



Mindfulness

brainstrust information sheet

Know Hows are published by *brainstrust* to help people living with a brain tumour to understand current topics. They are produced with input from relevant scientific and clinical experts and are written in a way that should help you to understand often complicated topics.

If you have an idea for a Know How, then please let us know.

If you have any queries, don't forget you can talk to one of our support specialists on **01983 292 405**, or email **hello@brainstrust.org.uk**.

Why do we need this Know How?

When living with a brain tumour diagnosis, either as a patient or a caregiver, you may often find yourself consumed by lots of different thoughts and priorities, and you may feel overwhelmed. This, in turn, may make it challenging to focus on certain activities and tasks.

The practice of mindfulness is about taking the time to focus on one particular task or activity, feeling relaxed yet awake and aware, and being completely in the present moment.

What does it mean?

Facing situations that feel uncertain and overwhelming can affect different aspects of who we are, such as our physical, social, concentrative, emotional and spiritual selves – everything that makes up who we are.

When practised regularly, mindfulness can help to reduce stress and anxiety, which can help your emotional well-being and aid sleep. This, in turn, can help your physical and social well-being and improve concentration and memory, which can help your spiritual well-being.

Allocating time in your day to being mindful can give you the opportunity to create space between you, your thoughts and your reactions.

How can I practise mindfulness?

There are lots of different ways to practise mindfulness and incorporate it into your daily routine.

There are no rules about how you practise mindfulness or what activity you focus on. The most important thing is that when you are being mindful, you are completely in the present moment.

It shouldn't feel like a chore, but it should be something that can, over time, just become a part of your usual daily routine.

Here are some examples of how you can practise mindfulness:

- Through hobbies and thinking creatively. Think about things you enjoy doing that you can use to practise mindfulness. This could include things such as DIY, gardening, painting, reading, crafts and crosswords.

- Putting your day to bed by writing your thoughts down in a notebook. Take 15 minutes out of your day to get your thoughts down on paper. Then put it aside, and continue with your day. You can read more about this practice here: brainstrust.org.uk/mindfulness.
- Breathing and relaxation practice:
 1. Breathe slowly and steadily and deeply – in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe into your belly rather than your chest, and let your belly rise and fall as you breathe. You can place a hand on your belly, just below your ribs, so that you can feel the rise and fall.
 2. Breathe in for three counts and out for five counts.
 3. Pause between each breath.
 4. Notice how the air feels and how your body moves as you breathe in.
- Using your daily shower or bath routine as your mindfulness practice. Take a look at this simple practice written by Lou Henry, brain tumour patient and former mindfulness and meditation teacher: brainstrust.org.uk/mindfulness-lou-henry/.

There are plenty of good mindfulness apps available to download on smartphones. These include Headspace and Calm, which are both available to download on iOS and Android.

Ask yourself

- What specifically am I struggling with?
- Where is my sanctuary?
- Who is in my team?
- What support do I need?
- When can I 'pause' my day?

Contact

Talk to *brainstrust*. We can help. You can call, write, type, text. Email for help and support: hello@brainstrust.org.uk. Telephone: **01983 292 405**.

Other helpful links

bit.ly/overwhelm-knowhow

bit.ly/team-knowhow

bit.ly/uncertainty-knowhow

brainstrust.org.uk/mindfulness

brainstrust.org.uk/exercise

Expertly checked and updated April 2020.



Production of *brainstrust*'s information is supported by the Anna Horrell fund. Anna, wife and mum, tragically passed away in August 2017 after a valiant fight against a glioblastoma. Throughout her life and her illness, she was an inspiration to us all, fighting bravely and cheerfully in the face of adversity. She was the beating heart of our family, and her loss left a hole in our lives that can never be replaced. In her incredible memory, we are passionate about helping others diagnosed with a brain tumour to navigate this most difficult of journeys.

Mike, Tom, Rebecca, Charlie & Sophie