

## **CORE SKILL #1: MINDFULNESS**

Mindfulness is the gentle effort of ***paying attention on purpose, non-judgmentally***.

Do you ever feel exhausted and not quite present?

Taking care of complex patients, teams, and organizations can make physicians become exhausted, burned out, and they report becoming "Mindless" -- not present and not Mindful. Practicing Mindfulness in one's life (**being**) is a strong antidote to the difficult work and environments of Medicine (**doing**).

Having the awareness of what you are feeling and your state of mind gives you choices, so you can decide what is truly best for yourself and others, in a particular moment, before you act.

Even one mindful pause per day can lower your stress.

### **TOOLS**

**Mindful breathing:** Tune into your breath, not changing anything, just feeling the sensations of breathing. Follow 1 complete breath cycle with your full attention. Work up to a few minutes at a time of mindfulness practice. Notice when thoughts come, then simply go back to the breath. Don't judge! You can try attending to any other sensation in this way: touch, hearing, vision, etc.

**Mindful eating:** One meal a day, eat 1 or 2 bites silently and mindfully. See yourself slow down, relax, and enjoy the pleasure of eating.

**Mindfulness with family:** With your spouse or child, take a moment when they are talking to gently mindfully look them in the eyes and really "see" them. Just a few seconds, so it's loving and warm.

**Mindfulness at work:** Next time you are going from one patient to the next, pick one sensation to feel for 5 or 10 full seconds. This could be the coolness of the doorknob into the next patient room or the texture of the curtain as you open it to see your next patient.

**Getting started:** Pick 1 way to practice mindfulness (simpler is better) and pick a time of the day and amount of time that you can definitely manage every day for a month. Even if only 10 seconds, try it and see what happens by the end of the month.