



## Developing Mindful and Reflective Practices

**Being mindful** – is about letting go of self-critique (of past actions) and anxiety (about future challenges) and simply giving your full attention to the present moment. It can help build stamina, resilience and capacity for keeping calm even when under pressure.

**Mindfulness exercises** – for starting or ending a day or an intervention / event to help ensure you are both highly alert and deeply relaxed:

### Breathing deeply:

Standing (or sitting) with your feet parallel and shoulders width apart, relaxed knees, straight back, shoulders lowered and chin tucked in to make the back of the neck straight. Inhale deeply feeling the air filling your whole chest area (to a count of 7) and then exhale fully (to a count of 7). Repeat 10 times.

### Body scan:

Lying (or sitting) down, breathing deeply and regularly, pay attention to each part of your body starting with your feet and travelling in your mind bit by bit up to your head. Notice where you are tense in a certain area (for example, in the hands or shoulders) and consciously let the tension go. Do this for 5 minutes regularly.

### Sensory awareness:

Close your eyes and listen to all the sounds you can hear – from within yourself, the room / immediate surroundings and from further away. Just hear them as sounds rather than interpreting what they are – activate your senses to build your sense of being alert and open to what is around you. You can do a similar process with looking, touching, tasting and smelling.

**Being reflective** – is about letting insights and ideas emerge in the sense of being on a quest for deeper understanding of what happened / is happening. Whilst more conventional thinking is based on logical deduction and knowledge, reflection is based on giving space to intuition and lived experience.

### **Creating the conditions for being reflective:**

- Schedule time for reflection on a regular basis (15 minutes a day or an hour a week)
- Be somewhere where you can be quiet and undistracted
- You can be in silence or have some music in the background if that helps still your chattering brain
- You can sit still and close your eyes or you can be physically active (for example walking slowly)
- Try and empty the mind, just 'be' or, if helpful, frame a leading thought or question that will help you to focus (for example: "*how am I feeling about XXX?*" or "*why does XXX matter so much to me?*" or "*what is needed now for XXX to happen?*")
- Have a pen and paper nearby to capture fleeting thoughts, feelings or insights
- Consider what your reflections have revealed, whether they have brought new insights / ideas and if (and if so, how) they can best inform your partnering practice going forwards

Those who are sceptical about the value of mindful or reflective practices and who see it as wasteful of precious time may not welcome these approaches and this is understandable. It requires a level of belief in their potential and some self-discipline if they are able to strengthen us physically and psychologically and if they are to add depth and value to our day-to-day partnering capabilities.

Being more 'mindful' and more 'reflective' comes over time and with regular practice – we can all get better at operating this way if we consciously and conscientiously try.