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Welcome. I'm Kelly Baron. I'm an eM life instructor and I'm delighted to be here for this webinar. And I'm going to begin with a question. Have you ever been out running errands, pulled into your driveway, and realized you had no idea how you got there? Sometimes that happens when we're lost in thought or worried about someone or something or maybe you've been in a meeting thinking about a list of to do calls. You had to make emails you needed to send or kids you needed to pick up after school. And suddenly you realized you're not tracking anything that's being said in the meeting.

This happens to all of us. It is so common to get taken away from the present moment with a jumble of thoughts about our tasks. Our everyday stressors, our minds literally can become full of worry. But there's another way we can think about being mindful. And that's what we're going to explore together today, how to develop the skill of mindfulness, which we can think of as the awareness that arises when we pay attention in a particular way. When we pay attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity without judgment, mindfulness helps us train our minds to become more present, more focused. It helps us become more aware and clear about the thoughts, the physical sensations and the emotions that arise within us. So, we can learn to respond to them rather than react to them.

Practicing mindfulness this way can reduce the distress we all feel at times. And as we learn to work with our stressors more skillfully, we might find that we have more to offer, not only to ourselves but also to others and the world around us, we may even find that we can enjoy our lives more. So, we'll be spending our time together talking about stress. What happens when we feel out of balance, how it affects our well-being. I'll be sharing a mindfulness practice with you that you can use any time to find relief from stressors that might arise in your day. And then finally, we'll spend some time learning about some of the benefits you can enjoy through the many eM Life programs that support your mental, emotional and physical well-being. Let's get started.

What exactly is stress? Well, essentially, it's a feeling of, of mental, emotional or physical tension and it's a normal reaction to the events in our lives, whether that's meeting a deadline, racing to the dentist or even riding a roller coaster. And we tend to think all stress is bad, but actually, it happens on a curve if we didn't have any stress, we'd feel pretty bored and when that happens, we're likely to feel unmotivated or disengaged in our lives. Have you ever felt that way? Like you just didn't have enough excitement in your life and then maybe at times you felt like you were able to meet a challenge. And that's what happens when we're at the top of the stress curve, we feel focused, motivated, energized and capable of handling the stress we encounter. And this is temporary stress. Think about the way you felt when you did have a deadline at work or when you had a presentation to make or even when you took a driver's test at the DMV, this kind of stress actually energizes us.

And then there's another kind of stress that's on the other end of the curve. And this kind of stress might be chronic, maybe it's a situation where we're caring for a loved one or we're in a position at work where we don't feel so supported or maybe we simply have just too much on our to do list. And it's been this way for weeks or maybe even months or years. And in these sorts of situations, we might feel overwhelmed, we might feel as though we can't handle the stress that we're facing. And this kind of stress leads to dis ease it, dampens our immune

system, our productivity, it steals our joy. And it also puts us at risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes or heart disease or depression, no matter where you are on this stress curve. One of the ways we can learn to handle it more confidently is to become more mindful and more aware of how stress is affecting us. And the way we experience stress is, it's very personal, it's individual. Some of us might get headaches or experience stomach upset. Some of us might feel anxious or think negatively about people situations we're facing. Another way we might experience stress is that we engage in unhelpful behaviors like overeating or scrolling through social media. And when we do this, we are actually trying to relieve some of the pressure we feel. But often it just makes us feel worse in some ways. We might experience all these facets of emotional mental and physical reactions to stress.

So how can mindfulness help? Well, mindfulness helps us become more aware of how stress is affecting us. And with that awareness, we give ourselves a chance to choose how we want to respond. We might, for example, choose not to dwell on naked thoughts or we might choose to go for a walk with a friend to relax and recharge. We might ask a colleague to help us at work or maybe we ask our partner or kids to lend a hand unloading the dishes. As I'll show you in a few more moments, we might even practice mindfulness to help us get some relief in the very moment in which we are experiencing our stress and doing this not only creates greater awareness, but it also helps us steady ourselves when those difficult moments arise. And you know, numerous studies in the last 20 years have shown that mindfulness has multiple benefits, physically helps us relax. It lowers blood pressure, reduces inflammation. It also helps us work with our pain and reduces the felt sensations of pain. We've also learned that mindfulness has mental benefits. It certainly helps us focus and increases mental flexibility, allowing us to problem solve better.

And it also helps us emotionally. We can learn to better regulate our emotions. We can work with our anxiety better and reduce it. We can also boost our happiness through the practice of mindfulness. And we can use certain practices to increase our acceptance, our kindness, our compassion for ourselves and others. And that curiosity and openness we use when we practice mindfulness can help us become more clear on what's really going on in a situation. We can even begin to explore our thoughts and feelings and our sensations and understand how they contribute to our stress. And from that more centered and focused place, we can create a greater sense of ease. So, the next time, something potentially stressful happens, we can put mindfulness into practice, we can take more effective action, have a more balanced perspective and we can become more creative about how to solve a problem that's arising in the moment.

And at E M Life, we offer mindfulness practices in a number of different ways. We offer short mindfulness breaks throughout the day. Like a practice we'll do together in just a couple of moments, and these are designed to be easy and mobile so you can apply them any time you might need to. And then we also offer longer multiple session, online classes, many of which are themed. So, for example, you could take a course in mindfulness at work where you learn a number of different techniques and skills and practices over time. And lastly, we have short sessions that are live every day, multiple times a day called mindful dailies. And in these sessions, a live expert instructors guide you. They practice with you and help you apply mindfulness in your daily life. And these mindful dailies are just 14 minutes long. That's just 1% of your day. Can you imagine if you practiced mindfulness? Just 1% of your day, what might shift for you, how it might boost your mental, emotional and physical well-being?

And by the way, if you've never done mindfulness before, if you're entirely new to it, you're in the right place. In fact, I'll show you how these programs work and what it looks like on the E M Life

platform in this short video. So, you can see how you can get started. And then after the video, I'll invite you to join a brief mindfulness practice that you can use any time throughout your day.

You're probably wondering how can I get started practicing mindfulness. It's actually pretty simple. All you need is a few minutes, something to focus on and a bit of curiosity, mindfulness is about training our attention to be aware of our inner experiences without being overwhelmed by them. You can do this any time any place. It doesn't require any equipment or sitting with your legs crossed in a beautiful nature scene. Keep things simple by following a few tips to help minimize distractions and focus your attention first. You can practice mindfulness anywhere, even loud and busy places like the office or the subway or your doctor's waiting room. But it's easier if you have a quiet place without noisy distractions. A second tip is to either close or halfway, close your eyes. What's in plain view is distracting. Once our attention is drawn away, it can be harder to refocus on our practice. The third tip is to balance being comfortable and staying awake, practicing while sitting in a chair and having both feet stable on the ground can help your body stay comfortable and your attention alert. Most importantly, don't worry about getting it. All right. Remember, you're training your attention and becoming more aware of what's happening, moment to moment, whatever happens. Keep a sense of humor and begin again. It's helpful to have some guidance to learn how to do this. Find a live class where you can participate with experienced teachers and ask questions. We hope to see you in a live class soon.

Now that you've gotten a glimpse into how to get started, are you ready to practice a bit with me? I'm going to guide you in a practice called Stop. And that's an acronym for Stop, take a breath, observe and proceed. And this is a practice that you can do in a couple of seconds, a minute or five minutes or longer depending on how much time you have. And it's a great tool to help you hit the reset button any time you feel overwhelmed by stress or simply want to be more present and enjoy the moment.

So, let's begin. I'll invite you just to stretch up, lengthen your spine and then settle in, soften your body around the structure of the spine. You can do this practice with your eyes open or close, whatever suits you. And the first step in this practice is just to stop, feel the weight of your body in the chair or whatever surface you're sitting on. Notice the contact points of the lower back or the back of your legs against the chair and just feel yourself resting. We might even relax the body a bit, maybe softening the muscles in the face, relaxing the jaw, letting your arms just drape along the sides of your body, even relaxing the muscles in your abdomen. So, we're stopping, we're taking a break, just relaxing the body. And in this next part of the practice, we're going to just take a breath, take a full breath in really connecting with the inhalation and the refreshment of a new breath entering the body and then really connecting with that sense of letting go on the exhalation. And you might want to do that two or three times if it's comfortable for you. And now you can let the breath fall into a natural rhythm and just observe that movement of the breath in the body. You might notice the rising and falling of the breath in the abdomen. Maybe you notice the breath in your chest moving up and down in and around the chest. You might also notice a breath at the tip of the nose, the gentle felt sensation of air moving in the nostrils and out of the nostrils and choose one of those spots and just observe the breath moving through the body. We also can observe other aspects of our experience. In fact, you might have noticed as you rested your attention on the breath, you're having thoughts. So just notice, what am I thinking? Is your mind busy with lots of thoughts or are there just a few coming and going? We might also notice a sound in the environment in which we're sitting or the temperature of the air around us that warmed the coolness of the air touching our skin. We might even notice an emotion, maybe a sense of contentment or ease. Or maybe we feel a bit bored, whatever you're noticing, it's all good. Just observe and you might observe once more,

the body resting in the chair, feeling the weight of the body. And the next part of this practice is just proceed. So, whenever you're ready, you can open your eyes if they were closed.

And I'm curious, what was that practice like for you? Did you notice a shift? Did you feel that you felt more grounded or settled? Maybe you just gained awareness that your mind was busy, or your body was restless or tired, whatever you noticed is good because that's the awareness that we're cultivating as we practice mindfulness. And that awareness really allows us to respond to the stressors we experience in our lives. And if you're feeling motivated to explore a bit more of mindfulness, we have lots of ways that you can do that. You can access more mindfulness programs on our web based platform and on the E M Life mobile app. And you'll find a wealth of content there to help you with everything from getting a better night's sleep, reducing anxiety.

We also have programs that can help you with parenting and caregiving. Mindfulness really has practical applications in all areas of our lives across our lifespans. And if you're wondering where to start, I might suggest sign up for a mindful daily, get guidance by an instructor such as myself. You might also want to access some of our on demand content which you can use any time throughout your day. And to begin with, I might suggest that you sign up from your desktop at first and create your EM Life account there. And that way when you download the app, you'll have your account already created. If you do sign up from your phone, remember that you want to sign up first with an employee account rather than a personal account. And this ensures that you'll receive all the eM Life benefits free of charge. You'll just need to ask for your organization's ID, which you can get from your H R department or your E A P.

And once you log in the learning series is a good place to begin there, you'll find a series of short videos which highlight the benefits of mindfulness, and they'll also tell you a bit about what to expect once you begin to practice. And yes, your mind will wander when you practice mindfulness, you'll still have thoughts. But over time you'll learn that you'll be able to work with those thoughts with greater ease, even the ones that maybe are stressful. And if you have questions about any of the eM Life programs, specific practices or mindfulness in general, feel free to contact us at support at e mindful dot com. We'll be glad to help. Thanks so much for joining me today. I hope you found this helpful, and I hope you enjoy exploring mindfulness and life be well.