

Stress and Coping: Mindfulness Can Help

Since my heart attack, I've been so afraid of having another one that I stopped doing a lot of things I enjoy ... I was scared to do anything that would make my heart work too hard. My doctor said activity was okay. But what kind? She suggested mindful walking.

I'd just gotten back from several meetings ... and my boss asked me if I could go over a report by the end of the day. That's when I snapped. It's just that there's so much to do, and I can't fit it all in. I knew I needed to do something to get my emotions under control. That's when I read about mindful breathing.

Mindful walking and breathing are just two of the ways you can practice mindfulness. When you're mindful, you pay attention to and accept the thoughts and experiences you're having right now ... in the present moment.

I needed to get over my fear about having another heart attack, so I gave mindful walking a shot. As I walk, I think about how the ground feels beneath my feet ... and take in all the sights, sounds, and smells around me. And if I start worrying ... I stop and take a breath.

Then I just keep walking ... and paying attention to what's around me. Being mindful has let me experience my walks ... and life ... in a whole new way. And even though the fear creeps up every now and then, it no longer holds me back.

I've got a long commute ... and plenty of time to stress about what happened at work yesterday and what might happen today. But now I use the time to breathe ... and try to think about all the good things in my life. I use traffic lights to remind me to breathe and be thankful. Mindful breathing is helping me focus on what's important ... feel more calm ... and gets me ready to face whatever the day brings.

Mindfulness isn't meant to solve your problems. But it *is* a tool you can use to cope with life's stresses. You don't have to carve out a special time to practice. You can practice anytime, anywhere ... and in any way you choose. How can it help you?