

MANAGING STRESS

SALLY'S STORY

Sally would describe herself as someone who gets stressed easily. Having to go to new places or meet new people makes her feel tense and wound up. It's a horrible physical feeling. She gets butterflies in her stomach and her heart races. Sometimes it feels like she can't catch her breath and her hands shake. Sally often refuses invitations to social events because she knows she'll be stressed beforehand. Her boss at work can be difficult and so Sally worries about work and feels stressed and overwhelmed by the deadlines she has. She started an evening course in childcare so she can change careers but she's finding the course work difficult and feels anxious and worried about handing assignments.

The stress Sally feels stops her sleeping at night and she ends up feeling tired all day which doesn't help with her concentration. Sally feels pretty sure her psoriasis gets worse when she's stressed but the really annoying thing is that psoriasis also makes her feel stressed.

MINDFULNESS CAN HELP

Mindfulness strategies can really help you to manage stress. At its most basic level, mindfulness brings your thoughts to the here and now. What that means is that instead of worrying about the horrible feelings of stress and anxiety and instead of worrying about the event that triggered the stress response in the first place, you shift your focus to the present moment.

Exercise

1. Imagine a square and breathe in as you visualise one side from bottom to top, breathe out as you imagine looking across the top from one edge to another, breathe in down the side and breathe out across the bottom line. Repeat.
2. Notice your feet on the floor, how the floor feels, how it supports your weight.
3. Notice the sounds around you. What can you hear? Is it loud, is it faint, is it continuous, does the pitch change?
4. Notice what you can see. Pick one thing and study it as if you were seeing it for the first time, the colours, the way the light hits it, the texture and so on.
5. Notice what you can smell or taste. Really focus on your environment, the sounds and the aromas.
6. Your mind will wander, that's part of being human. Just notice it and come back to focusing on the here and now.

This whole exercise should take no longer than a couple of minutes.

IF YOU LIKED THIS, THERE ARE MANY GREAT APPS TO HELP YOU BUILD MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE.