



## How We Can Control Headspace for Mindfulness

### Factsheet

#### What is Headspace?

The dictionary describes Headspace as a person's state of mind or mindset, however, we at Yellow Brick Road define it as;

*“The ability to enable and understand how to control our thoughts and feelings to affect their impact on either ourselves or others.”*

#### Why is Headspace so Important?

Despite technologic advances making our life simpler, the pace of life has increased considerably in the last few generations.

Our minds are increasingly filled with more and more stuff, and while evolution over millions of years had made a good job of growing the brain, right now for lots of us, there's just too much bouncing around to make sense of it.

This has three main outcomes;

1. We make bad decisions
2. We use inappropriate or regrettable emotions at the wrong times (like blowing our top!)
3. We negatively affect our own wellbeing – **We are permanently wired!!!!**

Many conditions such as depression (which could lead to suicide) can be preventable in many cases with the right support and help and personal attention to the mind, helping us to enjoy life more and feel better.

#### What's Going on in the Brain?

Prof. Stephen Peters, in his excellent book the Chimp Paradox, talks about 3 main parts of the brain – the thinking part (Frontal lobe) which he calls the **Human**, the emotional part (limbic system), which he calls the **Chimp** and the area of the brain we use for storage (Parietal lobe), which he calls the **computer**.

He states that the Emotional part of the brain is 5 times more powerful than the logical part, which explains why we can let our emotions get the better of us.

This stems back to **Fight, Flight or Freeze (FFF)** responses of our ancestors. In the interest of survival, the brain had no time to think. If you were about to be eaten, you had to choose quickly, our limbic system took care of this.

The problem is it's still there and it now struggles with establishing what is a genuine threat and what is not. Our brain literally cannot understand the difference between the threat from a saber-tooth tiger and stand in front of a large audience to speak.

## **Finding more Headspace**

Finding more headspace will bring immediate benefits to your wellbeing. The following steps can be adopted to help you to find more Headspace.

### **1. Control your tech**

A Kent State University study released recently revealed that excessive phone use is sucking the fun right out of our downtime. Researchers monitored a group of nearly 500 undergraduates and measured the individuals' daily smartphone use, and those who were considered in the "high use" category experienced more stress and anxiety during their leisure time than the other groups.

*Are you in the high use group?* Here are a few ground rules to help us have happy balance with our phones;

- Stop using your phone/tablet at least 2 hours before bed, the blue light it emits gets your brain racing. Reading a real book or journaling is much better way to ensure a good night's sleep.
- Always keep the phone out the bedroom.
- Tell your business colleagues what your personal rules are about when you will respond to messages.
- Take a social media holiday.
- Try turning off the router at home around 7-8pm or having a daily quota for use of devices.
- Allocate specific time in your diary for email and social media time – check out the great tips on <http://fourhourworkweek.com/blog/>

## **2. Control negative thoughts**

We can allow negative thoughts to consume us. The negative thought, no matter how trivial, becomes so powerful, it takes us into a negative state, and then from that more negative thoughts appear, then sparking negative emotional responses.

## **3. Be Mindful**

There are many definitions of mindfulness, we define mindfulness as the intention to be present in the here and now, fully engaged in whatever is happening, free from distraction or judgement, with a soft and open mind.

### **Mindful Meditation**

Meditation is the simple exercise to familiarise oneself with the qualities of mindfulness. It is a way of providing the optimum conditions for training the mind to be calmer, clearer and kinder. Research is proving that it leads to peace of mind and wellbeing, greater focus and creativity and better relationships.

### **Go for a Walk**

The expression goes, “Go for a walk to clear your head”. When you go for that walk, do it without your phone and take in all the good things about the walk – the trees, the birds, the couple in love, the way your feet feel on the ground, the weather, smells, sounds, etc.

### **Classical Music**

According to Jane Collingwood, the soothing power of music is well-established. It has a unique link to our emotions, so can be an extremely effective stress management tool, and it can be a great aid to meditation, helping to prevent the mind wandering.

### **Yoga**

There are many benefits of yoga to the physical body, and also many mental health benefits. It is also meditative in practice so gives much of the benefits around clarity of thought.

## **4. Know and Improve Your Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

Daniel Goleman came up with the term Emotional intelligence (EQ) some time ago, and whilst others have built on his work, he remains the world’s leading authority on the subject.

Once you have taken the test, being aware of your EQ will allow you to improve it.

## **5. Reframing**

Reframing a situation that you feel you could have handled your emotions better is known as reframing. By reframing a past situation will help you to deal emotionally with a similar situation in the future. Prof. Peters calls these issues gremlins and goblins. Gremlins can be reframed with a little practice, whereas goblins may be very deep-seated, perhaps stemming from some sort of trauma, and may need professional help to reframe.

## **6. Use anchoring**

Anchoring is a technique used in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and is a way to change your states of mind for both thoughts and emotions. The old phrase “Fake it to make it”, is the outcome here, in fact, you trick your mind so well you can “Fake it to to become it”.

## **7. Don't Sweat the Small Stuff**

We often allow our emotions to get the better of us over the simplest and smallest of things that in the big scheme of things don't really matter. 85% of things we worry about turn out to be positive or neutral. Try writing them all down on a piece of paper then throwing it away.

## **8. Practice Gratitude**

It not always easy to see the positives in life. Due to the Flight/flight/freeze response, we are all hardwired to see the negatives, as we look for threats and danger. However, this can make us focus unnecessarily on the negative and in turn affect our outlook and the way we behave.

Gratitude helps to build relationships, improves health, reduces stress, and, in general, makes us happier.