessibility and positive effects have the potential to make it a truly
- \_\_\_\_\_ the present, to be aware of what is going on around and within us, without passing judgement. While practising
- \_\_\_\_\_ your body is connecting with the environment and feeling sensations on your skin are all part of the experience. Everyone
- \_\_\_\_\_ transformative force for positive social change within all societies around the world.

Sources: *mindful.org, mind.org.uk*

**Part B:** Now find words in the extracts which mean the same as the following.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (adj.) feeling deeply worried and upset
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (n) the fear that something bad may happen in the future
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (n) the practice of focusing on the present moment using various techniques
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (v) to develop something so it is more likely to succeed
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (n) the practice of focusing your mind while sitting silently
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (n) a mental illness characterised by periods of deep depression followed by periods of high energy
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (n) the degree to which something is easy to reach or find
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (adj.) causing a complete change in something



### 3 Reading for gist

You are going to read Part 2 of the article on dealing with stress. First, read the following extracts and put them in the correct gaps a – f in the article on page five. You will not need all of them.

1. This involves spending time reflecting on the people in your life in such a way as to increase your positive feelings towards them.
2. Of course, reliable data is particularly hard to come by when dealing with such a personal subject.
3. Yet recent research has cast some doubt on how far-reaching the positive effects of mindfulness are.
4. Our connections to others are vital in shaping ourselves and our lives.
5. Yet it's worth asking: what is the real value of meditation?
6. It was found that the group who had practised mindfulness were much less sincere in their apologies than either of the other groups.
7. Not surprisingly, it has been adopted by businesses keen to promote teamwork and increase co-operation amongst their staff.
8. They were then asked to decide how much of it they would offer to the person they wrote about as an unexpected birthday gift.

### 4 Focus on vocabulary

Part A: Match the vocabulary to the definitions.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>altruism</u> (n)         | a. a person who supports a particular activity                                 |
| 2. <u>empathy</u> (n)          | b. a feeling of deep understanding towards others' feelings or situation       |
| 3. <u>practitioner</u> (n)     | c. the fact of having an understanding of yourself and your own character      |
| 4. <u>proponent</u> (n)        | d. the care of others, even when it brings no benefit to yourself              |
| 5. <u>reparation</u> (n)       | e. people who do a particular activity   |
| 6. <u>self-absorption</u> (n)  | f. the fact of being entirely focused on your own needs                        |
| 7. <u>self-awareness</u> (n)   | g. the act of making up for something wrong that was done to someone else      |
| 8. <u>tout</u> (v)             | h. persuade people to do, like or buy something by talking positively about it |
| 9. <u>well-disposed</u> (adj.) | i. having a positive attitude towards something                                |



**Part B:** Now put the vocabulary from Part A in the correct gaps 1 – 9 in the article on page five. You may have to change the form of the word.

**Part C:** Now in pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. Who do you know who you have the most **empathy** towards? Why?
2. Which practices are you a **proponent** of? Why?
3. Who do you know who practises **altruism**? What do they do to show this?
4. If you had to make **reparations** towards someone in your life, what would you do?
5. Would you say you have a deep sense of **self-awareness**? Why/why not?
6. Who do you know who has a problem with **self-absorption**? What do they do?





# The dark side of mindfulness

## Part 2

- A. From business, to education, to politics, mindfulness has reached into multiple arenas of modern life and been \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> as the way forward for all. While the specifics of practice vary from person to person, mindfulness most commonly asks \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> to focus on their breathing while paying attention to their internal feelings and external sensations. Reported benefits include lowered stress levels, and increased \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>. (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Having calm workers who are \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> towards one another is obviously worth the time and investment of inviting \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> of mindfulness into the workplace.
- B. (b) \_\_\_\_\_. Part of the practice of mindfulness involves observing thoughts and feelings without attaching any particular significance to them and allowing them to pass by, with the focus always brought back to the steady breathing. This can, it has been shown, reduce our feelings of guilt over previous actions which may have brought physical or mental harm to others and lower the likelihood of us addressing them by seeking to put them right.
- C. In an experiment which involved 1,400 people, volunteers were asked to write about a situation where they had wronged another person which they felt guilt over. Half of them were then asked to relax and think about whatever came to mind, while the other half were given a mindfulness exercise. Later, participants were asked to imagine they had just received \$100. (c) \_\_\_\_\_. Those who had completed the mindfulness exercise were willing to give an average of \$33.39, while the 50% of participants who had just let their minds wander, were happy to give almost 20% more – at \$40.70.
- D. A further experiment asked people to write a letter of apology to the person they had first written about. These were then read by two independent judges who assessed them for both whether or not the author had taken responsibility for what they had done and also if they offered to make \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> for their actions. Prior to writing, participants had been divided into three groups: one did a mindfulness exercise, one surfed the web and the others were allowed to occupy themselves with their own thoughts. (d) \_\_\_\_\_. It is possible then, that the focus that mindfulness brings to the self and the moment, while having benefits, can increase \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup>. Andrew Hafenbrack of the University of Washington in the US, who conducted the aforementioned studies has also studied a technique known as the 'loving-kindness technique'. (e) \_\_\_\_\_. His studies showed that where mindfulness had reduced people's feelings of empathy towards others, the opposite happened with the loving-kindness technique.
- E. It is essential to have \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup> and there are clear benefits to reducing stress. But we cannot see ourselves in a vacuum. (f) \_\_\_\_\_. Nourishing our relationships with others is just as important, if not more so, as reflecting on our relationship with the self. It seems the poet John Donne was deeply perceptive when he wrote: 'no man is an island.'

Sources: BBC, The Guardian





## 5 Reading comprehension

Complete the following summary with one, two, or three consecutive words from the article on page five. Listen to check your answers.



Mindfulness has become increasingly used in many areas of life due to its proven ability to help practitioners \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>, leaving them with \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> stress levels and a sense of well-being. However, recent research points to the possibility that, if we have hurt others, whether it was in a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> sense, it can lower feelings of guilt. An experiment found that participants who had not engaged in a mindfulness exercise were willing to give \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> money to someone they felt they had wronged, than those who had. A further experiment found that when volunteers penned an \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> to someone they had hurt, those who had done a mindfulness activity beforehand were less sincere. A potential alternative to mindfulness is the loving-kindness technique which has the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> effect from mindfulness in that it increases feelings of empathy towards others. We must remember that we don't exist \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> and that \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> on our relationships with others is just as vital as exploring our inner selves.

## 6 Talking point

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. Have you tried mindfulness? What is your opinion on it? If not, would you want to? Why/why not?
2. Would you volunteer for an experiment such as the one described in the article? Why/why not?
3. Do you think that self-awareness is important? Why/why not?
4. What do you think John Donne meant when he wrote 'No man is an island'?
5. Have you done anything recently to improve your relationship with other people? What did you do?





## 7 Extended activity/Homework

Write a letter of apology to someone you feel you have wronged in some way in your life. Consider the following questions.

1. What did you do?
2. Why do you feel it was wrong?
3. How do you feel about it?
4. What would you like to say about it?
5. What would you like to do about it?
6. What do you think the reaction of the person you are writing to will be?

You should:

- Write at least 250 words
- Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation

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