How Mindful Living Can Alleviate Your Stress and Anxiety

By Milton Spett, PhD and Lynn Mollick, PhD

- Do you feel overwhelmed by all the things you have to do?
- Do you find yourself rushing from one thing to the next?
- Are you constantly worrying about bad things that have happened or may happen?
- Do you have aches and pains, rapid heartbeat, difficulty sleeping?

If you have too much to do, too much to think about, too much to plan, you are probably over-stimulating your brain and creating stress and anxiety. Mindful Living reduces the stimulation entering your brain, slows down your breathing and heart rate, reduces your blood pressure, and helps you develop a sense of calmness and serenity.

What is Mindful Living?

Mindful living means focusing your attention on what is happening right now, without judging, without worrying about the past, and without planning for the future.

Mindful breathing means breathing naturally, not too deep or too shallow, and focusing your attention on your lungs as they expand and contract. When your mind wanders, and minds always wander, just bring your attention back to your breathing without judging.

Mindful eating means keeping your attention on the taste, the texture, and the temperature of the food in your mouth. Mindless eating means looking down at your empty plate and wondering how the food got from the plate into your stomach.

Mindful driving means paying attention to the cars in front of you, the homes, buildings, fields, the trees you pass by, and really hearing whatever music or talk radio you are listening to. Mindful driving means not thinking about whether you will arrive at your destination on time or what you will do when you get there.

Mindful showering means thinking about the water as it falls on your head and flows over your body. Is it cool? Warm? Hot? Adjust the temperature until it is just the way you like it, and then enjoy it without thinking about what you will do after showering.

What You Can Do Right Now

Making the transition from stressful living to Mindful Living takes time. You can begin by sitting in a chair for five minutes a day and practicing mindful breathing. Over the following weeks and months you can slowly add more Mindful Living techniques – mindful dishwashing, mindful listening, mindful brushing your teeth, etc. In this way you can gradually make the transition from stressful living to Mindful Living.

Mindful Living reduces the stimulation entering your brain and can greatly reduce your stress and anxiety. But usually Mindful Living is not enough. Many psychologists can teach you Mindful Living techniques. But all psychologists can teach you many other change techniques, including Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Psychodynamic Therapy, and other forms of therapy.

Combining Mindful Living with additional psychological change techniques can help you permanently alleviate your stress and anxiety and lead a happy, successful, fulfilling, and stress-free life.
Milton Spett, PhD, and Lynn Mollick, PhD, are the founders and leaders of the New Jersey Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists. They have given over 50 presentations on Cognitive Behavior Therapy for New Jersey mental health professionals and published numerous articles on CBT in professional journals, including nine articles in the *New Jersey Psychologist*. They will edit “Updates in Cognitive Behavior Therapy,” a special section of the Fall, 2014 issue of the *New Jersey Psychologist*. They maintain a private practice in Cranford, NJ. Their website is [http://www.cbt-nj.com](http://www.cbt-nj.com).