



**MENTAL
HEALTH
AWARENESS
WEEK**

11-17 MAY



Mental
Health
Foundation

Mindfulness

mentalhealth.org.uk

Who we are

The Mental Health Foundation is working to end the inequalities that face people experiencing mental health problems.

We develop and run research and delivery programmes across the UK that have, for more than six decades, given us the evidence and expertise to know what works and how to intervene earlier.

We use what we learn to help everyone by offering straightforward and clear information on every aspect of mental health.

Our advice also helps people help the people they care about too - in their families, their communities or their work. We influence policymakers and advocate for changes in services, using firm evidence and the voices of people with direct experience of the issues.

We are prepared to “speak truth to power” and to campaign on the issues that affect public mental health and wellbeing and the lives of people who have, or are close to someone with a learning disability. We aim to inspire the development of a society free from stigma and discrimination, where everyone can achieve their potential to flourish and thrive.

You can find out about our latest work on our website [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk).

Mental Health Awareness Week

Now in its 15th year, **Mental Health Awareness Week** aims to encourage the conversation around mental health to fight discrimination and stigma and promote good mental wellbeing.

For one week in May, we campaign around a specific topic. This year the week will fall from 11-17 May and will be on the theme of mindfulness.

What is mindfulness?

Contrary to popular belief, mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind of thoughts or "zoning out", it's about paying attention to the present moment, without getting stuck in the past or worrying about the future.

What you may be surprised to hear is that you have probably been mindful at some point in your life and didn't even know it... Have you gone for a long walk, breathing in the crisp, fresh air and then suddenly realised that four hours have passed? Have you listened so intently to a song that for a moment, you weren't thinking about anything but how beautiful the melody was? That's mindfulness!

At the heart of it, mindfulness is a mind-body based training that can help you observe the way you think and feel about your experiences, whether good or bad. This can really change the way you manage and react to stressful situations, giving you a valuable tool to stay mentally healthy.

Andrea explains mindfulness in her own words:



Mindfulness is one of those things you actually have to experience to understand. There are a lot of misconceptions about mindfulness - for example, that it's a tool with the aim of decreasing anxiety or inducing relaxation. That's not it at all - mindfulness is about accepting your present experience, just as it is, whether that's good, bad or neutral. Reduced anxiety or relaxation may happen, or it may not; learning to accept life's experiences and emotions is the true value of mindfulness. You could be experiencing some pretty awful emotions during the practise but mindfulness will allow you to manage them more effectively.

Why do we need mindfulness?

How we think and feel about ourselves and our lives impacts on our behaviour and how we cope in tough times. It affects our ability to make the most of the opportunities that come our way and play a full part amongst our family, workplace, community and friends. It's also closely linked with our physical health. Whether we call it wellbeing, emotional welfare or mental health, it's key to living a fulfilling life.

And yet the UK is facing a major mental health crisis. 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime.

Last year alone, over 11 million working days were lost due to stress, anxiety or depression. The economic consequences of poor mental health have been estimated at £100 billion in the UK. Yet the NHS's mental health services are increasingly put under financial pressure- new approaches are urgently needed.

Mindfulness has been proven to be a cost-effective, evidence-based treatment for mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

Be Mindful

To celebrate five years of amazing work at the Foundation around mindfulness, we are giving Be Mindful a fresh, new look! Here, you'll find up to date information and the resources you need in the field of mindfulness.

Since 2010 we have promoted the evidence-base behind mindfulness, through a teacher's directory at www.bemindful.co.uk, and a 4-week online course at www.bemindfulonline.com.

In November 2013 the University of Oxford found that our online mindfulness course could help reduce anxiety by 58%, depression by 57% and stress by 40%.

To learn more about the evidence and research behind mindfulness, visit mentalhealth.org.uk/mindfulness.

How you can be mindful

Mindfulness practise can make you feel more connected and in touch with what is happening around you. Bring mindfulness into these daily activities...



Take a course

Find a course in your local area at bemindful.co.uk. Alternatively, our web-based course at bemindfulonline.com has shown to reduce levels of depression, anxiety by up to 57%, and stress by more than 40%.



Go for a walk

Try and walk mindfully, noticing the sounds around you and the feel of your foot on the ground. Give your brain a break by thinking about your body and the present moment, rather than speculating ahead about what you're about to do.



Capture moments on camera

Taking photos is a great way of being mindful of precious moments as they go by. They're also a good way of reminding yourself to notice the small things in life.



Eat a mindful meal

Try and slow down and taste the food in your mouth. Really explore the texture; the colour; the smell. You'll find that if you slow your actions down, your mind will slow down too.



Turn off technology

Instead of watching TV or texting for hours, why not try changing your routine? Do something that allows you to concentrate on the sensations in your body like going for a walk or taking a bath.

How you can get involved

1. Be Mindful

Have you or your friends, coworkers or family tried mindfulness? If not, you may like to hold some mindfulness taster sessions:

- Ask a mindfulness teacher to give a talk to you and your colleagues or peers. You can contact teachers via bemindful.co.uk.
- Encourage people to take breaks and practise mindfulness by creating a space for people to do so, either at work or at school.

Use our mindfulness podcasts to kick off the event!

2. Spread the word

Throughout the week we will be posting stories and information on our **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Please follow and like us, share our messages and join in the discussion, using the tags **#MHAW15** and **#BeMindful**. You can copy and paste the below as an update:

Facebook

This year's theme for Mental Health Awareness Week 11-17 May 2015 is mindfulness. We've/l've partnered with the Mental Health Foundation to raise awareness of mindfulness and mental health. To find out more about the campaign, visit: <http://bit.ly/1E1IQUF>

Get involved by following [MHF_tweets](#) on twitter and by liking their Facebook page and sharing their posts from www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfoundation or www.facebook.com/mentalhealthawarenessweek

Twitter

This year's theme for Mental Health Awareness Week 11-17 May is mindfulness <http://bit.ly/1E1IQUF> **#MHAW15** **#BeMindful**

Practising mindfulness can help protect your mental health <http://bit.ly/1E1IQUF> **#MHAW15** **#BeMindful**

Get involved with **#MHAW15** and help us raise awareness of mindfulness <http://bit.ly/1E1IQUF> **#BeMindful**

3. Host an event

- Organise a health fair. Invite local organizations to staff exhibit booths, distribute materials, offer free health screenings, and more
- Set up and staff an exhibit table at a local hospital, community center, library, or shopping mall. Distribute our campaign materials.
- Coordinate a lecture or series of lectures about mindfulness
- Include our materials in your newsletter, announcements, or on your website.

Be Creative

Take part in this year's online art exhibition: an opportunity to showcase mental health and creativity. You can share anything from photography to sketches, sculptures to paintings - we want to see what inspires you!

See the entries and get involved.

Do you have a skill you can teach and pass on to others? Have you always wanted to start up a creative project? Mental Health Awareness Week could be a great chance for you to explore this. During the week you may like to:

- Put on a show! People are always happy to make a donation to attend a workshop or performance. Or if you fancy holding a surprise flashmob (**like these guys did**) why not collect on the day?
- Hold an arts and crafts workshop, invite your friends and family to take part. It's a great opportunity for everyone to get together and try something new!

Be Active

Mindfulness isn't just about staying still. Get fit, have fun and raise awareness at the same time! You could:

- Organise a yoga class in your local park
- Organise a meditation session for the whole office/class!
- Get your colleagues together for a lunchtime wellbeing walk

4. Add your event to our map

Every year we rely on our supporters to hold events across the country to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing.

To help us publicise your event, please **tell us about it here** so we can add it to our activity map!



5. Fundraise



Fundraising can be really simple and fun, it just takes some preparation!

Enjoy baking? Hold a Tea & Talk at home or at work to support us this year. All you need is tea, cake and some friends or colleagues to chat with. Ask your friends and family to make a donation when they come along. Find out more: mentalhealth.org.uk/tea

If you would like to fundraise during the week and would like some supporting materials such as **collection tins, posters and t-shirts**, please contact our team on: events@mentalhealth.org.uk.

Set up an online sponsorship page and email the link to everyone you know! Remember to link it to your Facebook and Twitter accounts.

If you have any other ideas you'd like to share, or would like to discuss your event please get in touch:
awarenessweek@mentalhealth.org.uk

How we can help

To help all of you wonderful supporters, we will be offering a free promotional pack on our theme of mindfulness. The pack will include:

- **A3 posters**
- **Mindfulness leaflets**
- **Balloons!**
- **A donation box**

You can choose to put these posters up around the office or your communities. Or even print out our digital versions and hand out to stores to display in your high street!

Get as many people involved as possible! Feel free to spread the word by:

- **Creating stands and displays in schools, offices or local communities**
- **Sending digital materials to your friends, loved ones and colleagues**

You can pre-order these materials [here](#). Please note we are only able to provide one pack per individual or organisation. These will be sent to you closer to the week!

If you would like to purchase bulk amounts of these materials please contact: publications@mentalhealth.org.uk

Digital materials

For larger companies and organisations who may need more copies, we will have digital versions of these materials which you are free to print out and distribute. Join our **Mental Health Awareness Week mailing list** to find out when these are available for download.

Thank you for getting involved in Mental Health Awareness Week 2015.

With your support, we can
continue to change lives.