

## ***Step out of Automatic Pilot***

This activity is designed to bring mindfulness into your everyday life.

**Choose one activity each day that you often do in automatic pilot.** Activities such as brushing your teeth, eating a meal, attending lectures, showering, preparing for bed, walking in the park are suitable. It is probably best to stick with one activity for a week or longer rather than changing the activity regularly.

**When the time comes for that activity, do it in a fully mindful frame of mind.** Pay attention to the activity itself, what is happening right now. With teeth brushing you might feel the touch of the brush on each tooth and the gum, note the noise it is making become aware of the taste of the toothpaste. Just like in the breath awareness, if you find yourself thinking of other things then note it for a second or two and return to the sensations associated with brushing the teeth.

If the activity is likely to be longer than a few minutes such as eating a meal or walking in the park then **practice the first two minutes mindfully**. Pay attention to what you see, the sounds you hear, the feeling of your clothes as you walk. What can you smell.

As a general aim, stick to the sensations present at the time, touch, sight, sound, taste, smell. You may also note what emotions and bodily feelings you have such as breathing faster or muscle tension.

At the end of the exercise continue the next activity mindfully for as long as that mindfulness lasts.

## ***Automatic Pilot***

In a car, we can sometimes drive for miles "on automatic pilot," without really being aware of what we are doing. In the same way, we may not be really "present" moment-by-moment, for much of our lives: We can often be "miles away" without knowing it.

On automatic pilot, we are more likely to have our "buttons pressed": Events around us and thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the mind (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old habits of thinking that are often unhelpful and may lead to worsening mood.

By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice; we do not have to go into the same old "mental ruts" that may have caused problems in the past.

The aim mindfulness is to increase awareness so that we can respond to situations with choice rather than react automatically. We do that by practicing to become more aware of where our attention is, and deliberately changing the focus of attention, over and over again.