



# MINDFULNESS CAMPAIGN

POWERED PANTRIES





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# DEAR PARTNERS,

Your pantries work closely with the Nutrition Education team at the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. Our team is helping pantries and their communities make the healthy choice, the easy choice. One of the programs we implement focuses on supporting pantries in meeting their health and wellness goals by making their pantries healthier. Staff work in partnership with pantries to create a healthy food environment by connecting food choice research with the food pantry environment. We support pantries by also offering nutrition education classes and food tastings.

Each quarter we will be providing toolkits to elevate your knowledge on subjects that increase overall wellness. This fall/winter seasons we are going to provide a toolkit to learn more about mental health. Two factors that may contribute to mental health challenges in our families are stress and food insecurity. Families living in poverty experience several barriers to receiving treatment and accessing mental health services. One of the primary barriers is the lack of health insurance, which prevents families from being able to afford treatment.

The aim of this campaign is to educate, encourage and support communities in managing their stress using mindfulness techniques. Throughout this campaign, there will be opportunities for everyone--including staff, volunteers, and pantry clients.

Best,

Nutrition Education Team  
Community Food Bank of New Jersey





# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The American Psychology Association defines mindfulness as “awareness of one’s internal states and surroundings. Mindfulness can help people avoid destructive or automatic habits and responses by learning to observe their thoughts, emotions, and other present-moment experiences without judging or reacting to them.” It is important to note that mindfulness is a tool or practice to help support positive mental health but does not act as a prevention to or cure for mental health challenges.

Join us as we strive to implement mindfulness strategies to improve the overall wellbeing of students both inside and outside of school. Breath deep, exhale slowly, and get ready to feel more grounded.

Check out the following links to mindfulness activities that anyone can do.

- <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/meditation-to-boost-health-and-wellbeing>
- <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/what-is-mindfulness>



# HERE'S WHERE YOU COME IN.

Pantries have a powerful role in supporting the community's mental health, and emotional well-being.

There are three simple ways you can help support your community members:

- Providing resources about mental health services during your hours of operation.
- Communicate with us! We'd love to know how we can help support your pantry goers individually.
- Share simple strategies to do at home like reflecting on how your day went and what you would like to achieve.
- Model positive coping skills to help manage stress, like going for a walk.



# Managing Stress at the Food Pantry

*It's important that pantry staff focus on their mental health and wellness in order to perform well at the pantry, especially when working with participants. Here are a few tips to managing stress at the food pantry:*



**Wellness Checks:** Ensuring that there are wellness checks with your staff. "How are you today?" "How can I support you?" "Are there areas that you would like support in?"



**Disgruntled Participants:** Understanding that when engaging with disgruntled clients, to not take things personal. Try to be empathetic as their emotions could be stemming from difficulties they may be experiencing.



**Resources:** Providing clients with resources not only pertaining to mindful health but to support their overall needs.



**Planning:** Check that there is a plan prior to operating hours so staff can be prepared. "Okay so it looks like we have only 2 volunteers and 2 staff, here is how we can split today's responsibilities when we open."



**The Four A's:** Educate on "The Four A's": Avoid, alter, adapt, or accept. <https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/ODEO/stress%20management.pdf>



**Mindfulness Activities:** Incorporate activities that support mental health to both staff and participants. This includes: yoga, meditation, art activities, outdoor activities (gardening, walking, etc.), and more.



## How Mindfulness Can Reduce Food Waste

**Food waste** is a continual issue in the United States. A new study reported that nearly 150,000 tons of food is wasted, or about one pound per American daily. Recently, “healthy eaters” have been pinned as the worst offenders, with produce as one of the most wasted foods. But who wants to be told they’re contributing to waste when they’re just trying to eat fruits and vegetables?

While you may be trying to do your body some good by increasing your produce intake, you might need some inspiration to get creative with how you buy and utilize your groceries. Let’s dive into some practical tips that may help you be more mindful of your food choices and reduce the amount of food you waste.

<https://foodinsight.org/3-ways-mindfulness-can-help-reduce-food-waste/>

**“Mindfulness, no matter how you practice it, is a way to cope with the uncertainty, to connect to your body, and generally relieve stress.”**

### **1. Get Creative at Home**

- Challenge yourself one day each week to make meals with the foods you still have — whether that’s some meat in the freezer, canned goods in the pantry or the long-lost veggies in the your refrigerator drawer. You may also want to consider giving your fridge a makeover by putting produce in more visible areas.

### **2. Finish Now or Finish Later**

- Mindful eating is about awareness while eating. A common practice is to notice all the different sensory aspects of food (taste, texture, aroma, etc.) while limiting distractions during mealtimes. Pairing **mindful eating** with **intuitive eating** (which aims to remove food rules and bring back the joy of eating) can help you focus on your hunger cues and be present for your meal. It’s just fine if you end up finishing it all at once — but if you want to save some for later, that works too. Eating leftovers is another way to prevent unnecessary food waste.

### **3. Eat a Variety of Foods — But Eat What You Like Too**

- Try the 3-2-1 method: Choose 3 fats (avocados, nuts, oils), 3 proteins (salmon, chicken, eggs), 3 grains/starches (sweet potatoes, pasta, rice), 3 fruits and 3 vegetables, 2 dairy products, 2 special foods (such as chocolate or a food you’ve never tried before) and 1 seasoning. With this method, you may find that you are utilizing more of your groceries, and it’s more fun to make meals for the week.

# Handouts/flyers

# Mindful Walking

change  
to chill  
by Allina Health

Meditation isn't necessarily about being still. For some people movement is helpful for becoming more aware of their bodies and minds, as well as the present moment. Choose a route, preferably outdoors, where you can walk uninterrupted for at least 10 minutes. Dedicate the time simply to walking, not getting to a destination or running an errand.

Before beginning your walk, stand still for a few moments, focusing on your breathing. Take note of how your entire body is feeling.

As you begin to walk, bring your full attention to the movements and sensations in your body.

Notice the way you carry your body—the feelings in your feet, legs, arms, chest, and head.

Once you have connected with the sensations in your body, begin to open your attention to the sights around you.

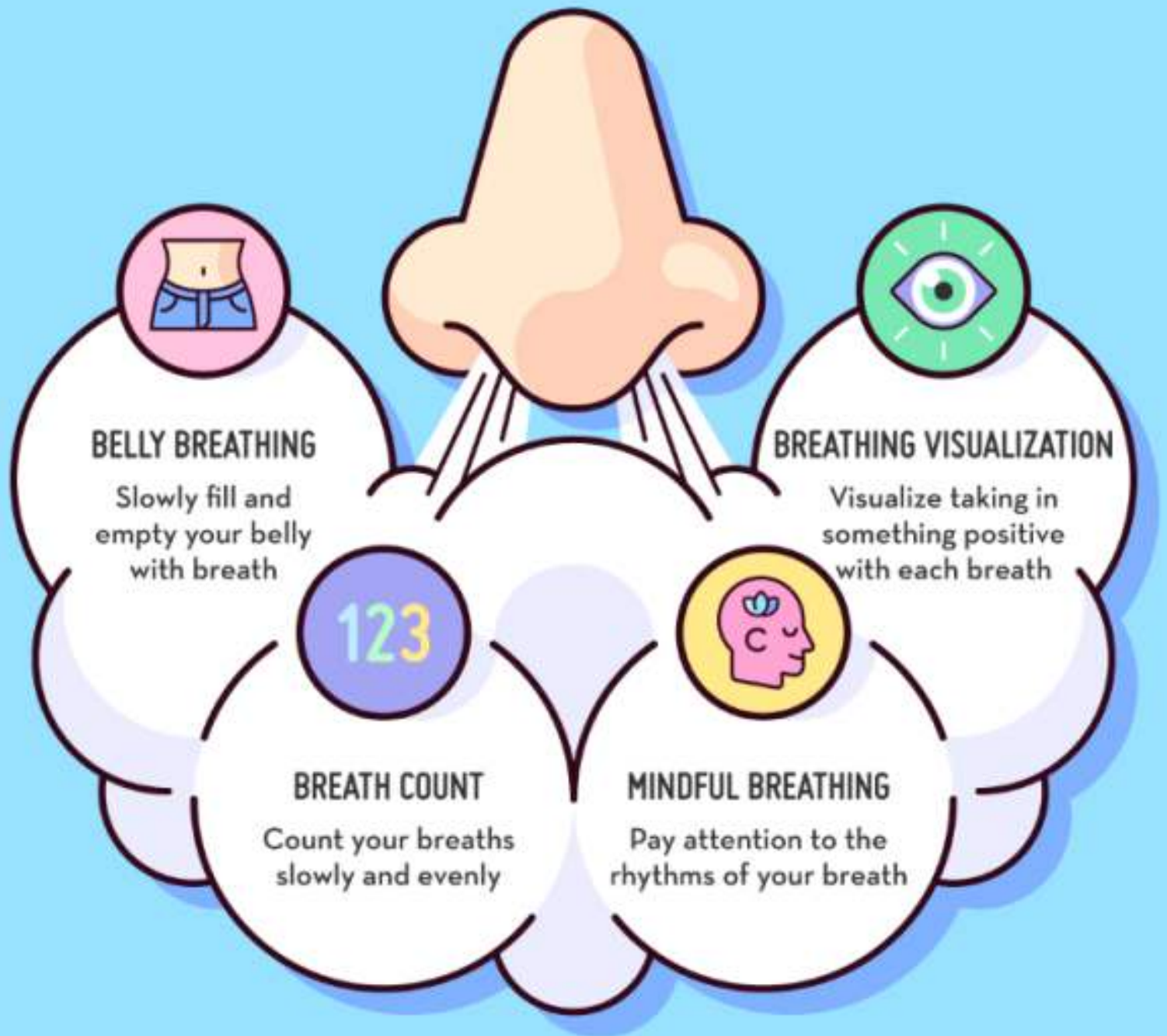
If you find yourself distracted by other thoughts, simply return to the focus on the movements of your feet, your breath, or the sensations in your body.

When you are done, notice how you feel.



# FOR STRESS RELIEF, JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

Start the week calm with four deep breathing techniques.



# HOW BREATHING AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH AND FUNCTION

## AND WHAT YOGA CAN DO TO IMPROVE IT



### LONGEVITY

"The pulmonary function measurement appears to be an indicator of general health and vigor and literally a measure of living capacity" (Framingham study). Those performing pranayama regularly have better respiratory efficiency and stronger respiratory muscles.



### EFFICIENT BLOOD-OXYGEN EXCHANGE

There should be a balance between the amount of blood ready to absorb oxygen and the amount of oxygen supplied by breathing. This can be achieved by deep breathing and altering the body position in relation to the ground.



### ENERGY RELEASE

To sustain life, the body must produce sufficient energy. The amount of energy produced depends on the quality and amount of fuel (food) and the supply of oxygen (ventilation). The science of pranayama ("life force expansion") teaches us how to manage our energy.



### STRESS MANAGEMENT / ORGAN FUNCTION

Every time you Inhale, you stimulate your SNS ("fight or flight" mode) slightly, every time you exhale, you stimulate your PNS ("rest and digest" mode). Specific yogic practices help these two branches work in harmony to regulate individual organ function and homeostasis.



### RESTFUL SLEEP

Brief interruptions in breathing during sleep can lead to poor sleep quality, insomnia and sleep disorders. Simple lifestyle changes and specific yogic practices can help you sleep better by calming the system, cooling the body and strengthening your respiratory musculature.



### BRAIN FUNCTION

The brain requires a lot of oxygen to function properly. In your yoga practice you can work on increasing the breathing capacity to ensure proper brain oxygenation. This will help maintain your mental sharpness, ability to make sound decisions and strong memory.



# Riding the Waves of CHANGE

**Change comes whether we want it or not. Mindfulness can help us handle change more gracefully and in a healthier way. If we can keep an open mind and stay curious about new possibilities, change can actually be the key to resilience. By learning to explore what presents itself, we “ride the waves of change” rather than getting stuck in the undertow.**

**C** – Choose to have an open mind - be open to new experiences and new ways of doing things.

**H** – Have awareness of what is unfolding, moment by moment. The key to mindfulness is noticing the details: What am I thinking and feeling? Which emotions are there? Which body sensations?

**A** – Adapt: If we learn to adapt, allowing new information (and challenges) to expand our perspective rather than shutting them out, we can move along with life's flow.

**N** – Notice how it feels to stay present. At the end of the day, most of us just want to feel better. When we allow ourselves to be gently present, we may notice an increase in energy, happiness, and resilience as we explore the great things in life.

**G** – Grow what you know! Notice any judgments or negative thoughts and see if you can shift into more positive or new ways of thinking.

**E** – Enjoy the good things in life! It's important to be open to change, but that doesn't mean we should be constantly want change or force it on ourselves. Riding the waves of change means being here for what happens naturally in the present moment—not moving toward the next thing and the next thing. Life can so easily slip past us unnoticed. Remember to pause, take a breath, and appreciate the good things happening around you.

*Adapted from Elaine Smookler/Mindful Magazine (mindful.org)*

# Guided Imagery



Guided imagery is the use of relaxation, visualization, and imagination to improve well-being, health, and mood. It can be done alone, with a therapist, or by following a video.

1. Find a quiet place to sit or lie down and become relaxed.
  - Be sure you are comfortable.
  - You can use the Deep Breathing or Tense & Relax Methods to become more relaxed.
2. Clear your mind of distractions and visualize a peaceful scenario. You can try one of these examples:
  - Imagine your favorite place (real or imaginary) or a place you would like to go to, like a peaceful lake, a sunny beach, or a beautiful mountain area.
  - Imagine that your pain or discomfort is an electric current and you can turn it off by turning off the switch.
  - Imagine any pain you have can dissolve into a cloud and it can float away.
  - Imagine having a conversation with your pain or disease; pretend your pain or disease can talk and imagine what it would say and what you could say back.
  - Imagine you are a flower or the sun and you can feel your petals or rays flowing in the air.
  - Imagine you find a key, and then a door that enters a room where you can leave all your pain and discomfort.
3. Whatever you choose to imagine, try to imagine it with all your senses.
  - How warm or cold is it?
  - What do you smell?
  - If you could imagine touching something, how would it feel?
  - What sounds do you hear in your image?
  - What colors do you see?

There is no right or wrong way to practice guided imagery. Start with just a few minutes, and gradually work to build your focus to 10-20 minutes for maximum benefit.

**Use this link to view a video of this technique:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1rRo6cgM\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1rRo6cgM_E)

# Imágenes Guiadas



Las imágenes guiadas son el uso de la relajación, la visualización y la imaginación para mejorar el bienestar, la salud y el estado de ánimo.  
Se puede hacer solo o con un terapeuta.

1. Encuentre un lugar tranquilo para sentarse o acostarse y relajarse.
  - Asegúrese de estar cómodo.
  - Puede utilizar los métodos de respiración profunda o tensión y relajación para relajarse más.
2. Limpie su mente de distracciones y visualice un escenario pacífico. Puede tratar uno de estos ejemplos:
  - Imagine su lugar favorito (real o imaginario) o un lugar al que le gustaría ir, como un lago tranquilo, una playa soleada o una hermosa zona montañosa.
  - Imagine que su dolor o malestar es una corriente eléctrica y puede apagarla apagando el interruptor.
  - Imagine que cualquier dolor que tenga puede disolverse en una nube y puede alejarse flotando.
  - Imagine tener una conversación con su dolor o enfermedad; finja que su dolor o enfermedad puede hablar e imagine lo que diría y lo que podría responder.
  - Imagine que es una flor o el sol y puede sentir sus pétalos o rayos flotando en el aire.
  - Imagine que encuentra una llave, y luego una puerta que entra a una habitación donde puede dejar todo su dolor e incomodidad.
3. Independientemente de lo que decida imaginar, trate de imaginarlo con todos sus sentidos.
  - ¿Qué tan cálido o frío es?
  - ¿Qué huele?
  - Si pudiera imaginar tocar algo, ¿cómo se sentiría?
  - ¿Qué sonidos escucha en su imagen?
  - ¿Qué colores ve?

No hay una forma correcta o incorrecta de practicar la visualización guiada. Comience con solo unos minutos y trabaje gradualmente para desarrollar su enfoque a 10-20 minutos para obtener el máximo beneficio.

# Deep Breathing Method



Deep breathing can help with chronic pain, stress, muscle tension, anxiety, sleep disorders, and other medical conditions. Using this method can help to bring about a relaxation response in your body.

1. Find a quiet place to sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Cushions or backrests can be helpful to maintain posture. If you are lying down, use a pillow to support your head - your face should be parallel to the ceiling.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Feel your breath as it comes in through your nose, fills your lungs, and releases through the exhale.
4. Put one hand on your lower belly. Allow your arm to relax and rest your elbow on the floor or a pillow.
5. As you breathe in (inhale) slowly:
  - Allow your belly to expand like a balloon that reaches forward, sideways, backward, upward, and downward
  - As your belly expands, feel your lungs fill with air
6. As you breathe out (exhale), let your belly relax and slowly let the air in your lungs release. Find a comfortable exhale between 4 to 10 counts.
7. As you practice your breathing, allow your mind to focus on this action alone. When distracting thoughts come up, gently redirect your mind to your breath.
8. Continue these steps for 10 to 20 minutes to maximize the impact of the practice. This can also be a strategy employed in short-term moments to briefly recenter your mind.

**Use this link to view a video of this technique:**

<https://youtu.be/Z8emmFOuhxE>

# Método de Respiración Profunda



La respiración profunda puede ayudar con el dolor crónico, el estrés, la tensión muscular, la ansiedad, los trastornos del sueño y otras afecciones médicas. El uso de este método puede ayudar a provocar una respuesta de relajación en su cuerpo.

1. Busque un lugar tranquilo para sentarse o acostarse en una posición cómoda. Los cojines o respaldos pueden ser útiles para mantener la postura. Si está acostado, use una almohada para apoyar su cabeza; su cara debe estar paralela al techo.
2. Cierre los ojos.
3. Sienta su respiración a medida que entre por la nariz, llene sus pulmones de aire y libérela a través de la exhalación.
4. Ponga una mano en la parte inferior de su vientre. Permita que su brazo se relaje y descance su codo en el piso o una almohada.
5. Mientras inhala (respira) lentamente:
  - Permita que su vientre se expanda como un globo que se extiende hacia adelante, hacia los lados, hacia atrás, hacia arriba y hacia abajo
  - A medida que su vientre se expande, sienta que sus pulmones se llenan de aire
6. Mientras exhala, deje que su vientre se relaje y deje que el aire de sus pulmones se libere lentamente. Encuentre una exhalación cómoda entre 4 y 10 conteos.
7. Mientras practica su respiración, permita que su mente se concentre únicamente en esta acción. Cuando surjan pensamientos que le distraigan, redirija suavemente su mente a su respiración.
8. Continúe estos pasos durante 10 a 20 minutos para maximizar el impacto de la práctica. Esta también puede ser una estrategia empleada en momentos a corto plazo para volver a centrar su mente brevemente.

# Mindfulness Meditation



Mindfulness meditation is a practice of working towards a calm and focused state of mind. Using this practice regularly may help to reduce pain and stress, promote better sleep, and improve memory.

1. Environment plays a big role in mindfulness meditation. If possible, find a place that is quiet, private, and free of distractions.
2. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, keeping your posture aligned and relaxed. If you're lying down, place a pillow under your head and neck for support if needed.
3. Begin by finding awareness of your breath. Place a hand on your belly to feel it expand with each inhale and relax with each exhale.
4. Close your eyes and begin to find a soft focus on your thoughts. Allow each thought, worry, and distraction to come and go freely. Notice the speed of your thoughts. Notice what the thoughts are about.
5. After some time, start to let each of your thoughts float away. Don't ignore them, judge them, or try to stop them – instead, each time a thought comes up, let it go as if it could just float away. Recenter your focus onto your breathing as each thought floats through your mind.
6. Don't worry if thoughts keep coming into your mind, this is normal. Continue the process of gently acknowledging and releasing each one. This will get easier the more you practice.

Just five minutes of mindfulness meditation can have a significant impact on your day. With time and consistency, your practice will become easier and the length of each session can increase to 10 to 20 minutes to achieve maximum effect.

**Use this link to view a video of this technique:**

[https://youtu.be/ssss7Vl\\_eyA](https://youtu.be/ssss7Vl_eyA)

# Meditación de Atención Plena



La meditación de atención plena es una práctica para adquirir un estado mental tranquilo y enfocado. El usar esta práctica regularmente puede ayudar a reducir el dolor y el estrés, promover un mejor sueño y mejorar la memoria.

1. El entorno juega un papel importante en la meditación de atención plena. Si es posible, busque un lugar tranquilo, privado y libre de distracciones.
2. Siéntese o acuéstese en una posición cómoda, manteniendo la postura alineada y relajada. Si está acostado, coloque una almohada debajo de la cabeza y el cuello para apoyarlos, si es necesario.
3. Comience por encontrar la conciencia de su respiración. Coloque una mano sobre su vientre para sentir que se expande con cada inhalación y relájese con cada exhalación.
4. Cierre los ojos y comience a encontrar un enfoque suave en sus pensamientos. Permita que cada pensamiento, preocupación y distracción vaya y venga libremente. Note la velocidad de sus pensamientos. Note de qué se tratan los pensamientos.
5. Después de un tiempo, empiece a dejar que cada uno de sus pensamientos se vaya flotando. No los ignore, juzgue o intente detenerlos; en cambio, cada vez que surja un pensamiento, déjelo ir como si pudiera alejarse flotando. Vuelva a centrar su atención en su respiración a medida que cada pensamiento flote en su mente.
6. No se preocupe si le siguen entrando pensamientos en la cabeza, es normal. Continúe el proceso de reconocer y liberar suavemente a cada uno. Esto será más fácil mientras más practique.

Solo cinco minutos de meditación consciente pueden tener un impacto significativo en tu día. Con el tiempo y la constancia, su práctica será más fácil y la duración de cada sesión puede aumentar de 10 a 20 minutos para lograr el efecto máximo.



# RESOURCES

**Mindfulness** is awareness of one's internal states and surroundings. **Mindfulness** can help people avoid destructive or automatic habits and responses by learning to observe their thoughts, emotions, and other present-moment experiences without judging or reacting to them. **Mindfulness** is used in several therapeutic interventions, including mindfulness-based cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and mindfulness meditation.

If you or someone you know is in need of additional support, please see resources below:

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** The Lifeline provides 24-hour, confidential support to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Call or text 988 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

**Crisis Text Hotline:** if you're in a crisis, you can text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor. You can also message them on Facebook. The Crisis Text Line website has valuable information about coping with challenges such as emotional abuse, the coronavirus, and depression.

**Disaster Distress Helpline:** The disaster distress helpline provides immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. The helpline is free, multilingual, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call or text 1-800-985-5990.

**Find a support group or program:** Talking with people dealing with similar issues can help a lot. Since they've "been there" and are doing the work to heal and recover, they can be a great support system. For more information, visit:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/health-care-or-support/support-group-or-local-program>

**Mental Health America:** Mental Health America offers a variety of resources, such as Self-Help Tools. These include mental health screening tools and worksheets that can help ground you, help you plan for and make positive changes in your lifestyle, and take control of risky behaviors. <https://www.mhanational.org/self-help-tools>