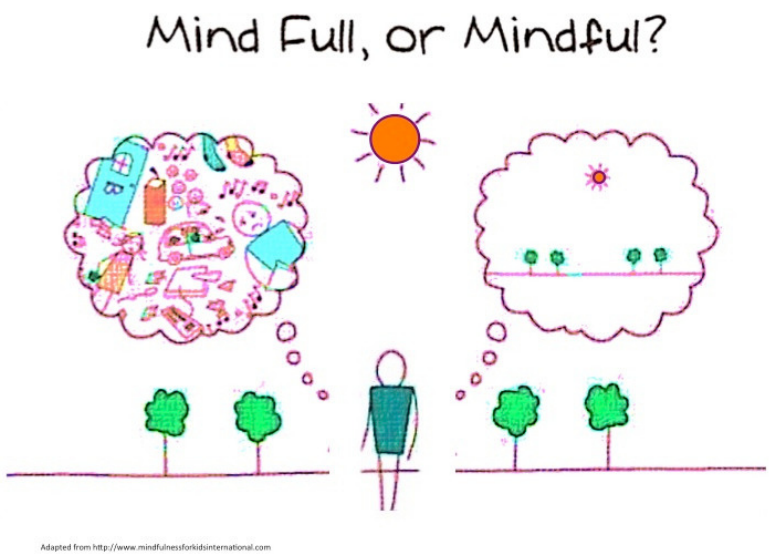
MIND-FULLNESS OR MINDFULNESS?

EASY with SUSAN Mindfulness Series | **ECI Consulting Holdings Pte Ltd**



Mindfulness is not a practice to be perfect or to live a perfect life. Mindfulness is a practice to direct & strengthen your present moment focus & attention inwards, noting & watching - without judging - your breath, body sensations, feelings, & thoughts, without acting upon them or changing them. Mindfulness is a practice to not judge life's perfections & imperfections; but to accept & embrace that life will have imperfections from time to time & to intentionally choose the kinder response towards yourself and others at every moment.

EASY with SUSAN Mindfulness Programs

Assembly talk - 4 main takeaway:
1) Importance of having goals in life
2) Your starting point does not affect your ability to achieve your goals in life
3) Life consists of the nice and the not-nice, & avoiding the not-nice will not help you achieve your goals
4) Breathe / walk when the sand clouds your vision & let the sand settles before reacting.
Include videos and students' on-stage participation.

6-hour Workshops
These can be divided into 1-hour, 40-min or 30-min per lesson. Participants will learn about body scan , mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful eating, & mindful listening using a checklist to help them focus. **PLUS**:
- Having choices and making mindful choices in life
- The automaticity of feelings, thoughts & behaviours, the cons of automaticity, & how to use focus and awareness to counter them and make good decisions and solve problems
- Being non-judgmental and accepting about one's experiences & using mindfulness to bounce back from life challenges.

Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

by Susan Tan

Regular mindfulness practice has been linked to the following benefits:
1. Increased flexibility and adaptability
2. Reduced discriminatory experiential avoidance
3. Reduced stress response
4. Improved memory, learning and problem-solving
5. Improved attention allocation
6. Improved impulse control
7. Improved self-regulation through increased self-awareness and increased ability to suppress knee-jerk reactions

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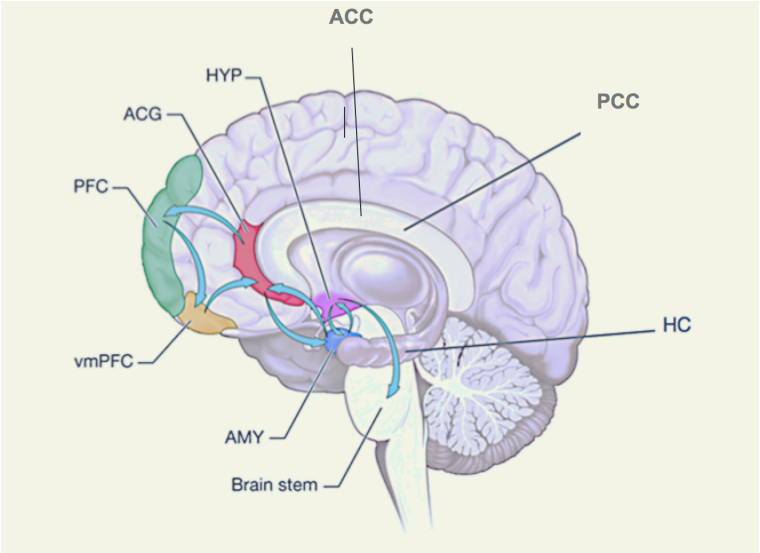
More about benefits of practising mindfulness



Many studies done with MRI scans showed regular mindfulness practices have impact on both the structure of the brain & the activity of the neurons activity in the brain. One such area is the pre-frontal lobe of the brain where MRI scans showed thickening of the pre-frontal cortex (PFC) which is associated with attention & emotional expression. MRI scans also showed increased in gray matter in the hippocampus (HIC) which is associated with learning, memory & self-regulation. Regular mindfulness practices also reduce the gray matter in the amygdala (AMY) which is responsible for the body's stress response – the release of the stress hormones into the blood stream by the pituitary gland activated by the hypothalamus (HYP). These stress hormones then stimulates the adrenal glands to release cortisol, adrenaline & noradrenaline. Adrenaline sharpens one's senses, tightens one's muscles, increases one's heart rate, blood pressure & breathing – preparing the body for flight or fight; whereas the noradrenaline will reverse all these bodily reactions once the threat / danger has passed. Repeated exposure to the stress response or if the stress response is constantly turned on will results in **pro-inflammatory gene transcription** causing diseases subsequently including heart disease, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes / **metabolic syndrome (in children), cancer**, & even dementia. In the meantime, it **affects one's ability to focus, & to** think creatively. It also impairs one's executive capacity, lowers one's motivation, task performance & resilience. In addition, it also **heightened one's emotional reactivity, hence, lowering one's interpersonal skills.** Prolonged experience of stress may result in **high level of anxiety and even depression**. This reduction in gray matter is linked with reduction of stress response.

These studies also showed that regular repetition of mindfulness practice increased activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). ACC is associated with attention allocation, reward anticipation, decision-making & problem-solving, ethics & morality regulation, impulse control, & emotions regulation; hence, increased activity will result in **ability to self-regulate, ability to purposefully direct attention & behaviour, ability to suppress knee-jerk reactions & reduce unchecked aggression, optimal decision-making by learning from past experiences & switching strategies flexibly**. Whereas, mindfulness practice has been shown to **deactivate** the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) which is associated with **daydreaming / mind wandering, spatial memory, maintenance of discriminatory avoidance learning, &the conscious or unconscious mental (self) fixation on either substance craving, a particular viewpoint or activity that one gets lost in them**. This process typically involves emotion processing, social cognition, self-referential orientation, & evaluative/judgment systems. Increased activity in PCC is linked to youth mental health issues including **anxiety disorder & addiction**.

SUSAN HAS BEEN A MINDFULNESS PRACTITIONER SINCE 1992.