

## A Mindful Lockdown?

You hear about Mindfulness mentioned everywhere these days. Many books and apps are available. As a Mindfulness teacher, I offer Mindfulness sessions to people who would not otherwise be interested in engaging with the Chaplaincy where I work.

You may know that Mindfulness has its origins in Buddhism, but has been developed in healthcare for the benefit of those with physical and mental health conditions. As such, it has received appropriate academic scrutiny on both sides of the Atlantic.

But would it be useful to us as Christians? I think it would, in fact I think it already is. I am sure that many of us practice Mindfulness without realizing. For example, during your daily walk, have you been power walking with your headphone in, or walking more slowly taking notice of your surroundings. Either could be done mindfully as you bring your awareness to the present moment. Maybe you are in the flow of a power walk or run and feel stress melt away as you step out and breathe deeply. Or maybe you notice the small changes that occur daily as you walk around your neighbourhood. If you are able to walk in the local park, countryside or even in your own garden, you will notice that God's creation has blossomed during the weeks of lockdown. Spring as I've never observed it before!

Gratitude journals are encouraged to improve your mental health. Have you come across that idea before? Prayers of thanksgiving? Count your blessings? Yes, even in our current situation. The Ignatian practice of the Examen or Review of the Day also encourages this. You can do it in different ways. One way - each evening, ask yourself what is it that you would like to give thanks to God for today; then bring to God anything that you found difficult, or did not go so well; then ask for his presence with you for tomorrow. You can do this in less than 10 minutes. Look at [www.pathwaystogod.org](http://www.pathwaystogod.org) for more information.

Have you tried to meditate? I say 'tried' because most people find it difficult and get distracted easily - that's normal! However, a short meditation, even one minute, can help to keep you calm. Focus on your breathing and where you are most aware of it - around your mouth and nose? In your chest? Or in your abdomen? Don't try and change the rate or depth of your breathing, observe it just as it is. After a minute or so, bring your awareness back to your surroundings - and you will feel more relaxed. There are a range of apps that will help you to meditate. Headspace and Calm have been recommended to me. I came across Space to Breathe at Greenbelt. They share useful resources on [www.spacetobreatheuk.com](http://www.spacetobreatheuk.com).

Before lockdown, plans were well underway to offer a Mindfulness Quiet Day in June. I wonder if you would now be interested in an online Mindfulness session of no more than 2 hours, but with activities and ideas for you to continue afterwards. Please contact me if you are interested [jan.scott@live.co.uk](mailto:jan.scott@live.co.uk).

Another opportunity is to do a Retreat in Daily Life (RIDL) online. More information can be found at [www.manresalink.org.uk](http://www.manresalink.org.uk).

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