

Steps to Wellbeing

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Course Workbook

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Mindfulness Course Workbook

This workbook contains notes and quotes to back up the discussions that we have in class. Please take the time to read the relevant session notes after each class. The homework for each week is detailed at the end of each set of session notes.

You may find it useful to keep notes of your experiences as the course progresses. Any notes you make are entirely to facilitate your own learning process and there will be no need for them to be seen by anyone else. If you wish, you can use your notes to remind you of your experiences during the week, and any questions you have, which you may want to bring to class.

Do share your experiences of the course with us as the weeks pass. If you are experiencing any difficulties in connection with the course, please contact us to discuss things. We will be available for 15 minutes before and after each session if you would like to speak with us then.

We are looking forward to working with you and hope that the course is a useful and enjoyable learning experience for you.

The majority of the material in this handbook is reproduced from:

'Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression- A New Approach to Preventing Relapse.' Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, John D. Teasdale. The Guilford Press. 2002.

The Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practise, University of Wales, Bangor.

We would like to express our gratitude for their permission to allow us to make use of this material.

Safety and Wellbeing

Due to the format of our courses we are not able to check in with each person individually. If you feel at risk to yourself or others, or feel at risk from anyone else, please utilise your risk management plan agreed at assessment.

The services below can also be used for support:

- ◇ Contact a friend or family member for support
- ◇ **Connection** a local 24/7 helpline run by Dorset HealthCare: **0300 123 5440**
- ◇ **Samaritans** (24 hours) Telephone **116 123** or e-mail jo@samaritans.org
- ◇ Self-present at **The Retreat, Hahnemann Road, Bournemouth BH2 5JW**
- ◇ NHS out of hours support: **111** or **999** (in the case of an emergency)
- ◇ Your GP or other healthcare professionals involved in your care e.g. The Community Mental Health Team
- ◇ Present at your local hospital Accident and Emergency Department in an emergency

Please make a note of your useful telephone numbers, so that you have them to hand when you need them. You may want to write them in the space below, or save them in your phone so they are ready to use. (E.g. Family/ Friend contact details, your GP / CMHT telephone number?)

NOTES:

Personal Safety Plan

Signs that my mood is worsening:

What Steps can I take? Who is my support?

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Pre-Course Questions

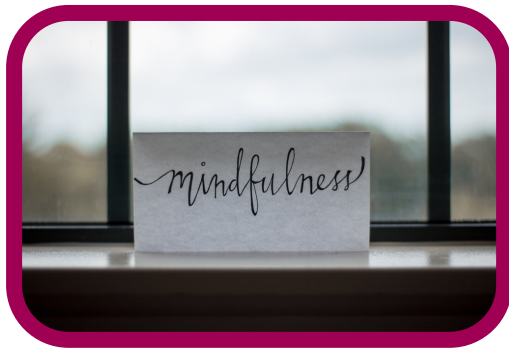
Before starting the course you may find it interesting and useful to write down your responses to the following questions. You can then reflect back on your original reasons for coming on the course when you have completed the class.

What has drawn you to come on this mindfulness course?

What are my expectations of the course?

What do I want or hope to get out of doing the course?

What is Mindfulness?



Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

'Mindfulness is the willingness and capacity to be equally present to all events and experiences with discernment, curiosity and kindness'

-Christina Feldman 2013



As I see it, the mind is like a single point, the centre of the universe, and mental states are like visitors who come to stay at this point for short or long periods of time. Get to know these visitors well. Become familiar with the vivid pictures they paint, the alluring stories they tell, to entice you to follow them. But do not give up your seat - it is the only chair around. If you continue to occupy it unceasingly, greeting each guest as it comes; firmly establishing yourself in awareness, transforming your mind into the one who knows the one who is awake, and the visitors will eventually stop coming back. If you give them real attention, how many times can these visitors return? Speak with them here, and you will know every one of them well. Then your mind will at last be at peace.

Achaan Chah - A still forest pool: The Insight Meditation of Achaan Chah, by Jack Kornfield and Paul Breiter

Home Practice

Home practice is an important part of the course. The patterns of the mind that we will be working to change have often been around for a long time. These patterns are often automatic. We can only expect to succeed in making changes if we put time and effort into learning new ways.

It is challenging to carve out time to do the home practice that is part of the course. It really is worth it though. A useful attitude to adopt is -



“I'll give this a go, with an open mind. At the end of the course I'll decide what the learning has meant for me and what I can take away with me.”

In order for you to make a decision about whether this approach could be a useful part of your life you need to involve with it fully during these eight weeks.

A part of each session will be used to reflect on your experiences of the home practice during the week. We will discuss any difficulties that you may be experiencing with the practice, either in getting to do it or things that arise for you during the practice itself. Much of the learning of the course will be drawn from these experiences.

Patience and Persistence

We will be working to change established patterns of mind, and much of the approach will involve investing considerable time and effort, the effects of which may only become apparent later. In many ways, this is much like gardening; we have to prepare the ground, plant the seeds, and ensure that they are adequately watered and nourished, and then wait patiently for the results.

The encouragement is therefore to approach this course with the same spirit of patience and persistence; committing yourself to put the time and effort into what will be asked of you, while accepting with patience that the fruits of your efforts may not appear straight away.

Facing Difficulties

A central aim of the approach is to learn how to be more fully aware and present in each moment of life. The good news is that this can make life more enjoyable, interesting, and fulfilling. On the other hand, this means facing what is present, even when it is unpleasant and difficult. In practice you may find that turning to face your difficulties is the most effective way to reduce suffering.

In this course you will learn gentle ways to face difficulties and will be supported while doing this, but of course it will not always be easy.

Tip: If you find difficulty focusing on your breathing throughout this course, you may choose to focus on your feet instead as the feet are the farthest from your breath.



Session 1: Introducing Mindfulness

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 pushed'. 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 of this program is to **increase awareness** so that we can respond to situations with **choice** rather than react automatically. We do that by practising to become more aware of where our attention is and deliberately changing the focus of attention over and over again.

To begin with, we use attention to different parts of the body as a focus to anchor our awareness in the moment. We will also be training ourselves to put **attention and awareness** in different places at will. This is the aim of the body scan exercise, which is the main homework for next week



Cultivating Qualities in Mindfulness

Beginners Mind: In the beginner's mind we bring simple curiosity to whatever we are experiencing now, thereby cultivating a mind that is less filled with fearful thoughts about the future or unhappy thoughts about the past.

Non-Judging: Mindful awareness helps us to recognise thoughts, even self judging ones, as mental events arising and passing, like clouds in the sky. This makes it possible to see that *we are not our thoughts*, which is a tremendously liberating insight.

Patience: Patience is an understanding that events evolve at their own pace and not necessarily on a time table of our own choosing.

Non-Striving: In mindfulness practice there is nothing to achieve, nothing to get, and nowhere to go. Instead you are cultivating another way of being; learning how to be fully aware of exactly where and how you are at this very moment, even if the moment is painful or you don't like it.

Trust (as self-reliance): Learning to listen to ourselves is also a key element of mindfulness practice. You are the ultimate authority on your experience, and learning how to trust your inner wisdom is the path to what is best for you.

Acknowledgement (moving toward acceptance): In meditation practice, when we bring awareness to our moment to moment experience without trying to change anything, run away, or deny what is happening, we are practicing *acknowledgement of things as they are*.

Letting Be: With mindfulness we can turn toward the difficult or unwanted and find a way to let it be ... It is interesting to discover the more we resist the way things are, the more suffering we create for ourselves. It is a paradox summed up in the saying "that which you resist, persists".

Kindness: The quality of kindness inherent in mindfulness practice is cultivated as an antidote to the difficult mind states we human beings are so prone to – fear, anger, envy, greed, judgement and all the variations on those themes. Over and over we cultivate kindness, moving in the direction greater compassion and acceptance.

Adapted from Mindful Birthing: Training the Mind, Body, and Heart for Childbirth and Beyond by Nancy Bardacke

A Patients Report

This patient had been hospitalised for depression four years before, following which her husband left her, taking their children with him. There had been no further contact except through lawyers. She had become very depressed and lonely, although she had not been in hospital again. Now over the worst of her depression, she started to use the body scan practice to help prevent her mood from deteriorating. These were her comments looking back after eight weeks:

“For the first ten days it was like a burden. I kept 'wandering off' and then I would worry about whether I was doing it right. For example, I kept having flights of fantasy. When the tape mentioned Massachusetts, I would think of a trip to Boston with the family five years ago. My mind was all over the place. I tried hard to stop it, I think.

Another problem at the start was him saying, 'just accept things as they are now'. I thought that was totally unreasonable. I thought to myself, 'I can't do that.'

Eventually, I just put the tape on and expected to go off into a realm of thoughts. I didn't worry if concerns came in. Gradually, the 40 minutes passed without me losing him, and from then on, the next time was more effective.

After ten days, I relaxed more. I stopped worrying if I was thinking about anything else. When I stopped worrying about it, then I actually stopped the flights of fantasy. If I did think of something else, I picked up the tape again when I stopped thinking. Gradually, the flights of fantasy reduced. I was happy to listen to him, and then I started to get some value from it.

Soon I had developed it so that I could actually feel the breath going down to the base of my foot. Sometimes I didn't feel anything but then I thought, 'If there's no feeling then I can be satisfied with the fact that there's no feeling.'

It's not something you can do half a dozen times. It's got to be a daily thing. It becomes more real the more that you try it. I began to look forward to it.

If people have got to structure the time for the 45 minutes for their tape, it may be easier to structure other things in their life as well. The tape, in itself, would prove an impetus."

Tips for the Body Scan

Regardless of what happens (e.g. if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things or focusing on the wrong bit of body, or not feeling anything), just do it! These are your experiences in the moment. Just be aware of them.

If your mind is wandering a lot, simply note the thoughts (as passing events) and then bring the mind gently back to the body scan.

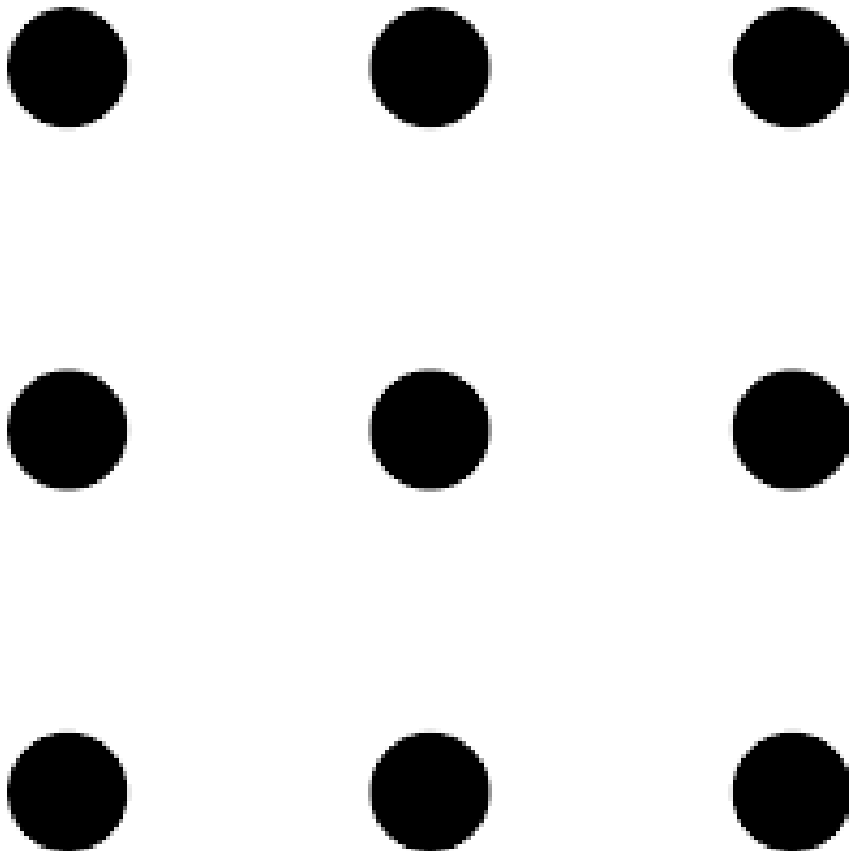
Let go of ideas of success, failure, doing it well or 'trying to purify the body'. This is not a competition. It is not a skill for which you need to strive. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. Just do it with an attitude of openness and curiosity.

Let go of any expectations about what the body scan will do for you. Imagine it as a seed you have planted. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to develop. So with the body scan, just give it the right conditions - peace and quiet, regular and frequent practice. That is all. The more you try to influence what it will do for you, the less it will do.

Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: 'OK, that's just the way things are right now'. If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings or body sensations, the upsetting feelings will only distract you from doing anything else. Be aware, be non-striving, be in the moment, and accept things as they are.

The Nine Dots Exercise

Draw four straight lines without lifting your pen or retracing any lines to connect all nine dots.



Session 1 Homework

Do the Body Scan CD (CD 1) six times before we meet again. Don't expect to feel anything in particular from listening to the CD. In fact, give up all expectations about it. Just let your experience be your experience. Don't judge it. Just keep doing it, and we'll talk about it next week.

Record on the homework record form each time you listen to the CD. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Choose one routine activity in your daily life and make a deliberate effort to bring moment-to-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it, just as we did in the raisin exercise. Possibilities include waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, drying your body, getting dressed, eating, driving, taking out the rubbish, shopping, and so on. Simply zero in on *knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it*.

Note any times when you find yourself able to notice what you eat, in the same way you noticed the raisin.

Eat at least one meal “mindfully” in the way that you ate the raisin.

Do the 9 dots puzzle on the previous page in this booklet and notice any responses you have whilst doing it.

There is a Homework Comment sheet at the end of this booklet so you have somewhere to note thoughts and feelings down so we can discuss them at the next session

Grace

Grace
Gives me a day
Too beautiful
I had thought
To stay indoors
& yet
Washing my dishes
Straightening
My shelves
Finally
Throwing out
The wilted
Onions
Shrunk garlic
Cloves
I discover
I am happy
To be inside
Looking out
This, I think,
Is wealth.
Just this choosing
Of how
A beautiful day
Is spent

Alice Walker

Session 2: Handling Stress

Home Cooking

When I first started cooking at Tassajara, I had a problem. I could not get my biscuits to come out right. I'd follow the recipe and try variations . . . but nothing worked. I had in mind the "perfect" biscuit, and these just didn't measure up.

Growing up, I had 'made' two kinds of biscuits: one was from Bisquick and the other from Pillsbury. For the Bisquick biscuits, you added milk to the mix and then blobbed the dough in spoonful's onto the pan—you didn't even need to roll them out. The biscuits from Pillsbury came in a kind of cardboard can. You rapped the can on the corner of the counter and it popped open. Then you twisted the can open more, put the premade biscuits on a pan and baked them. I really liked those Pillsbury biscuits. Isn't that what biscuits should taste like? Mine just weren't coming out the way they were supposed to. It's wonderful and amazing the ideas we get about what biscuits should taste like, or what a life should look like. Compared to what? Canned biscuits from Pillsbury? *"Leave it to Beaver?"*

People who ate my biscuits could be extolling their virtues, eating one after another, but for me, [those perfectly good] biscuits were not "right."

Finally one day that shifting-into-place occurred, an awakening: not "right" compared to what? Oh, no! I've been trying to make canned Pillsbury biscuits! Then that exquisite moment of actually tasting my biscuits without comparing them to some (previously hidden) standard: wheaty, flaky, buttery, sunny, earthy, here. Inconceivably delicious, incomparably alive, present, vibrant. In fact, much more satisfying than any memory.. . . Those moments when you realize your life as it is, is just fine, thank you can be so stunning and liberating. Only the insidious comparison to a beautifully prepared, beautifully packaged product makes it seem insufficient. The effort to produce a life with no dirty bowls, no messy feelings, no depression, and no anger is bound to fail - and be endlessly frustrating. Then savouring, actually tasting the present moment of experience - how much more complex and multifaceted. How unfathomable....

As a Zen student one can spend years trying to make it look right, trying to cover the faults, conceal the messes. Everyone knew what the Bisquick Zen student looked like: calm, buoyant, cheerful, energetic, deep, and profound. Our motto, as one of my friends says, was, "Looking good."

We've all done it ... tried to look good as a husband, wife, or parent...

Well, to heck with it, I say, wake up and smell the coffee- and how bout savouring some good old home cooking, the biscuits of today?

Ed Brown - The complete Tassajara cookbook: Recipes, techniques, and reflections from the famed Zen kitchen.

Session 2: Handling Stress

Aim of the course: Be more aware, more often

A powerful force taking us away from being 'fully present' in each moment is our automatic tendency to judge our experience as being not quite right in some way- that it is not what should be happening, not good enough, or not what we expected or wanted.

These judgements can lead to sequences of thoughts about blame, what needs to be changed, or how things should be different. Often, these thoughts will take us, quite automatically, down some fairly well worn paths in our minds. In this way, we may lose awareness of the moment, and also the freedom to *choose* what, if any, action needs to be taken.



We can regain our freedom it as a first step, we simply acknowledge the actuality of our situation, without immediately being hooked into automatic tendencies to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are. The body scan exercise provides an opportunity to practice simply bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in each moment, without having to do anything to change things. There is no goal to be achieved other than to bring awareness to bear as the instructions suggest. Specifically, achieving some special state of relaxation is *not* a goal of the exercise.

**‘Whenever some goodness comes we should turn towards it.’
Rumi**

Common Barriers in Mindfulness

Expectations – Notice if you have ideas about “success” or “failure”, “doing it really well”, or “getting it right”. It is not a skill you are trying to strive to perfect.

Painful sensations - The intention of the body scan includes paying attention to physical sensations of the body. Awareness of the pain can cause you to think about the pain. The invitation is to bring your awareness back to the breath or the part of the body scan that we are focusing on at the time. You can also choose to move your body if the pain is due to your posture.

Conditions are not right - Practice ideally requires time without interruptions, when you feel relatively calm.

Mind wandering- This can be regarded as a 'mistake' that needs correcting. However, it is the nature of the mind to wander, our job is not to get tangled in the stream of thoughts but to simply notice them and return our awareness to the breath.

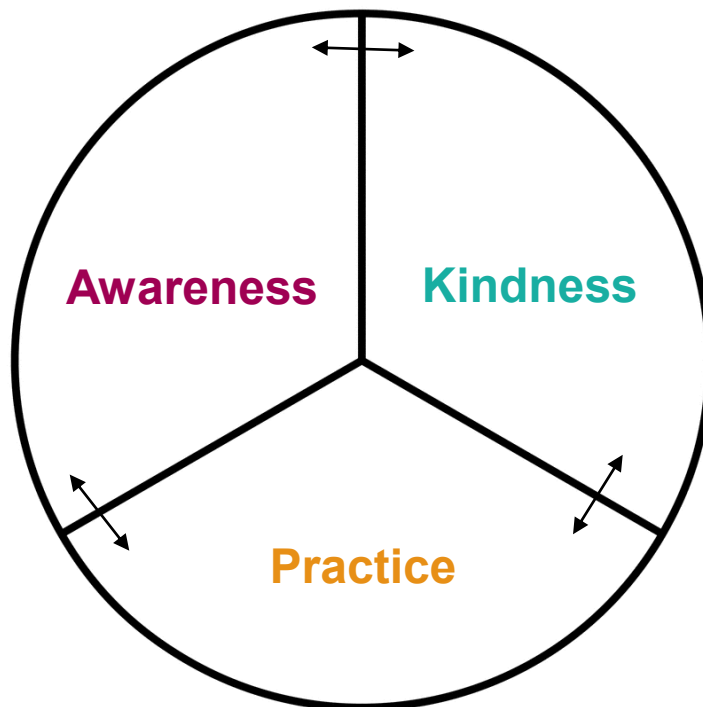
Falling asleep- The idea of mindfulness is 'falling awake' so you can feel cheated that you have fallen asleep during the meditation. This is not a problem — research is showing that meditation is still beneficial when you are sleeping and it may be that this is just what your body requires at the time. However, if falling asleep happens regularly, you may choose to adjust the conditions of your practice so that eventually you experience the whole of the body scan! For example you may choose to: change your posture, meditate with your eyes open, make yourself a little less comfortable, change the time of day that you do it, take a nap before you meditate or maybe simply accept that you must need the sleep!

Feeling bored- Boredom can undermine the motivation to do the practice. When the mind is bored it tries to move on to another subject and you can lose your focus. How often do we get bored in life and lose focus: at work, when talking to a child, attending a training session? See if you can allow yourself to stay focused, despite feeling bored, throughout the meditation — loss of focus in boring situations may cause you to miss important messages due to tuning off.

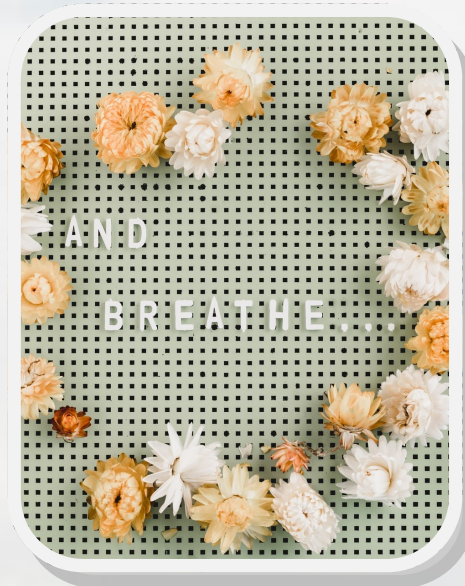
What barriers have you come up against so far?

3 Elements to Mindfulness:

Silverton & Gold:



Mindfulness & The Breath



Breath is life. You could think of the breath as being like a thread or chain that links and connects all the events of your life from birth, to death, the end. The breath is always there every moment, moving by itself like a river.

Have you ever noticed how the breath changes with our moods - short and shallow when we're tense or angry, faster when we're excited, slow and full when we're happy, and almost disappearing when we're afraid? It's there with us all the time. It can be used as a tool, like an anchor, to bring stability to the body and mind when we deliberately choose to become aware of it. We can tune in at any moment during everyday life.

Mostly, we're not in touch with our breathing - it's just there, forgotten. So one of the first things we do in mindfulness is to get in touch with it. We notice how the breath changes with our moods, our thoughts, or body movements. We don't have to control the breath. Just notice it and get to know it, like a friend. All that is necessary is to observe, watch, and feel the breath with a sense of interest, in a relaxed manner.

With practice, we get more aware of our breathing. We can use it to direct our awareness to different aspects of our lives. For example, to relax tense muscles, or focus on a situation that requires attention. Breath can also be used to help deal with pain, anger, relationships or the stress of daily life. During this program, we will be exploring this in great detail.

Karen Ryder, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Instructor, University of Massachusetts Medical Centre

Mindfulness & The Breath

Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor, with your buttocks supported by cushions or a low stool. If you use a chair, it is very helpful to sit away from the back of the chair, so that your spine is self-supporting. If you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees actually touch the floor. Experiment with the height of the cushions or the stool until you feel comfortably and firmly supported.

Allow your back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor, with your legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes.

Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations, just as in the body scan.



Mindfulness & The Breath

Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath moves in and out of your body. When you first try this practice, it may be helpful to place your hand on the lower abdomen and becoming aware of the changing pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact with the abdomen. Having 'tuned in' to the physical sensations in the area in this way, you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations in your abdominal wall.

Focus your awareness on the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each in-breath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each out-breath. As best you can, follow with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen all the way through as the breath enters your body on the in-breath and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between one in-breath and the following out-breath, and between one out-breath and the following in-breath.

There is no need to try to control the breath in any way - simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.



Mindfulness & The Breath

Sooner or later (usually sooner), your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath in the lower abdomen to thoughts, planning, daydreams, drifting along - whatever. This is perfectly OK - it's simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself - you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where the mind has been ("Ah, there's thinking"). Then gently escort the awareness back to a focus on the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen, renewing the intention to pay attention to the ongoing in-breath or out-breath, whichever you find.

However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over again), as best you can, congratulate yourself each time on reconnecting with your experience in the moment, gently escorting the attention back to the breath, and simply resume following in awareness the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in-breath and out-breath.

As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of your mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.

Continue with the practice for 15 minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time you notice that your mind has wandered and is no longer down in the abdomen, following the breath.



Session 2 Homework

Use the Body Scan CD again for 6 days and record your reactions on the record form.

At different times, practice 10-15 minutes' mindfulness of breathing for 6 days. Being with your breath in this way each day provides an opportunity to become aware of what it feels like to be connected and present in the moment without having to *do* anything.

Complete the Pleasant Events Calendar (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of your thoughts, feelings and body sensations around one pleasant event each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, *in detail* (e.g. use the actual words or images in which the thoughts came) the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.

Choose a new routine activity to be especially mindful of (e.g. brushing your teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out rubbish, reading to kids, shopping, eating).

Session 2 Homework

Pleasant Events Calendar

Be aware of a pleasant event *at the time it is happening*. Use the following questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down as soon as possible afterwards.

What was the Experience?	What thoughts and images accompanied this event?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind as you write this down?
Example: Heading home at the end of my shift. Stopping, hearing a bird singing	That's good. How lovely (the bird), it's so good to be outside.	Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropped, uplift in corners of mouth	Relief and pleasure	It was such a small thing, but I'm glad I noticed it.
<u>Wednesday</u>				
<u>Thursday</u>				
<u>Friday</u>				
<u>Saturday</u>				
<u>Sunday</u>				
<u>Monday</u>				
<u>Tuesday</u>				

Session 3: The Power of Being Present - Living All of your Moments

Being Mindful and Aware

When we were very young, we were much more physical and aware of our bodily sensations. As we have got older, most of us have become less grounded and aware - and more likely to live life in “automatic pilot”- half asleep, lost in the past, and worrying about the future.

Practising being more grounded in our body and in the world around us helps us to wake up to our lives. Being more aware of our physical sensations and our mind states allows us to be more present - here and now.

Focusing on the breath: Brings you back to this very moment- the *here and now*. Is always available as an anchor and *haven*, no matter where you are.

Can actually change your experience by connecting you with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things.



Information about Mindful Movement Practice

There are many different form of movement that are meditative, including yoga, tai chi, and different forms of dance.

Please follow the instructions on the CD as best you can, keeping the body loose while moving and softening the joints. Only do each exercise the number of times that feels comfortable for you - be sensitive to how far your body can go, and stop when it signals you to do so. If you are unsure or get warning signals from your body during an exercise, it is fine to stand or sit and simply imagine yourself doing the movement. If we are standing still, it is fine to gently ease parts of the body which become stiff, for instance lowering the arms or straightening the knees, and if you wish, resuming the posture when you are ready.

Above all, be mindful of how your body is feeling right now, and do these movements in a way that respects your body and is gentle with your own present limits. If you have a medical or orthopaedic problem, you can check with your doctor before doing this practice.

*The easiest way to relax is to stop trying to make things different.
Struggle comes from not accepting what is present.*

Walking Meditation

One simple way of bringing awareness into your daily life is to practice the walking meditation. As you might guess, this means bringing your attention to the actual experience of walking as you are doing it. It means simply walking *and* knowing that you are walking.

One of the things that you find out when you have been practicing mindfulness for a while is that nothing is quite as it appears. This is as true for walking as it is for anything else. For one thing, we carry our mind with us as we walk, so we are usually caught up in our own thoughts to some extent. We are hardly ever just walking, even when we are 'just going for a walk'.

Walking meditation involves intentionally attending to the experience of walking itself. It involves focusing on the sensations in your feet or your legs or, alternatively, feeling your whole body moving. You can also integrate awareness of your breathing with the experience of walking.

We begin by making an effort to be fully aware as one foot contacts the ground, as the weight shifts to it, as the other foot lifts and moves ahead and then comes down to make contact with the ground in its turn. As with all the other methods we have been exploring, when the mind wanders away from the feet or the legs or the feeling of the body walking, we simply bring it back when we become aware of it. To deepen our concentration, we do not look around at the sights, but keep our gaze focused in front of us. We also don't look at our feet. They know how to walk quite well on their own. It is an internal observation that is being cultivated, just the felt sensations of walking, nothing more.

When we practice walking meditation, we are not trying to get anywhere. It is sufficient just to be with each step, realising that you are just where you are. The trick is to be there completely. This doesn't mean that your mind will go along with your intention to just be with each step for very long without a concerted effort to keep it focused. You might soon find it condemning the whole exercise, calling it stupid, useless, idiotic. Or it might start to play games with the pace or with balancing, or have you looking around or thinking of other things. But if your mindfulness is strong, you will quickly become aware of this activity, and return your attention to the feet, legs and body. It's a good idea to start with awareness of the feet and legs and practice that for a while. Then, when your concentration is stronger, you can expand the field of awareness to include a sense of your whole body walking.

You can practice mindful walking at any pace. We sometimes do it very slowly, so that one step might take a minute. This allows you to really be with each moment from moment to moment. But we also practice it at a more natural pace. You can practice being aware even when moving quickly – you will find that you won't be able to be with each step so easily, but you can shift your awareness instead to a sense of your body as a whole moving through space. So even rushing, you can be mindful, if you can remember.

In summary, any time you find yourself walking is a good time to practice mindfulness. And sometimes it's good to find an isolated spot and do it formally as well, back and forth, step by step, moment by moment, walking gently on the earth, in step with your life, being exactly where you are.

Quoted (with adaptations) from 'Full Catastrophe Living' by Jon Kabat-Zinn, pp114-9

Coming to Our Senses

Mindfulness is about paying attention, deliberately and without judgement, as best you can to what is going on in your body and your mind and in the world around you

Your body:	The world around you:	Your mind:
♦ Looking	♦ Looking	♦ Becoming aware of your thinking
♦ Listening	♦ Listening	♦ Becoming aware of your emotions
♦ Feeling sensations	♦ Touching	♦ Becoming aware of your breath
♦ Tasting	♦ Tasting	
♦ Smelling	♦ Smelling	

The 3 Step Breathing Space - Basic Instructions

The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment.

Awareness: Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask:

"What is my experience right now... in thoughts... in feelings . . . and in bodily sensations?"

Notice, acknowledge and register your experience instead of turning away. Accept all your experiences in the body, mind and emotions and stay with them for a few moments, allowing even difficult or negative experiences to be present.

Gathering: Then gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each in-breath and to each out-breath as they follow, one after the other.

The breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

Expanding: Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression — as if your whole body is breathing.

Autobiography in five chapters

1) I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in.

I am lost . . . I am hopeless

It isn't my fault

It takes forever to find a way out.

2) I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.

I can't believe I'm in the same place.

But it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

3) I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there.

I still fall in.. .it's a habit.

My eyes are open.

I know where I am.

It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

4) I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I walk around it.

5) I walk down another street

Portia Nelson

Session 3 Homework

This week we are going to use two different CDs:

On Days 1, 3, and 5, practice with the Mindful Movement CD, using the exercises or walking meditation, or alternate them, and record your experiences on the Homework Form.

On Days 2, 4, and 6, practice with the Body Scan CD and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.

The point of the stretches and movement is to provide a direct way to connect with awareness of the body. The body is a place where emotions often get expressed, under the surface, and without our awareness. As such, it gives us an additional place from which to stand and look at our thoughts. If you have any back or other health difficulties that may cause problems, make your own decision as to which (if any) of these exercises to do.

Practice using the 3-Minute Breathing Space three times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance.

Complete the Unpleasant Events Calendar (one entry per day) - and use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations around one unpleasant event each day, at the time that they are occurring. Notice and record, as soon as you can, in detail (e.g., put the actual words or images in which thoughts came, and the precise nature and location of bodily sensations). See the body map on the next page.

What are the unpleasant events that 'pull you off centre', or 'get you down' (no matter how big or small)? What do you most not want to look at? Notice when you move into 'automatic pilot'- under what circumstances does this occur?

Have in your awareness an intention to 'capture' the moments of your day.

Without resistance

Awareness meditation is a way of opening our attention to the truth of what is present. We do not selectively pay attention to pleasant things and ignore the unpleasant. We open choicelessly, to what is positive and joyous as much as to the suffering that we find. Meeting each moment without resistance, we discover unsuspected beauty in our hearts, minds, and bodies, and in the world around us. We sense the uniqueness of each fleeting breath. We perceive the movement of nature within us. We feel sad without needing to justify or eliminate the emotion. We feel happy without needing to believe that we will never again know sadness. This is the way of meditation.

Gavin Harrison - In the Lap of the Buddha.

Session 3 Homework

Unpleasant Events Calendar

Be aware of an unpleasant event at the time it is happening. Use the questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down later.

What was the Experience?	What thoughts and images accompanied this event?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind as you write this down?
Example: Waiting in line at the bank and someone pushes in.	Some people only look after themselves. If I wasn't invisible people wouldn't push me around	Tightness around my eyes, clenched jaw, and then shoulders slumped.	Anger, taken advantage of. Guilty for not standing up for myself.	If something seems unfair, I blame it on myself
<u>Wednesday</u>				
<u>Thursday</u>				
<u>Friday</u>				
<u>Saturday</u>				
<u>Sunday</u>				
<u>Monday</u>				
<u>Tuesday</u>				

Mindful

Every day
I see or hear
something
that more or less
kills me
with delight,
that makes me
like a needle
in the haystack
of light.
It is what I was born for
To look, to listen,
to lose myself
inside this soft world to
instruct myself
over and over
in joy
and acclamation.
Nor am I talking
about the exceptional,
the fearful, the dreadful,
the very extravagant but
of the ordinary
the common, the very drab,
the daily presentations.
Oh, good scholar,
I say to myself,
how can you help
but grow wise
with such teachings
as these the
untrimmable light
of the world, the ocean's shine
the prayers that are made
out of grass?

Mary Oliver

From 'Why I wake up early'

Session 4: Learning about our Patterns of reactivity to stress

In general, we can react to experience in one of three ways:

- ♦ **With indifference** - spacing out, or boredom, so that we switch off from the present moment and go off somewhere else "in our heads."
- ♦ **With attachment** - wanting to hold on to things - not allowing ourselves to let go of experiences that we are having right now, or wishing we were having experiences that we are not having right now.
- ♦ **With aversion** - wanting it to go away, being angry with it - wanting to get rid of experiences that we are having right now, or avoiding future experiences that we do not want.

As we will discuss further in each class, each of these ways of reacting can cause problems, particularly the tendency to react to unpleasant feelings with aversion. For now, the main issue is to become more aware of our experience, so that we can respond mindfully rather than react automatically. Regularly practicing sitting meditation gives us many opportunities to notice when we have drifted away from awareness of the moment, to note with a friendly awareness whatever it was that took our attention away, and to gently and firmly bring our attention back to our focus, reconnecting with moment by- moment awareness. At other times of the day, deliberately using the breathing space whenever we notice unpleasant feelings or a sense of "tightening" or "holding" in the body, provides an opportunity to begin to respond rather than react.



Fight Or Flight Response

When faced with a life-threatening danger it often makes sense to run away or, if that is not possible, to fight. The *fight or flight response* is an *automatic* survival mechanism which prepares the body to take these actions. All of the body sensations produced are happening for good reasons – to prepare your body to run away or fight – but may be experienced as uncomfortable when you do not know why they are happening.

Thoughts racing

Quicker thinking helps us to evaluate danger and make rapid decisions. It can be very difficult to concentrate on anything apart from the danger (or escape routes) when the fight or flight response is active

Changes to vision

Vision can become acute so that more attention can be paid to danger. You might notice 'tunnel vision', or vision becoming 'sharper'

Dry mouth

The mouth is part of the digestive system. Digestion shuts down during dangerous situations as energy is diverted towards the muscles

Heart beats faster

A faster heart beat feeds more blood to the muscles and enhances your ability to fight or run away

Nausea and 'butterflies' in the stomach

Blood is diverted away from the digestive system which can lead to feelings of nausea or 'butterflies'

Hands get cold

Blood vessels in the skin contract to force blood towards major muscle groups

Muscles tense

Muscles all over the body tense in order to get you ready to run away or fight. Muscles may also shake or tremble, particularly if you stay still, as a way of using up excess adrenaline

If we don't exercise (e.g. run away or fight) to use up the extra oxygen then we can quickly start to feel dizzy or lightheaded

Dizzy or lightheaded

Breathing becomes quicker and shallower

Quicker breathing takes in more oxygen to power the muscles. This makes the body more able to fight or run away

Adrenal glands release adrenaline

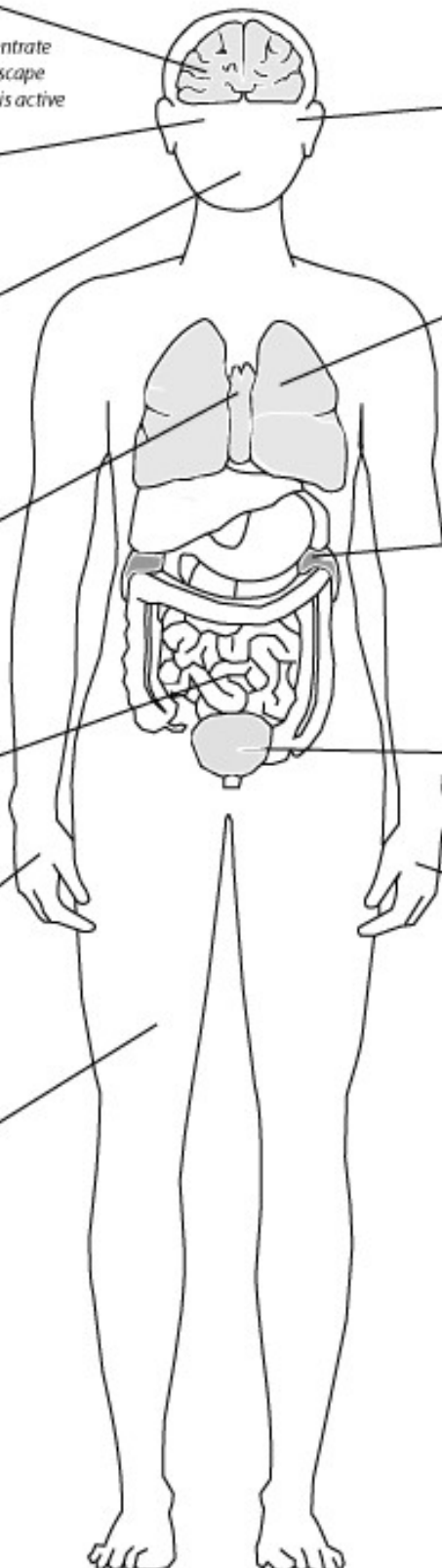
The adrenaline quickly signals other parts of the body to get ready to respond to danger

Bladder urgency

Muscles in the bladder sometimes relax in response to extreme stress

Palms become sweaty

When in danger the body sweats to keep cool. A cool machine is an efficient machine, so sweating makes the body more likely to survive a dangerous event



Staying Present

Remember to use your body as a way to awareness. It can be as simple as staying mindful of your posture. You are probably sitting down as you read this. What are the sensations in your body at this moment? When you finish reading and stand, feel the movements of standing, of walking to the next activity, of how you lie down at the end of the day. Be in your body as you move, as you reach for something, as you turn. It is as simple as that.

Just patiently practice feeling what is there - and the body is always there - until it becomes second nature to know even the small movements you make. If you are reaching for something, you are doing it anyway; there is nothing extra you have to do. Simply notice the reaching. You are moving. Can you train yourself to be there, to feel it?

It is very simple. Practice bringing your attention back to your body again and again. This basic effort, which paradoxically is a relaxing back into the moment, gives us the key to expanding our awareness from times of formal meditation to living mindfully in the world. Do not underestimate the power that comes to you from feeling the simple movements of your body throughout the day.

Adapted from J. Goldstein (1993) 'Insight Meditation'

'Mr Duffy lived some distance from his body' James Joyce, 'The Dubliners'

It can be useful to come back to the body at times of stress/distress. We can work with what is here by working with the body. The body can be a good barometer to what is going on in the mind and emotional aspects of an experience.

"Holding" in the body, provides an opportunity to begin to respond rather than react.



The Stress-Reaction Cycle

(adapted from Full Catastrophe Living, Kabat-Zinn, Ch19)

Human beings are remarkably resilient to stress. We are expert copers and problem solvers, using our own internal resources, pleasurable and meaningful activities, and encouragement and support from family and friends, to deal with stress. But it's also true that our usually stable balance can be pushed over the edge into deregulation and disorder if it is taxed beyond its capacity to respond and adapt. Health can be undermined by a lifetime of ingrained behaviour patterns that



compound and exacerbate the pressures of living we continually face. Our automatic reactions to stress, triggered without awareness, often exacerbate the stress, making simple problems into worse ones, and largely determining how much stress we experience. A lifetime of unconscious reactivity to stress significantly increases our risk of eventual breakdown and illness.

We all experience external stressors from the biological, physical, social, economic and political forces that bear on us and generate changes in our bodies, our social status and our lives generally. From the inside, our thoughts and emotions are strongly affected by our perception of these outside forces, and also generate their own stressful reactions, producing another whole set of pressures and demands.

Some stressors affect us over extended periods of time – we call these *chronic stressors*. For instance, taking care of a family member who is disabled is a form of chronic stress. Other stressors come and go over relatively short periods of time – an example is getting something done for a deadline – these are called *acute stressors*. We react to stressors in different ways, depending on how far we perceive them as threats to our well-being or sense of self. Our reaction can range from minimal (where little or no threat is perceived) to an automatic *alarm reaction* where the stressor is highly charged for us emotionally, or is perceived as being a definite threat in some way.





This *alarm reaction* is our body's way of clearing the decks for defensive or aggressive action, to protect ourselves in life-threatening situations, and to maintain or regain control. People, in common with animals, go through a physiological reaction when feeling under threat, called the *fight or flight reaction*. This leads to a state of physical and psychological *hyperarousal*, which is characterised by muscle tension, strong emotions, a rapid cascade of nervous-system firings, and the release of stress hormones such as *adrenaline*. We become very alert and attentive. The heart beats faster raising the blood pressure, and the blood is redirected from digestion (causing feelings of 'butterflies in the stomach') to the large muscles of the arms and legs - if you are about to be eaten by a tiger, there's no point continuing to digest food, you need to have as much energy as possible to run or flight! This activity is regulated by the *autonomic nervous system*. (see page 31)

The fight-or-flight reaction helps us to survive when we find ourselves in life-threatening situations, but it can become a problem. Much of our stress comes from threats, real or imagined, to our social status, rather than to our lives. *But the fight-or-flight reaction kicks in even when there is no life-threatening situation facing us. It is sufficient for us just to feel threatened.* Our body and mind react automatically, whether the threat is real or not. If this happens often enough, unfortunately hyperarousal can become a permanent way of life. This can manifest in chronic muscle tension, shakiness, faster heart rate, and frequent urges to flee or to 'lash out' in anger or get into arguments or fights.

What do we do when the fight-or-flight reaction is building up inside us, but we feel unable to fight or run because both are socially unacceptable, and we know neither will solve our problems? The common way to deal with these feelings is to suppress or deny them, hiding them from others and sometimes even from ourselves. We internalize our stress reaction and carry on as usual, holding it all inside. Instead of getting the resolution that fighting or running brings, which leads to physical release and recovery afterwards, we just carry the arousal around inside ourselves, which plays havoc with our bodies, and keeps our thoughts and feelings agitated.

If this becomes a way of life, and we have no healthy way of releasing the built-up tension, we can drift into a state of chronic hyper arousal that we can come to think of as 'normal'. This can lead to long-term physiological deregulation, with problems such as high blood pressure, digestive problems, chronic headaches, back aches, and sleep disorders, as well as to psychological distress such as chronic anxiety.

Many people cope remarkably well with extremely trying personal circumstances, and have developed their own strategies for doing so. They know when to stop and take time out, they have hobbies and other interests to take their minds off things, and they give themselves advice, reminding themselves to look at things differently and not to lose perspective. People who do this tend to be the stress-hardy ones.



But many of us cope with stress in ways that are actually self-destructive. These attempts at control are labelled 'Maladaptive coping' in the Figure above, because although they do help us tolerate stress and give us some sense of control, in the long run they wind up creating problems and making our lives more stressful. Such strategies include denial of what is happening, and although denial can be helpful short-term, it eventually becomes unhealthy. *Workaholism*, and *overeating*, can also be strategies that avoid perceiving and dealing with the real problem. To cope with stress in our lives many of us use alcohol, caffeine, sugar, nicotine, and all sorts of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. When these become habitual, or the main or only methods of coping, they can put yet more stress into our systems, as is shown in the Figure by the stress arrows going from substance dependency back into the person.

Ultimately all maladaptive coping can be addictive. Sooner or later the accumulated effects of stress reactivity, compounded by unhelpful ways of dealing with it, lead to breakdown in one form or another - exhaustion, burnout, physical illness, or recurrent depression. Whatever form it takes becomes one more stressor feeding back into the person, and requiring even greater adaptation.

When we are caught up in this vicious cycle, it can seem just the way life is, that there is no other way. But getting stuck in stress reactivity is neither normal nor inevitable - we have far more options and resources than we may realise. And the first step on the road to recovery is to use mindfulness to become aware of what our own patterns are.



Session 4 Homework

On days 1, 3, and 5 practice with the Mindful Movement CD. Record what your practice is each day and your reactions to it on the record sheet if you wish. On days 2, 4 and 6 practice with the Guided Sitting Meditation CD.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Regular: Practice at least three times a day, either at times when you think about it, or connect it to 3 regular activities you do each day such as just before eating or when you first get into your car. Record your practice on the record sheet.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Coping: Practice whenever you notice unpleasant feelings. Record your practice on the record sheet.

Be aware of your reactions to stress during the week without trying to change them. Notice if you are blocking, numbing or shutting off from the moment, when it happens and how this feels in the body. When do you notice yourself refusing or resisting what is happening? When do you find yourself willing to embrace the unwanted?



Halfway Review

One thing meditation has taught me is that we never stop thinking. To sit in meditation is a wonderful way to take time out from the endless business of the mind. Entering regularly into a space where we don't analyse ourselves, our problems, or even our happiness, but simply watch them and become comfortable with them as they are, allows self acceptance to grow. Outward affirmation becomes less important, because peace from within is nourished and begins to show itself in everyday life.

Paul Seal – English Student at Bristol.

This course is about taking active steps in participating in your own health and well-being.

Weeks 1-4 have been focused on becoming aware of the wanderings of our minds, using awareness to come back to the present and developing skills in moving our attentiveness to different areas.

We are now half way through the course. The emphasis in the second half of the programme is on cultivating a different relationship with our internal and external experiences in our day-to-day lives.

Take some time to reflect on:

What am I learning through this process? What do I need to do over the next 4 weeks to get the most out of the rest of the course?

NOTES:

Session 5 Coping with Stress: Using Mindfulness to Respond Instead of React

'You can't make radical changes in the pattern of your life until you begin to see yourself exactly as you are now. As soon as you do that, change will flow naturally'

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana.



The basic guideline in this practice is to become mindfully aware of whatever is most predominant in our moment-by-moment experience. So if the mind is being repeatedly drawn to a particular place, to particular thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations, we deliberately and intentionally take a gentle and friendly awareness to that place. That is the first step.

The second step is to notice, as best we can, how we are relating to whatever arises in that place. Often, we can be with an arising thought, feeling, or bodily sensation, but in a non-accepting, reactive way. If we like it, we tend to hold onto it; we become attached. If we do not like it, because it is painful, unpleasant, or uncomfortable in some way, we tend to contract, to push away out of fear, irritation or annoyance. Each of these responses is the opposite of acceptance.

The easiest way to relax is, first, to stop trying to make things different. Accepting experience means simply allowing space for whatever is going on, rather than trying to create some other state. Through acceptance, we settle back into awareness of what is present. We let it be - we simply notice and observe whatever is already present. This is the way to relate to experiences that have a strong pull on our attention.

Once your attention has moved to the bodily sensations and you have what is pulling your attention in the field of awareness, say to yourself, "It's OK. Whatever it is, it's OK. Let me feel it." Then, just stay with the awareness of these bodily sensations and your relationship to them, breathing with them, accepting them, letting them be. It may be helpful to repeat, "It's OK. Whatever it is, it's OK. Let me feel it," using each out-breath to soften and open to the sensations of which you become aware.

Acceptance is *not* resignation: Acceptance, as a vital first step, allows us to become fully aware of difficulties, and then, if appropriate, to *respond* in a skilful way rather than to *react* in a knee-jerk fashion, by automatically running off some of our old (often unhelpful) strategies for dealing with difficulties.

Responding to Stress

(adapted from Full Catastrophe Living, Kabat-Zinn, Ch20)

The very first and most important step in breaking free from a lifetime of stress reactivity is to be mindful of what is actually happening while it is happening. This creates an alternative pathway, which we call the *stress response* to distinguish it from the automatic stress reaction. In the *stress response*, we use mindfulness to create strategies to cope with stress in healthy ways.

Moment-to-moment awareness allows us to exert control and to influence the flow of events at those very moments when we are most likely to react on automatic pilot, and where before we would have plunged into the flight-or-flight reaction, and hyperarousal.

As soon as you bring awareness to what is going on in a stressful situation, you are not on automatic pilot anymore, and have already changed the situation dramatically. Just becoming aware takes only a split second, but it *gives you a range of options for influencing what will happen next*. You now don't have to suppress your thoughts and feelings associated with heightened arousal to prevent yourself from going out of control. You can actually allow yourself to feel threatened or fearful or angry or hurt, and to feel the tension in your body. You can easily recognize these agitations for what they are - *thoughts and feelings and sensations*.

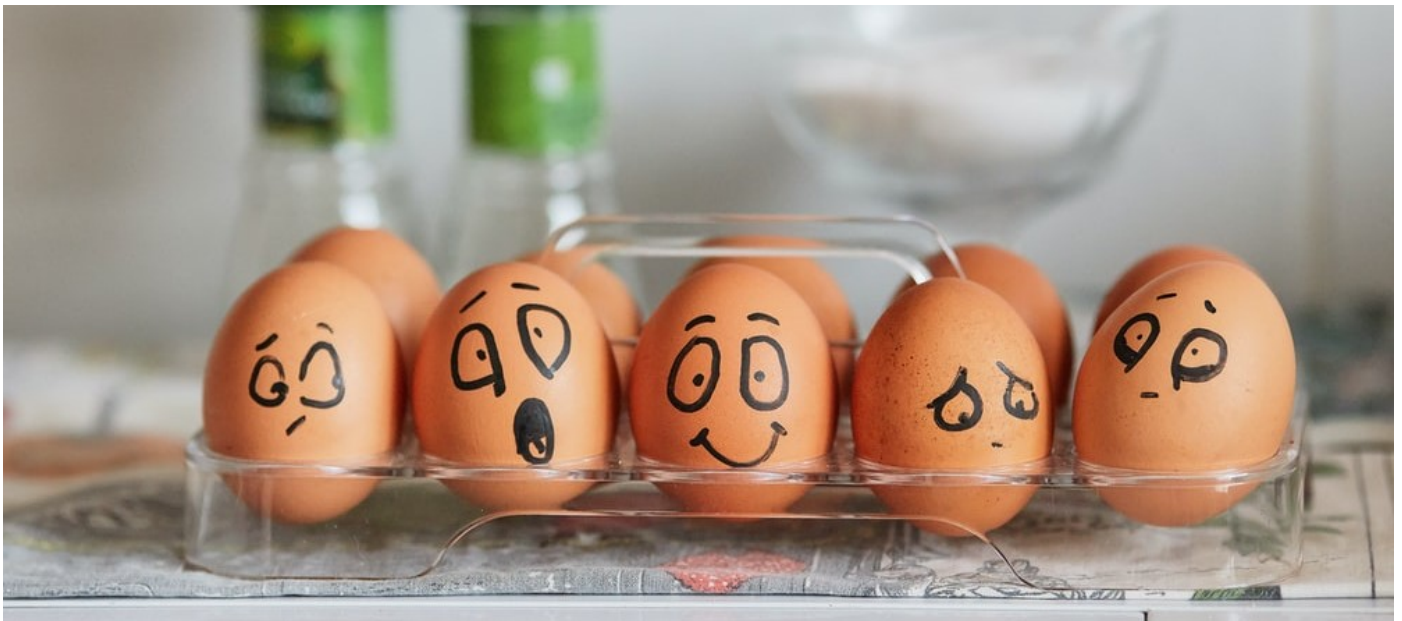


We have been training mind and body to respond in this way in the formal meditation practice. Only through this regular training could our calmness and awareness start to become strong and reliable enough to help us respond in a balanced, imaginative way when we are stressed. The capacity to respond mindfully develops each time we experience discomfort or pain or strong feelings during meditation, and we just observe them and work at letting them be the way they are, without reacting to them. We have learned that control can come out of inner calmness, acceptance and openness - we don't have to struggle with thoughts or feelings, or try to force things to be how we want them to be. We can decide to do things differently.

Responding to Stress

(adapted from Full Catastrophe Living, Kabat-Zinn, Ch20)

When you bring awareness to stressful moments, you might see if you're overreacting to the situation, and remind yourself to try letting go of your own self-limited view, just to see what would happen. Making the effort to meet the situation with calmness and clarity might help things become more harmonious. When you experiment in this way, you may be surprised at how many things that used to 'push your buttons' no longer get you aroused. They may no longer even seem stressful to you, not because you have given up and become helpless and defeated, but because you have become more relaxed and trusting of yourself. Responding in this way under pressure is an empowering experience. What do you have to lose by trying it?



How do we consciously cultivate the stress response in daily life? The same way we cultivate mindfulness in the formal meditation practice: moment by moment, grounding ourselves in our body and our breathing. When your buttons are pushed or you find yourself feeling stressed, you might try bringing your awareness to your face and shoulders as they tense up, to your heart beginning to pound, to how your stomach is feeling, or to whatever you might notice about how your body feels at that moment. See if you can be aware of your feelings of anger or fear or hurt as you feel them arising in you. You might even try saying to yourself, "This is it" or "Here is a stressful situation" or "Now is the time to tune into my breathing and centre myself". It takes practice to catch stress reactions as they are happening. But don't worry, if you are like most of us, you will have plenty of opportunities to practice. It is unrealistic to expect yourself to respond in this way to every situation, but just by *trying* to bring a larger view to each moment, you are transforming the stressors into challenges and pathways for growth.

Using the Breathing Space when Facing Difficulties

When you are troubled in thoughts or feelings:

Awareness

(Of the difficulty)

Acknowledging: Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting a dignified posture. Then ask 'What is going on with me at the moment?'

Observe: Bring the focus of awareness to your inner experience and notice what is happening in your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations.

Describe, acknowledge, identify - put experiences into words, for example, say in your mind, "A feeling of anger is arising" or "Self-critical thoughts are here."

Redirecting Attention

Gathering: Gently focus your full attention onto the breath. Experience fully each in-breath and each out-breath as they follow one after the other. Try noting at the back of your mind: "Breathing in...Breathing out" or counting the breaths.

Expanding Attention

Allow your attention to expand around the breathing, to the whole body, and the space it takes up, as if the whole body is breathing - especially to any sense of discomfort, tension, or resistance. If these sensations are there, then take your awareness there by "breathing into them" on the in-breath. While breathing out, allow a sense of softening and opening and letting go. Say to yourself on the out-breath, "It's OK. Whatever it is, it's OK. Let me feel it."

As best you can. Bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day. Carry on holding any difficult experiences in a wider awareness when you notice them rather than the mind being in battle with them.

The Guest-house

This being human is a guest-house

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honourably.

He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

*Say I Am You. Poems of Rumi.
Translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks.
Maypop 1994.*

Session 5 Homework

Practice Sitting Meditation CD for 6 days. If you prefer, alternate the sitting practice with either the Body Scan or the Mindful Movement. Experiment with times of the day that seem to work for you. Be flexible and open-minded. If you wish to, record your practice routine and reactions to it on the home practice record form.

3-Minute Breathing Space – Regular - practice three times a day either when you think of it, or connect it to 3 regular activities you do each day. Make a note of your practices and any comments/difficulties on the Homework Record Sheet.

3-Minute Breathing Space – Responsive - Practice whenever you notice yourself starting to feel stressed and explore options of responding with greater mindfulness and in a more friendly way to yourself and the situation. Record your practice.

Bring awareness to moments of reacting, and explore options for responding with greater mindfulness, spaciousness and creativity, in formal meditation practice and in everyday life. Remember the breath is an anchor, a way to heighten awareness of reactive tendencies, to slow down, and to make more conscious choices.

Complete the difficult communications diary one entry per day. Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of and explore your reactions to difficult situations, as well as what results from these reactions. If you have no difficult communications during the week, either remember some, or imagine communications that would fit in with your knowledge of yourself, and explore them.

Session 5 Homework

Describe the communication. Who? What? What was the subject?	How did the difficulty come about?	What did you really want from the situation or person?	What did the other person(s) want? What did they get?	How did you feel During and after this time?	Has the issue been resolved yet? How might it be?
Wed					
Thurs					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					
Mon					
Tues					

From the prelude to 'The dance'

What if there is no need to change?

No need to try to transform yourself

Into someone who is more compassionate, more present, more loving, or wise?

How would this affect all the places in your life where you are endlessly trying to
be better?

What if the task is simply to unfold

To become who you already are in your essential nature:

Gentle, compassionate, and capable of living fully and passionately present?

What if the question is not

"Why am I so infrequently the person I really want to be?"

But "Why do I so infrequently want to be the person I really am?"

How would this change what you think you really have to learn?

What if becoming who and what we truly are happens not through striving and
trying

But by recognising and receiving the people and places and practices

That are for us the warmth of encouragement we need to unfold?

How would this shape the choices you make about how to spend today?

What if you knew that the impulse to move in a way that creates beauty in the
world

Will arise from deep within

And guide you every time you simply pay attention

And wait.

How would this shape your stillness, your movement,

Your willingness to follow this impulse


To just let go

And dance?

Session 6- Stressful Communications and Interpersonal Mindfulness

"A great deal of our suffering in life is in relationship to other people ... We meditate alone, but live our lives with other people... (In meditation) the personal and interpersonal paths are profoundly connected ... how easily and even elegantly they can be interwoven."

Gregory Kramer: 'Insight Dialogue: The interpersonal path to freedom' (Shambala, Boston and London)



What does your Stressful Communications Diary from the last week's home practice tell you about your own patterns of difficult communication with others? From your growing awareness of what you do when talking to others, what strategies can you develop to make your communications less stressful, more satisfying, and more effective? How can you use the mindfulness skills you have been practising to help you in this?

Bringing mindfulness into talking with others starts with awareness - knowing your feelings. Once you know what your feelings are, you can practice expressing your feelings accurately, finding ways around your own barriers to doing this. The more you pay attention to what happens in your communications with others, the more you'll develop a greater awareness of your own interpersonal communication patterns, and begin to explore ways of changing these if you decide to do so.

You have been developing and practising skills through the whole mindfulness course - skills of awareness, of stepping back and taking a wider perspective, of letting go of judgements about yourself and your experiences. As you start to practise these skills when communicating with others, you're likely to find yourself staying more aware and balanced in relationships, especially under conditions of acute or chronic stress. Pressures to go back to old patterns can come from the strong expectations of others, past habits of emotional expression or suppression, and the ways you present yourself to others in everyday life. Based on the skills that you've been developing through the entire course, you can cultivate the capacity to be more flexible and to recover more rapidly during challenging interpersonal situations.

The Mountain Meditation

When it comes to meditation, mountains have a lot to teach us. The image of the mountain held in the mind's eye and in the body, can refresh our memory of why we are sitting, and of what it really means to dwell in the realm of non- doing.

"Picture the most beautiful mountain you know - or can imagine. Notice its overall shape, the lofty peak, the base rooted in the rock of the earth's crust, the sloping sides. Note how massive it is, how unmoving, how beautiful.

See if you can bring the mountain into your own body - your head becomes the lofty peak; your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain; your buttocks and legs the solid base rooted to your cushion on the floor or to your chair.

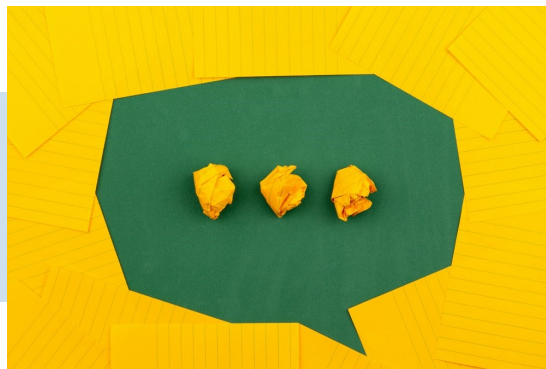
Become the breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are - beyond words and thought, a centred, rooted, unmoving presence.

As the light changes, as night follows day and day night, the mountain just sits, simply being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment. Storms may come, but still the mountain sits. Calmness abiding all change.

Jon Kabat-Zinn. 'Wherever You Go There You Are'

Mindful Communication

Other people can be a big source of stress in our lives. Our relationships with others give us unending opportunities for practicing mindfulness and so reducing 'people stress'. Psychological stress arises from the *interaction* between us and the world, so we need to take responsibility for our part in relationships with people who "cause us stress" - responsibility for our own perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. If we react unconsciously when we are having a problem with another person, just as with other forms of stress, this usually makes matters worse in the long run.



The deeply automatic impulse to fight-or-flight influences our behaviour even when our lives are not in danger. When we feel our interest or social status is threatened, we can react aggressively to protect our position before we know it. Alternatively we may act submissively, often at the expense of our own views, feelings, and self-respect. Since we also have the ability to reflect, think and be aware, we have a range of other options available to us. But we need to purposefully cultivate these other options. They don't just magically surface, especially if our way of relating interpersonally has been dominated in the past by automatically defensive or aggressive behaviour. We can choose a response, rather than being carried away by a reaction.

Even when we are feeling threatened, angry, or frightened, we have the potential to improve our relationships dramatically if we bring mindfulness into the domain of communication itself. To communicate is to unite, to have a meeting or union of minds. This does not necessarily mean agreement. It does mean seeing the situation as a whole, and understanding the other person's view as well as one's own.

Mindful Communication

When we are totally absorbed in our own feelings, view and agenda, it is virtually impossible to have a genuine communication. When we react by feeling personally threatened, it is easy to draw battle lines, and have the relationship degenerate into "us" against "them", making the possibility of communication very difficult. When we lock into certain restricted mind-sets, we cannot go beyond the nine dots and perceive the whole system of which we and our views are only a part. But when both sides in a relationship expand the domain of their thinking and are willing to consider each other's point of view and the system as a whole, then extraordinary new possibilities emerge, as imaginary but all-too-limiting boundaries in the mind dissolve.

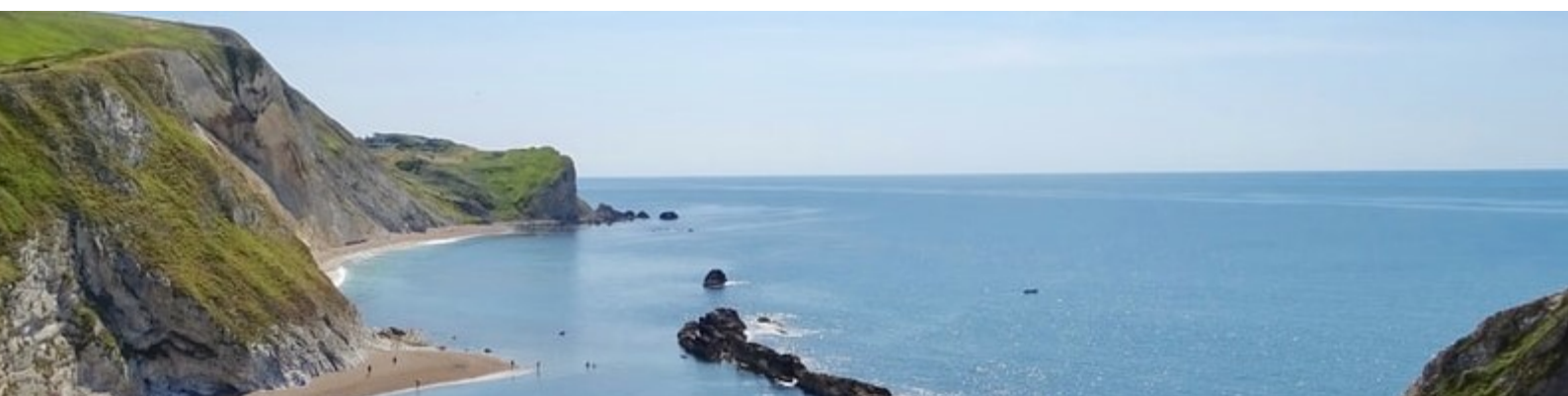
Even when one party takes responsibility for thinking of the whole system and the other does not, the system is altered and new possibilities for conflict resolution and understanding may emerge. This response requires us to be centred, awake and mindful. We become grounded in our breathing and in seeing the situation as a whole without reacting totally out of fear, even if fear is present as is likely in our real-life stressful encounters with people. It means showing that we are willing to see things from the other person's perspective, that we are receptive, and willing to look and listen. This allows the other person to maintain their integrity, and for both to become partners rather than adversaries, whether the other person wants to or not. In this position, though you don't know what will happen next, you've many options. By maintaining your centre, you are in control of yourself and much less vulnerable to harm. If you are committed to meeting each moment mindfully, with as much calmness and acceptance as you can muster and with a sense of your own integrity and balance, new and more harmonious solutions often come to mind as you need them.



Mindful Communication

The patience, wisdom and firmness that can come out of a moment of mindfulness in the heat of a stressful interpersonal situation yield fruit almost immediately, because the other person usually senses that you cannot be intimidated or overwhelmed. He or she will feel your calmness and self-confidence and will probably be drawn toward it because it embodies inner peace. When you are willing to be secure enough in yourself to listen to what other people want and how they see things without constantly reacting, objecting, arguing, fighting, resisting, making yourself right and them wrong, they will feel heard, welcomed, accepted. This feels good to anybody. They will then be much more likely to hear what you have to say too, maybe not right away, but as soon as emotions calm. There will be more chance for communication and a meeting of minds, and an acknowledging and coming to terms with differences. In this way, your mindfulness practice can have a healing effect on your relationships.

The most effective way to communicate with others is by being assertive (rather than either submissive or aggressive). This comes from giving yourself and others equal rights, and respecting both your own and other's boundaries. Assertiveness involves clear, calm thinking and respectful negotiation, where each person is entitled to their opinion. It requires you to have an awareness of your feelings *as feelings*, so you can break out of the passive or hostile modes that so automatically rear up when we feel put upon or threatened. The first step towards becoming more assertive is to practice knowing how you are actually feeling. This may not be so easy, especially if you have been conditioned all your life to believe that is wrong to have certain kinds of thoughts or feelings, which can lead to unconscious suppression of feelings, or alternatively to feeling guilty about what you are feeling. The first lesson in assertiveness is that your feelings are simply *your feelings!* They are neither "good" nor "bad" - these are just judgments that you or others impose *onto* your feelings.



Mindful Communication

When you know what you are feeling and have practiced reminding yourself that feelings are just feelings and it's okay to feel them, you can begin to explore ways of being true to your feelings without letting them create more problems for you by becoming passive or aggressive. When being assertive, it is very helpful to say how you are feeling or seeing things by making "*I*" *statements* rather than "*you*" *statements*. "*I*" statements convey information about your feelings and views, rather than saying things like "*You* make me so angry" or "*You* are always making demands on me". Can you see that this is saying that the other person is in control of *your* feelings, so handing power over your feelings to another person? The alternative is to say something like "I feel so angry when you say this or do that". This is more accurate. It says how *you* feel in response to something. This leaves the other person room to hear what you are saying about how you see and feel without feeling blamed or attacked, and without being told he has more power than he does.

The most important part of effective communication is to be mindful of your own thoughts, feelings and speech as well as of the whole situation. Most of the time, cultivating this approach will resolve potential conflicts and create greater harmony and mutual respect. In the process, you are much more likely to get what you want and what you need from your encounters with other people - and so are they!

Wonder

I wonder what would happen if
I treated everyone like I was in love
With them, whether I liked them or not
And whether they respond or not and no matter
What they say or do to me, and even if I see
Things in them that are ugly, twisted, petty,
Cruel, vain, deceitful, indifferent, just accept
All that and turn my attention to some small
Weak, tender, hidden part, and keep my eyes on
That until it shines like a beam of light
Like a bonfire I can warm my hands by and trust
It to burn away all the waste which is not,
Never was, my business to
Meddle with.

Derek Tasker



Session 6 Homework

Practice for 45 minutes each day over the next 6 days. Work with different combinations of the 3 main practices we have learned — body scan, sitting and mindful movement. Record your practices and reactions on the Homework Record Form.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Regular: Practice three times as with previous weeks. Record your practices and comments.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Coping: whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings or when you start to feel stressed (paying particular attention to *thoughts*)

Start bringing awareness to what you are taking into your body and into your mind from the outside world, noticing what is truly nourishing and what is not; this can include interactions with other people, food, drink, reading, tv, internet, where you go and what you do, etc.



Session 7 Life-Style Choices: How can I best look after myself?

What we actually *do* with our time, from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from one year to the next, can be a very powerful influence affecting our general well-being and our ability to respond skilfully to the challenges of our lives.

You might like to try asking yourself these questions:

- ♦ Of the things that I do what nourishes me, what increases my sense of actually being alive and present, rather than merely existing? ('nourishing' activities)
- ♦ Of the things that I do, what drains me, what decreases my sense of actually being alive and present, what makes me feel I am merely existing, or worse? ('depleting' activities)
- ♦ Accepting that there are some aspects of life that I simply cannot change, am I consciously choosing to increase the time and effort I give to the things that nurture me, and to decrease the time and effort I give to the things that deplete me?
- ♦ How could I learn to approach the things that at present I find depleting in a different way? To practice being present with them, even if I find them boring and unpleasant – to bring the same curiosity and attention to them that I did to the raisin, instead of judging them or wishing that they were not there?



Session 7 Life-Style Choices: How can I best look after myself?

By being actually present in more of our moments, and making mindful decisions about what we really need at each of these moments, we can use activity to become more aware and alert.

This is true both for the regular pattern of our daily lives and for times of difficulty in our lives. We can use our day-by-day experience to discover and cultivate activities that nourish us, which we can use as tools to cope with periods of challenge. The availability of these tools means that we will be more likely to persist with them in the face of difficulty.

For example, one of the simplest ways to take care of your physical and mental well-being is to take daily physical exercise - as a minimum, aim for three brisk 10 minute walks a day, and also, if at all possible, other types of exercise such as mindful stretching, yoga, swimming, jogging, etc. Once exercise is part of your daily routine, it is readily available as a way of responding to external and internal difficulties as they arise.

Don't Exhaust yourself

Only our searching for happiness
prevents us from seeing it.
It's like a vivid rainbow which you pursue without
ever catching,
or a dog chasing its own tail.
Although peace and happiness do not exist
as an actual thing or place,
it is always available
and accompanies you every instant.

Wanting to grasp the ungraspable,
you exhaust yourself in vain.
As soon as you open and relax this tight fist
of grasping,
infinite space is there- open, inviting, and
comfortable.

Make use of this spaciousness, this freedom
and natural ease.
Don't search any further.

Don't go into the tangled jungle
looking for the great awakened elephant
who is already resting quietly at home,
in front of your own hearth.

Lama Gendun, "Free and Easy"

Using the Breathing Space: The Action Step

The Breathing Space provides a way to remind us to use activity to deal with unpleasant feelings as they arise. After reconnecting with an expanded awareness in the breathing space, it may feel appropriate to take some *considered action*. In dealing with difficult times the following activities can be particularly helpful:

- **Doing something pleasurable**
- **Doing something that will give you a sense of satisfaction**
- **Acting mindfully**

To work out which is most likely to be helpful, ask yourself:

- *What do I need for myself right now?*
- *How can I best take care of myself right now?*

1. Do something pleasurable:

Be kind to your body.

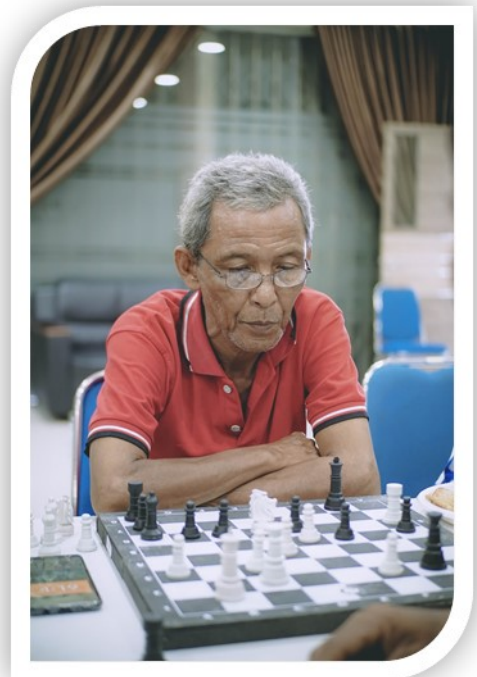
Have a nice hot bath; have a nap; treat yourself to your favourite food without feeling guilty; have your favourite hot drink; give yourself a facial or manicure.

Engage in enjoyable activities.

Go for a walk (maybe with the dog or a friend); visit a friend; do your favourite hobby; do some gardening; take some exercise; phone a friend; spend time with someone you like; cook a meal; go shopping; watch something funny or uplifting on TV; read something that gives you pleasure; listen to music that makes you feel good.

Be aware of barriers to pleasure:

Be aware of 'killjoy thoughts' that tell you you won't enjoy a pleasure you have planned, that you don't deserve it, that you should be enjoying it more, thoughts that distract you from fully experiencing what you are doing.



Using the Breathing Space: The Action Step

2. Do something that gives you a sense of mastery, satisfaction, achievement, or control:

Clean the house; clear out a cupboard or drawer; catch up with letter writing; do some work; pay a bill: do something that you have been putting off doing; take some exercise (N.B. It's especially important to congratulate yourself whenever you complete a task or part of a task and to break tasks down into smaller steps and only tackle one step at a time.)

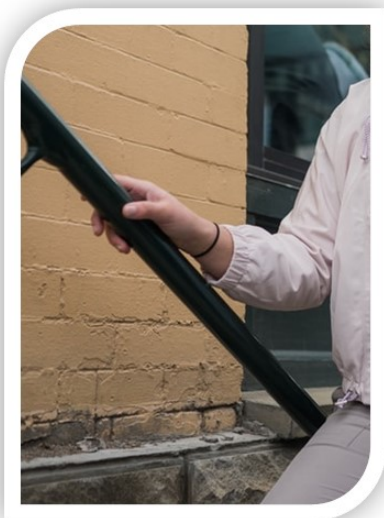


3. Act mindfully:

When we are faced with difficulties or are feeling stressed our minds tend to be preoccupied with worries. We may be going over and over things that have happened in the past, trying to make sense of why we feel the way we do, or anxiously wondering about the future. The end result is that our attention is not really on what we are doing – we are lost in our heads, rather than focused on what is happening right here and now. This means that activities that might nourish us become depleting.

Try to focus your entire attention on just what you are doing right now; keep yourself in the very moment you are in: put your mind in the present (e.g. "Now I am walking down the stairs...now I can feel the banister beneath my hand...now I'm walking into the kitchen...now I'm turning on the light..."); be aware of your breathing as you do other things; be aware of the contact of your feet with the floor as you walk.

The more powerful your thoughts and feelings, the more difficult this may be. But, with practice, you will find that your capacity to be more fully present in each moment will grow.



Using the Breathing Space: The Action Step

Remember:

Be open minded: Try to perform your action as an experiment. Try not to prejudge how you will feel after it is completed. Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way.

Aim for a broad range: Consider a range of activities and don't limit yourself to a favourite few. Sometimes trying new behaviours can be interesting in itself. "Exploring" and "inquiring" often work against "withdrawal" and "retreat".

Don't expect miracles: Carry out what you have planned as best you can. Putting extra pressure on yourself by expecting this to alter things dramatically may be unrealistic. Rather, activities are helpful in building your overall sense of control in the face of shifts in your mood.

When things feel difficult: The mindfulness skills we have been developing are particularly relevant to these times. When we are under pressure we are more likely to revert back to old habits of mind. The more 'tuned in' you are to yourself and the world about you, the wiser your decisions, choices and actions will be. This is particularly helpful when you are facing challenges.

At these times try asking yourself:

"What do I need to help me get through this time?"

Stress Management Planner

Stress Indicators (Warning signs)

E.g. Cramming too much in - sense of compulsion, headaches, irritability, going to bed later, sleeplessness, procrastination, etc.

Unhelpful Actions/Strategies

e.g. eating too much/not eating, more coffee/painkillers, unhelpful self-talk/guilt, working harder, mindless telly

Helpful Actions/Strategies

e.g. Listening to music, going for a run/physical exercise, turn telly off, talk with friends, have a bath etc

Session 7 Homework

From all the different forms of formal mindfulness practice you have experienced, settle on a form of practice that you intend to use on a regular, daily basis for the next few weeks (up to and after the end of the course). Use this practice on a daily basis this week. Try your practice with and without recordings. Also practice informally by being as aware and awake as possible throughout the day. Look for ways to make this practice your own. Record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Regular: Practice three times a day as in previous weeks. Record your practice and any comments.

3-Minute Breathing Space - Responsive plus action: Practice whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings.

What are your early warning signs that you are feeling stressed? Set up an early warning system using the sheet provided.

Now write down suggestions to yourself for an action plan that you can use as a framework for coping action once you have noticed the early warning signs.

Notes:

Session 8: Keeping Your Mindfulness

Alive

“Mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back in touch with our own wisdom and vitality... The most important point is to be really yourself and not try to become anything you are not already... Being in touch with your deepest nature, and letting it flow out of you unimpeded. “

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness meditation for everyday life, Piatkus, 1994.

Using What Has Been Learned

The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully **responding** to situations rather than immediately running off pre-programmed, “automatic” reactions have been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skilful action directed at achieving change in the inner or outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that it might be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that, by carrying on, trying to solve an insolvable problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up "banging one's head on a brick wall," exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one's sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, **you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it.** Choosing not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.



Daily Mindfulness

When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, **bring your attention to your breathing**. Observe five mindful breaths.

Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.

Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing- **use any sound as the bell of mindfulness**. Really listen and be present and awake.

Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. **Observe five mindful breaths**.

Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. **Look at your food and realise that the food was connected to something that nourished its growth**. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.

Notice your body while you walk or stand. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing?

Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking, can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?

Whenever you wait in a queue, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen. **Are you feeling impatient?**

Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, **let go of the excess tension**. Is there tension stored anywhere in your body? For example, your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back? If possible, stretch or do yoga once a day.

Focus attention on your daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing up, brushing your hair, putting on your shoes, doing your job. **Bring mindfulness to each activity**.

Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and **bring attention to your breathing**. Observe five mindful breaths.

Adapted from: Saki Santorelli, EdD, University of Massachusetts Medical School

The Future

Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be over the next couple of weeks, and stick to it as best as you can.

Also, remember breathing space– regular practice provides a way of ‘checking in with yourself’ a few times a day. Let it also be your first response in times of difficulty, stress or unhappiness– **whatever happens.**



KEEP BREATHING

Larry Rosenberg suggests a 6 stage reminder to take away from a course such as this.

1. Where possible do just one thing at a time.
2. Pay full and curious attention.
3. When the mind wanders bring it back.
4. Repeat step 3 several billion times! (Kindly).
5. Note what has distracted you.
6. Simply do the best you can in whatever you do.

Reflection

At this point you may find it interesting and useful to reflect back on your original reasons for coming on the course and what you now feel has been the learning for you in the last 8 weeks.

What did I get out of coming, if anything?

What did I learn?

What sacrifices have I made to do this course?

Reflection

At this point you may find it interesting and useful to reflect back on your original reasons for coming on the course and what you now feel has been the learning for you in the last 8 weeks.

What are my biggest blocks or obstacles to continuing the practice?

What can I do to help myself not get stuck, and to continue practising?



If I had my life to live over

I'd like to make more mistakes next time.

I'd relax, I would limber up. I would be sillier than I had been on this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Nadine Stair 85 years old

When we take up the practice of mindfulness, we are acknowledging - literally remembering - our capacity for wakefulness and stability in the midst of chaos, uncertainty and the arrival of the unexpected. This is a necessary skill, an essential discipline. Each time we take our seat, holding ourselves upright, opening fully, without unnecessary strain, to this breath, this moment, these thoughts, this feeling, we are embodying our capacity to be present and awake. In this way we reconnect with our basic nature—the truth behind the story, behind the momentary activity of the mind. What I realized beyond question that night in Boston was that fear is workable. This had nothing to do with getting rid of the fear or uttering internal affirmations that I was not afraid; rather it involved realizing that right next to the fear was an innate capacity to be with it rather than to deny, dismiss, or be swept away by it.

The fear returned on opening night. I remember being able to move into and through those moments. The first flaring of hollowness in the belly and wetness in the mouth, the deliberate internal shift, the turning toward the audience, the anxious throb in the chest spilling out into a sureness of speech and action that carried me into the next moment.

When we sit, literally taking our seat with non-judgmental awareness, we begin to recover our ability both to stand firm and to flow more fully into and with experience. We begin to see that everything is in flux, temporal, simultaneously vivid and alive. We begin to treat ourselves more kindly, see ourselves more clearly, and in turn see and treat others similarly. The barriers between self and other start to blur. We touch the brokenness and wholeness of being—our humanity—with less struggle, more ownership, allowing ourselves to be more fully with what is.

This is not to suggest that we can "breathe" or "sit" our troubles away. Meditation is not meant to be another opportunity for magical thinking, an elaborate method for deepening denial, or a means of blinding ourselves to what is before us. What stands as a counterbalance is our commitment, our intention to be awake, and our willingness to relate honestly with ourselves and with others. In this way mindfulness is healing.

Further Reading

There is a vast range of books which will support your ongoing explorations in the use of mindfulness within your life.

We particularly recommend:

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, published by Piatkus

This book helpfully details the use of mindfulness meditation to deal with the physical and mental effects of stress and illness, giving a comprehensive guide to with the full catastrophe of life; however this manifests in our own lives. It is the basis for the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course, and gives plenty of extra information and ideas as well.

The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness (purchase includes audio CD narrated by Jon Kabat-Zinn) by J. Mark G. Williams, John D. Teasdale, Zindel V. Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, published by the Guilford Press

This book draws on the collective wisdom of four internationally renowned cognitive therapy and mindfulness experts to help you break the mental habits that can lead to despair. It is relevant to all not just those who experience depression in their lives. This authoritative, easy-to-use self-help programme is based on methods clinically proven to reduce the recurrence of chronic unhappiness.

Mindfulness meditation for everyday life by Jon Kabat-Zinn, published by Piatkus

This is particularly useful for those who have done the 8-week course. It has very short chapters - reflections on mindfulness in everyday life - which are easy to read, thought-provoking, and very helpful in keeping our mindfulness alive!

Websites:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/>
<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/>

Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
You must travel where the Indian in the white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends out into the day to mail letters and purchase bread,
only kindness that rises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

Naomi Shihab Nye

Words under the words: selected poems (A far corner book), Eight mountain press, USA (1998).

Homework Record Keeper

Record on the homework record form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/Date	Homework Number	Comments

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