

**“I’m late, I’m late!”...exclaimed the White Rabbit, before leading Alice down the rabbit hole into Wonderland where she encounters the March Hare and a cast of extraordinary characters.**

And should there be a lesson to take from the White Rabbit, the March Hare or any present at the famously disorderly Tea Party, it’s that in busy times, there is virtue in slowing down.



Modern living often gives rise to unavoidable stresses and strains, but by increasing our awareness by paying attention and reflecting and responding rather than automatically reacting, we can become better equipped to meet these challenges. One increasing phenomenon throughout the modern workplace is **‘burnout’**. This is when unresolved, prolonged and excessive stress lead to emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion, which in turn can affect our physical and mental health.

So what can we do to slow down, to become more mindful and reduce the impact of stress in our workplaces and wider world? One of the best ways is to **PAUSE**. Let’s consider the acronym:

## **P**resent **A**cept **U**nderstand **S**enses **E**ngage

**Present.** To a greater or lesser degree, we all instinctively know what it means to be mindful. Leading mindfulness figure Jon Kabat-Zinn succinctly describes it as, “...paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in **the present moment**, and non-judgementally...It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold in moments.”

**Accept.** Put simply, mindfulness is about being aware of, and noticing our present moment by moment experience as it’s happening, alongside **accepting** that experience with an open-minded curiosity and without judgement.

**Understand.** This acceptance can be further demonstrated with a very simple example: picture a chair. The chair is still a chair, with all of its inherent properties, whether you **understand** that it is or not. The world is as it is, regardless of our place in it.

**Senses.** Mindfulness practice helps us to take notice of our senses. By developing self-awareness, we can gradually learn to **‘come to our senses’** and to more easily pay attention to what’s already there. This enables us to be grateful for what we have, alongside helping us to accept and meet the challenges of the present. Regular mindfulness practice can therefore help us to build resilience to become better equipped to meet these challenges.

**Engage.** Slowing down and pausing then, is ultimately about how we present to the moment that we’re in. By **engaging** with the moment as if it were the first time of experiencing it, we can reflect and respond, rather than react.

### Putting that together:

Allow yourself a little time. Take two breaths to pause, accept what’s happening right here in the present moment without judgement, take heed of your senses, and engage with the moment as if was the first time.

In our busy lives as we run around reacting, expending energy, and constantly finding things to do, remember – at times, it’s better for us to let things happen, rather than try to make them happen.

And in recognition of spring, and our friend the March Hare, we’ll end on a quote from Matsuo Basho that should provide some food for thought: **“Sitting quietly, doing nothing, spring comes, and grass grows by itself”.**

**For more tips on mindfulness practice, see December’s e-zine, entitled, “The Best Present is the Present”, also available to view in the Resource library section of the Inspire Support Hub: [www.inspiresupporthub.org](http://www.inspiresupporthub.org)**