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This article is about how our minds can help heal our bodies. Yes, it's true – our minds and our bodies interact. So read on to discover how we can use our minds to help our bodies.

And don't forget, our last article discussed our brains and how plastic they are! [Click here](#) to find out more.

If you're interested in our previous articles, please click [here](#)

Mind Over Body ... Well, Mind AND Body Actually

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If you've got a suggestion for an article, or there's something more you would like to hear about, please send us an email by clicking [here](#)

Did you know that the way we think and how we perceive can affect our physiology? Fascinating, isn't it? Recent research suggests that our mental and physical health is affected by the way we perceive and relate to it. This indicates that our minds truly can influence our bodies.

As an example, imagine the following two scenarios.

1. You've got a headache (and no access to pain relief) – your day isn't that busy, and during the day you have thoughts like "My head really hurts" "I'm sure I've never had a headache as bad as this before" "This feels like a 10/10 headache" "Ugh, I feel so awful" "I can feel it at my temples, behind my eyes ... when will this end?"

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2. You've got a headache (and no access to pain relief) – you have a busy day that is jam packed, and during the day you have thoughts like “Wow, today's going quickly” “Now that I've had a few seconds spare, I'm noticing my headaches still there” “Now, what next?”

Can you guess in which scenario your headache would feel better or worse? Even though it started out the same in both scenario's! And I'm wondering if you can think of an occasion where your pain, anxiety, depression, or even worry was better because you were busy, or you were distracted, or you were focused on someone or something else. And maybe you can think of an occasion where your pain, anxiety, depression, or even worry was worse because you were focused on it, attached to it, or had 'become it'.

Whilst we're not suggesting that illnesses are 'all in the mind', or suggesting that you can 'control' symptoms such as pain, anxiety and depression ... what we are suggesting is that we can influence symptoms by how we think and by what we perceive.

One way of influencing symptoms is by using mindfulness, or mindfulness meditation.

So what is mindfulness? Well, it's not relaxation ... and I think this is where people get confused.

Mindfulness :

- teaches us how to be more open and attentive to our experiences (even difficult ones)
- means practicing acknowledgement of our present moment experience (most of us try to make the unpleasant experience go away)
- teaches us to observe our present moment attitudes and behaviours towards ourselves, and teaches us to be more compassionate and kind to ourselves (how many times do you add to your difficult situation by being hard on yourself?)

- helps us to let go of our labels and judgements, and see our reactions as normal in response to unpleasant events (rather than thinking they're “bad” or “awful” or that we're “bad” or “awful” or “weak” for having them)
- helps us to understand that our difficult thoughts, feelings and urges are transitory – they will come, and they will go – this can often help the thoughts, feelings and urges pass more quickly (our distress that our anxiety, depression, pain or stress isn't going away can keep them from shifting)
- also helps us to focus on what 'workable' action we can take vs the current 'unworkable' actions we might be engaging in (such as overthinking, dwelling, catastrophising, staying in bed, etc)

But mindfulness, while it sounds easy, takes practice (just like learning to play a musical instrument would take practice ... lots of it in my case). Maybe we should refer to it more as Mindfulness Training!

So consider your thinking patterns, your feelings, your perceptions, and your behaviours. If you think working with a health professional to be more mindful will help you, then contact us on 0488 954 195, amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

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