



17 Seconds to Mindfulness

Are you suffering from low mood and finding it difficult to think positively about the future? It can be a difficult cycle to break. One of the reasons we get into this cycle is because we are wired to notice threat, danger and bad feelings. This is completely normal and healthy, and it's what has kept us alive for thousands of years, it's our inbuilt survival system. The problem is that while it is our human nature to notice the bad we may get into the habit of only recalling and remembering the negative elements of the day. What you focus on is what gets your brain fired, wired and strengthened, those parts of the brain switch on and the neurons start firing, lasting connections will be made, this strengthens your memory and influences what the brain will recall in the future, whether that is positive or negative. So how do we change our thought patterns to think more positively, we need to focus on the things around us that bring us pleasure or make us happy, these could be objects around the home photos, a pleasant view out of the window or when we are outside in nature. If we can focus on these surroundings and the things in them, begin to stir up the happy emotions that go with those surroundings, then we can begin to change our brains to think more positively.

Everything you experience will alter the physical structure of your brain and it only takes 17 seconds of focusing on a happy event or your surroundings to change from negative thought patterns to positive ones. Science tells us, if we can do this four times a day (68 seconds) the connections between the neurons will become stronger and ensure that they stay. Cells that fire together, wire together and stay together.

17 seconds to mindfulness practice

Set an alarm for 17 seconds. Sit or stand quietly and take a look around your surroundings, begin to notice all the things that make you smile or invoke a happy feeling or memory that you can hold onto, try not to allow your mind to wander off into some other thought, just keep focusing on that feeling of happiness that your surroundings bring you. Continue with this for the duration of seventeen seconds and the alarm goes off. For children, get them to talk about something they really enjoy doing for 17 seconds, or 68 if you have the time.

You may find this difficult if you are not used to practicing mindfulness exercises but with practice over time you can change your negative thoughts by using this simple 17 second brain break.

Benefits of Mindfulness

- Improves your self-esteem
- Builds resilience
- Strengthens connections
- Stimulates optimism and gratitude

