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Ageing Well

WP3/ A1- Activity 2

Module F: Compassion Fatigue and the Importance of  
Self-Care

Institute of Development (IoD)

Lesson Plan 3: Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques





## Overview of the module

This module introduces caregivers to mindfulness and relaxation techniques, essential tools for managing stress and preventing compassion fatigue. These practices enhance self-awareness, reduce anxiety, and promote emotional regulation. By learning techniques such as deep breathing, body scanning, and progressive muscle relaxation, caregivers can reduce stress, improve focus, and maintain emotional well-being in their caregiving roles.

### Objective:

To teach caregivers basic mindfulness and relaxation techniques that they can incorporate into daily routines to improve emotional well-being, reduce stress, and maintain resilience.

**Duration:** 60 minutes in total (including all activities)

### Activities:

1. Introduction to Mindfulness (12 minutes)
2. Guided Breathing Exercise (12 minutes)
3. Body Scan Meditation (18 minutes)
4. Feedback and Discussion (18 minutes)

### Materials needed:

For Activity 1: Infographic, whiteboard, markers.

For Activity 2: Comfortable chairs or yoga mats, handouts with mindfulness exercises, audio equipment

For Activity 3: Comfortable chairs or yoga mats, handouts with mindfulness exercises, audio equipment

For Activity 4: Comfortable chairs or yoga mats, handouts with mindfulness exercises, audio equipment



For Activity 5: Whiteboard and markers

### Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will:

- o Understand the benefits of mindfulness and relaxation techniques in managing stress and preventing compassion fatigue.
- o Learn and practise deep breathing, body scan meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- o Recognize areas of tension in their bodies and use mindfulness techniques to relieve stress.
- o Develop a plan for incorporating these techniques into their caregiving routine.

### List of sources and references related to the activity:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delta.

Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2009). *The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions*. American Psychological Association.



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Activity 1: Introduction to Mindfulness



## ACTIVITY 1: Introduction to Mindfulness

### Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

Mindfulness is a practice that involves focused attention on the present moment, fostering a sense of calm and emotional balance. In caregiving, mindfulness helps reduce stress, increase awareness, and promote emotional resilience, which are essential in managing the challenges of caregiving.

### Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Introduce the concept of mindfulness and its relevance to caregiving.
- o Discuss the benefits of mindfulness, such as reducing anxiety and improving focus.
- o Encourage participants to consider the role of mindfulness in supporting well-being.

### Materials Needed:

- o Infographic highlighting mindfulness benefits
- o Whiteboard and markers

**Duration of the activity:** 10 minutes in total



## Description of the process of the activity:

### Step 1: **Overview of Mindfulness**

#### **Introduce Mindfulness:**

- Start by briefly explaining mindfulness as the practice of bringing full attention to the present moment. Emphasize that it involves observing thoughts and feelings without judgment, which can help manage stress and improve emotional well-being.

#### **Discuss Relevance to Caregivers:**

- Connect mindfulness to the caregiving role, mentioning that caregiving often involves high stress and emotional demands. Highlight that mindfulness can provide caregivers with a way to pause, reset, and handle these challenges with greater calm and focus.

#### **Discuss Key Benefits:**

- Outline a few core benefits, such as:
  - **Reducing Anxiety:** Explain that by focusing on the present moment, mindfulness can help caregivers feel less anxious and more grounded.
  - **Emotional Balance:** Mention that mindfulness allows caregivers to observe their emotions without becoming overwhelmed, promoting emotional resilience.
  - **Improving Focus:** Share that mindfulness can help caregivers stay more present and focused, enhancing their ability to respond effectively to caregiving tasks.



**Invite Participation:**

- Encourage participants to share their experiences or thoughts about mindfulness by asking:
  - “Has anyone tried mindfulness or a similar practice before? How did it help you manage stress?”
  - “What area do you think mindfulness could benefit you most in your caregiving role—reducing anxiety, balancing emotions, or improving focus?”



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Activity 2: Guided Breathing Exercise





## ACTIVITY 2: Guided Breathing Exercise

### Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

Deep breathing is a foundational mindfulness technique that promotes relaxation by calming the nervous system. This simple practice allows caregivers to manage stress effectively and can be easily incorporated into daily routines.

### Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Teach participants how to use deep breathing to reduce stress.
- o Provide a practical technique for managing emotions in caregiving situations.
- o Encourage participants to incorporate deep breathing into their daily self-care routine.

### Materials Needed:

- o Comfortable seating or yoga mats
- o Handouts on deep breathing exercises

**Duration of the activity:** 10 minutes in total

### Description of the process of the activity:

#### Step 1: **Guide the Breathing Exercise**

- o **Instruction:** Lead participants through a deep breathing exercise. Instruct them to focus on each inhale and exhale, noticing how their body feels with each breath.



- **Facilitator's Note:** Remind participants to let go of any tension and simply observe their breath.

## Step 2: **Distribute Handouts and Reflection**

**Instruction:** Provide a handout with step-by-step instructions for deep breathing. Encourage participants to try this technique during moments of stress in their caregiving routines.

**Reflection Prompt:** “How do you feel after this exercise? How might this technique help you during stressful caregiving moments?”

- Lead participants through a guided deep breathing exercise. Ask them to focus on their breath and notice how their body responds.
- Distribute a handout with instructions on how to practice deep breathing, encouraging participants to incorporate this into their daily routine.
- Ask participants to reflect on how they feel after the exercise and how they might use this technique during stressful caregiving moments.



## Handout: Guided Breathing Exercise

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### 1. Deep Breathing for Relaxation

Deep breathing is a simple yet powerful technique for reducing stress and calming the mind. Practicing deep breathing can help you feel more grounded and focused in caregiving. Use this guide to practice during the session and refer to it whenever you need a moment of calm.

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### ii. Step-by-Step Instructions

#### 2. Get Comfortable

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

#### 3. Start with a Deep Inhale

Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Feel your chest and abdomen rise as you breathe in.

#### 4. Hold the Breath (Optional)

Hold your breath gently for a count of 2-3 seconds. This pause allows you to fully absorb the breath.

#### 5. Exhale Slowly

Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth, releasing any tension. Feel your body relax with the exhale.

#### 6. Repeat

Continue breathing in this way for 5-10 cycles. With each breath, let go of any stress



or worries.

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### i. When to Use This Technique

Use deep breathing:

- **At the start of your day:** Take a few breaths to center yourself.
  - **In moments of stress:** A few breaths can help you regain calm.
  - **At the end of the day:** Relax and release any tension from the day.
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### ii. Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on how you feel after practicing deep breathing.

- **How did you feel before starting this exercise?**  

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  - **How do you feel now, after practicing deep breathing?**  

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  - **How might you use this technique in your caregiving routine?**  

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Activity 3: Body Scan Meditation



### ACTIVITY 3: Body Scan Meditation

#### Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

Body scanning is a mindfulness practice where participants focus sequentially on different parts of their body to release tension. This technique helps caregivers become more aware of areas where they may hold stress, promoting relaxation and grounding.

#### Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Introduce body scanning as a method for identifying and releasing physical tension.
- o Help participants recognize where they may hold stress in their body.
- o Provide a technique that can be used for grounding and relaxation in caregiving situations.

#### Materials Needed:

- o Comfortable chairs or yoga mats
- o Handouts on body scan meditation

**Duration of the activity:** 15 minutes in total

#### Description of the process of the activity:

##### Step 1: **Guide the Body Scan**

- o **Instruction:** Lead participants through a body scan meditation. Instruct



them to focus on each part of their body, from feet to head, noticing any tension and releasing it as they progress.

- **Facilitator's Note:** Encourage participants to focus on areas where they typically feel tension related to caregiving tasks.

## Step 2: **Reflection and Discussion**

**Reflection Prompt:** Ask participants to take a moment to reflect on their experience, thinking answers to questions such as:

- “Where did you feel the most tension in your body?”
- “How did focusing on these areas help you relax?”

Facilitate a brief group discussion or partner sharing on their experiences.

Discuss how this practice can help in grounding and relaxation.



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Activity 4: Feedback and Discussion





#### ACTIVITY 4: Feedback and Discussion

##### Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

This final discussion gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their experience with mindfulness and relaxation techniques. Sharing insights encourages accountability and helps caregivers consider how these techniques might be integrated into their daily caregiving routines.

##### Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Reflect on the effectiveness of mindfulness and relaxation techniques in reducing stress.
- o Discuss potential challenges and benefits of incorporating these techniques regularly.
- o Encourage participants to set goals for practicing mindfulness daily.

##### Materials Needed:

- o Whiteboard and markers

**Duration of the activity:** 15 minutes in total



### Description of the process of the activity:

#### Step 1: **Open Floor Discussion**

**Instruction:** Begin with an open discussion, inviting participants to share their thoughts on the mindfulness and self-care techniques covered. Encourage them to discuss which techniques felt most helpful or interesting.

**Prompts:**

- “Which technique did you find most effective for reducing stress?”
- “What challenges might you face in incorporating these practices into your daily routine?”

#### Step 2: **Reflecting on Incorporating Mindfulness**

**Instruction:** Transition into a focused discussion on how they can incorporate these techniques into their caregiving routines. Guide participants to think about the long-term benefits of regular mindfulness practice.

**Prompts:**

- “How could a few minutes of mindfulness fit into your daily caregiving tasks?”
- “What positive changes would you hope to see from a consistent mindfulness routine?”
- “How might regular self-care and mindfulness impact your energy or focus over time?”

#### Step 3: **Take-Home Reflection: Personal Self-Care Goals**



- **Instruction:** Ask each participant to write down 2–3 personal self-care goals that they feel motivated to implement. These goals will act as a take-home plan to remind them of their commitment to self-care.
- **Sample Goal Ideas:**
  - “Practice deep breathing for five minutes at the start of each day.”
  - “Take a short afternoon break to do a grounding exercise.”
  - “Once a week, reflect on my self-care progress and adjust as needed.”



## 1. Infographic:

### Mindfulness Benefits

