

Mindfulness, Mindful Breathing and Mast Cells



The benefits of mindfulness

Whether your mast cells are reacting to you feeling stressed, or you are feeling stressed because of your mast cells misbehaving, mindfulness can be a wonderful tool to support you on your MCAS journey. In fact, mindfulness and mindful breathing techniques can benefit anyone and everyone.

There is a plethora of research done into how we benefit by doing such practices.



Did you know that mindfulness and mindful breathwork:

- reduces stress
- improves clarity of thought, focus, productivity and concentration
- improves mental health with reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression and other disorders
- improves physical health such as chronic pain, lower blood pressure and improves sleep
- regulated emotions and behaviours
- boosts resilience and increases ability to cope with challenges
- better sense of wellbeing, quality of life
- less feelings of trauma or PTSD
- stronger respiratory function
- better immune system function and protection
- and there are so many other benefits too!

Putting on your oxygen mask

I'd like you to imagine you're a passenger on an aeroplane.

The stewards come to give you a safety briefing before take-off, "blah, blah, Your oxygen mask can be found here. Please ensure you fit your own mask before fitting anyone else's, blah, blah".

Your journey has been going well and you've now been in flight for a good few hours. You start to experience turbulence and the crew become aware of things escalating. To keep passengers safe, they ask for everyone to fit their oxygen mask. They encourage you to fit your mask, before fitting anyone else's. This is something you remember them stressing at time of take-off, during the safety briefing.

If you have been diagnosed with, or suspect MCAS, no doubt you've had a bumpy ride. Often this journey isn't turbulent-free and we can use huge amounts of energy just keeping afloat.

Now, is the time to put on your oxygen mask.

Self-care is paramount.

Let's look after number one.

I've got my mask on and I'm ready to help you.

Anna x

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What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means giving attention to, and experiencing increased awareness of something. For example, your mind 'being full' of interest and curiosity and openness towards something, such as an emotion; an object; an experience; a taste, a noise and so on.

A delightful by-product of practicing mindfulness, comes in the form of having a quieter mind, less mental chatter, less judgement, increased ability to sit with one's thoughts and emotions and physical sensations, less reactivity and an increased ability to think before speaking. There are, of course, many other benefits.



A great mindful exercise for calming and quietening the mind:

- Pick up an object, whether it be a cuddly toy, a crumb from off the floor, or a pebble from outside.
- Now look at this object. Pay full attention to it. Look at it as though you have never seen it before.
- Look at the object with such curiosity, as though you are an intrigued scientist.
- Notice that, whilst you're paying full attention to the object, your mind wanders off, thinking about other things.
- Notice what your mind is thinking about and then bring your attention straight back to the object.
- Every time your mind wanders, show no frustration, for this is the exercise to help experience a slower, quieter mind.
- Look at the object with such interest, that you could almost imagine seeing inside of it.
- Not wanting to change a thing. Letting it be exactly as it is.
- Not wanting to change your thoughts. Letting them come and go, bringing attention and awareness back to the object.

You can do this exercise for 60 seconds or longer. The more you practice, the quieter your mind will become.

Breath

Breath marks our life at birth, along with our passing at close of life. Whilst we live, we breathe and many studies have been done to prove the benefits we can all experience by living in a more mindful way, including incorporating breathwork into our lives. Positive changes can be felt very quickly.

The Universal Breath, also known as 6x6 breathing, to be practiced daily. Think of it as a maintenance practice, to prevent and repair, to encourage long term improved health, both physically and mentally.

If practiced for just 20 minutes per day, makes everything we can measure about a human body better for 24 hours!

It's super-simple and you'll notice a positive difference in no time.



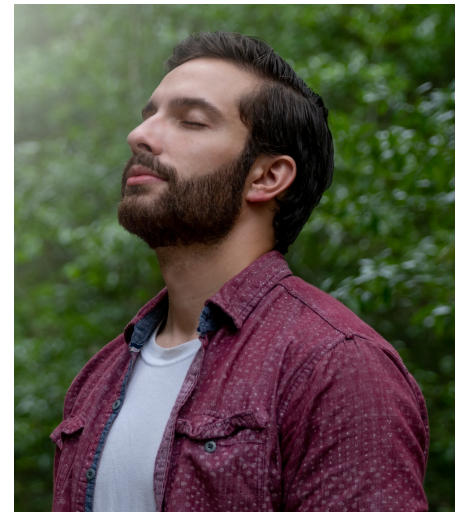
The Universal Breath Instructions:

- Inhale for 6 seconds, exhale for 6 seconds
- Breathe in and out of the nose, if possible
- No holding of the breath, no pausing
- Breathe down to your belly, feeling it expand and contract
- Steady, even breathing
- Relax the back of your throat to make a slight rasping noise as you breath. Ensure this rasp comes from your throat not nasal passages
- For optimum results, do this exercise for 20 minutes per day

Calming your body when you feel it reacting

The faster you can identify your body and/or mind is reacting, the better. In time, you'll become more in-tune with your MCAS reactions and emotional responses. You will hopefully notice your reactions reduce, as you become more aware of your triggers and perhaps become stabilised on medication.

Emotional stress can affect some people's mast cells, and so it's a great idea to support your emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as your physical wellbeing too.



Mindfully noticing a reaction:

I encourage you to practice this and become very familiar with it prior to experiencing a reaction, if possible.

- Safety first- ensure you are safe, have notified someone of your reaction if necessary and have taken any emergency medications if necessary.
- Breathe. Steady belly breathing; filling the brain with oxygen, calming the autonomic nervous system, slowing everything down so you can think clearly and feel safer.
- As you breathe, become mindful of what parts of your body are being affected by the reaction.
- Just like the mindful exercise mentioned above, make a point of being really curious with regard to how that part of you physically feels.
- Notice, in this moment, exactly what the reactions feel like.
- If the reaction could be described, how would you describe it?
- How deep inside can you feel the reaction, or does it feel as though it's coming from the external and pushing in?
- If the reaction had a shape or size, how big would it be and how far would it spread?
- By paying very close attention to the symptom you're experiencing, if the reaction had a colour, what colour would it be?
- Be curious, make space for the reaction, breathe. This too shall pass.
- Notice how fast your heart is beating. Try to slow your breathing down to a nice, even pace of 6x6.
- Become aware of your body as a whole, from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.
- Become aware of the parts that are symptomatic of the reaction.
- Noticing and acknowledging that you are not the reaction.
- Here you are, as a whole, and there's the part of you that's experiencing a reaction. You are not the reaction.

Anna

Hello, I'm Anna from Calmology,

I am passionate about helping people feel safer in their present and future. I have a special interest in trauma and PTSD.

No matter how small our traumas are, if you felt a strong emotion, the chances are that your behaviours, reactions, choices and personality are somewhat shaped by your experience, which in turn, makes you who you are today.

Calmology was founded as a result of my journey with MCAS.

Intermittently, over years, I was housebound and bedridden, completely detaching me from the 'normal' life I once lived. I experienced debilitating and ridiculous symptoms. So ridiculous in fact, that for years, I simply wasn't believed or helped. I could feel my body shutting down and was left fighting for survival on numerous occasions, yet time after time, I was told it was all imagined. I had no idea what was wrong with me. I was desperate.

As I left yet another specialist appointment, I thought 'Wow, if I am capable of making this all up, I'm not safe to be a Mother to my son. What else am I capable of doing?' I became scared of myself. So then I was left with a choice... to let my symptoms take me, or to fight as hard as humanly possible, to be my best advocate, so that I stood a chance of being heard and helped.

I chose to find my fight.

I chose to immerse myself in gaining strong, good, mental health.

I chose to stand tall no matter what.

I learned tips and tricks to help me feel safer in my desperate situation and I believed I was worth fighting for.

"I know it doesn't have to be like this. I know I can be helped, I just don't know how. Please don't give up on me". This was my 'opening line' in all of the tens of appointments I attended.

Finally, I was believed. As a result, I received the support, answers, diagnosis and treatment that I needed. I was worth fighting for.

Calmology therapy is here to help you find your fight. To ride this journey with you. To help you stand tall. To equip you with techniques for freedom and safety, enabling lasting positive change, no matter what your situation.

Calmly,

Anna



Further support



If you have found the information in this pack to be useful and would like to access further information, support and resources, please visit:

www.mastcellaction.org

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