**Mindful Check-In**

The point of the mindful check-in is to increase self-awareness by stopping to “check in” with ourselves. We check in with ourselves to become aware of how we are feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically. Sometimes we begin to experience thoughts, feelings, or sensations without really knowing it, and we can be unaware of these experiences until they become overwhelming. In order to manage stress and anxiety, we have to know when and how we feel stressed, and be able to detect it early, before it builds in intensity. That way we can address it before it gets damaging. Frequent check-ins with ourselves can help us become more aware of the presence of stress and anxiety.

**To practice the mindful check-in, follow these steps:**

1. To begin, close your eyes, or find a spot on the floor to stare at.
2. Begin the mindful check-in by attending to your breath. Notice its qualities, what it feels like. Breathe in, and breathe out, noticing how your abdomen rises with each inhale and falls with each exhale. Engage in this focused breathing for a moment.
3. Body Awareness: Now extend this awareness of the breath to your entire body, just being present with your whole body and noticing any sensations that arise. Do not judge these sensations, just notice anything happening in your body. Maybe you feel some relaxation in some area, or some tension. Maybe there is some discomfort, or another particular sensation. Just be with these experiences for a moment.
4. Emotional Awareness: Now shift your attention to your emotions, and any feelings you may be having, no matter how subtle or strong. Again, do not want to judge these emotions, simply notice and accept their presence. Stay with your emotions for a moment.
5. Thought Awareness: Finally, shift you awareness to your thoughts. Without becoming attached to any of your thoughts, or getting wrapped up in them, simply notice them. Notice them as they arrive, observe them as they play out, and allow them to leave without trying to push them away or cling to them. Stay with your thoughts for a moment.
6. When you are ready, slowly and gently open your eyes and re-enter the room.

**A few mindful check-in tips:**

* The entire exercise should only take approximately three minutes, as it is meant to be a short formal practice.
* If you feel comfortable with closing your eyes during this practice, this is recommended. If not, find a place on the floor to gently focus your eyes on.
* It is recommended that this technique be incorporated into everyday life, whenever it crosses your mind to practice it. It can be good to practice between tasks, during a break, or when you feel yourself becoming stressed out.

(Adapted from Stahl, B. & Goldstein, E. (2010). A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.: Oakland, CA.)