



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## *A Course in Meditation and Mindfulness*

Presented by the BC Association  
for Living Mindfully (BCALM)

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# The Art of Living Mindfully

## **Module 1**

### *Introduction*

#### Objectives:

1. To understand the objectives of the ALM course
2. To introduce the concepts and practice of mindfulness, cognitive behavioural therapy, and meditation
3. To begin to create a meditation practice

#### Skill:

- To introduce the Relaxation Breath and The Body Scan



"Think this is bad? You should see the inside of my head."

David Sipress, The New Yorker, June 26/10

## Tips for Creating a Practice

- **Choose a sacred time and space-** There is no perfect time for meditation. Consistency is the most important thing in creating a practice. Ensure there are minimal distractions: phones, pagers, etc.
- **Sit in a comfortable, upright, and relaxed position-** Sit with a straight back, either in a chair or on the floor. Try a cushion under you so that your knees are lower than your hips. Allow your face to relax into a natural smile and your hands to rest gently in your lap or else cupped one atop of the other.
- **Using a guided meditation** can make it easier to get started on your meditation practice. As time goes on you may choose to use a guided meditation or not. If you are not using a guided meditation set a timer to end your sit.
- **BCALM has recorded meditations** on [bcalm.ca](http://bcalm.ca). Your Facilitator will let you know which track to access each week. Alternatively, you can use any guided meditations that you find that you enjoy. Try and choose ones that align with the content of each module – look at the first page of the module under “Skills”
- **“Meditate anyway....”-** Your mind and your life will present LOTS of reasons and justifications for why you could not do your practice on any given day. Meditate anyway! Even if it is only for 5-10 minutes, it is the consistency and routine that will create a strong practice.
- **Be gentle....** with yourself and with your practice. Let go of any preconceived ideas of perfection in your meditation practice.

Simply be curious about whatever arises.

## **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing without being reactive or judging the experience.

Often, we spend much of our lives either reliving the past or planning for the future and tend to miss the only time that we actually are living – the present.

## **What is Meditation?**

Meditation is the formal practice of mindfulness. It strengthens one's ability to be aware moment-to-moment: simply to BE where we are rather than in the past or the future. The breath can be used as an anchor for attention and allows focus to be centered on the ever-present rhythm of the breath to promote awareness, calmness, and clarity.

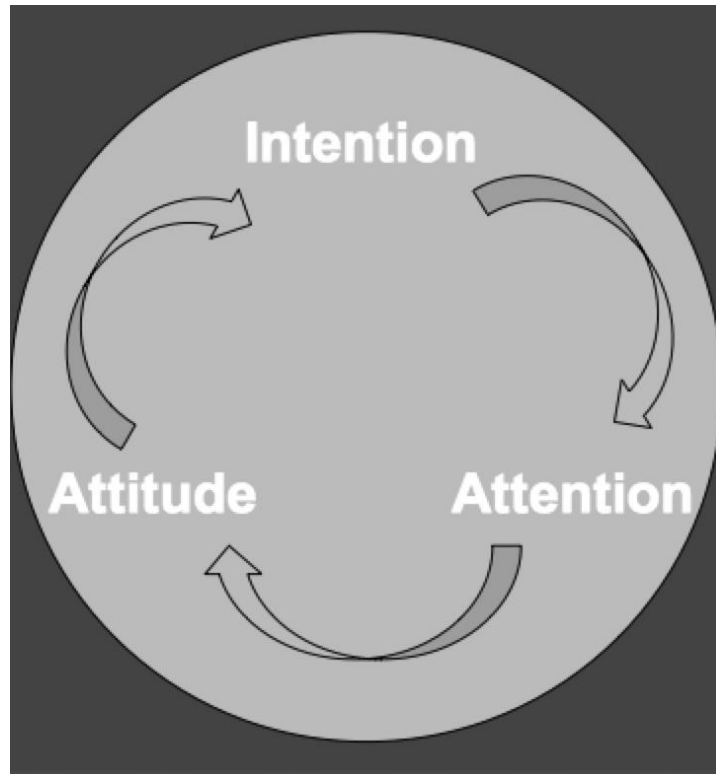
ALM teaches secular concepts and practices that originated from teachings of Buddhist psychology. Mindfulness skills of presence, compassion, and focused attention are also found in many other spiritual and religious traditions. That said, mindfulness itself is in no way religious. If you do have a religious practice, you may find it is enriched as you become more present.

**Mindfulness is paying attention,  
on purpose,  
in the present moment, without judgment.**

*Jon Kabat-Zinn PhD*

*Author of Full Catastrophe Living and Wherever You go There You Are*

## The 3 Core Elements of Mindfulness Practice



### **Intention**

The intention behind our meditation practice can be thought of as a direction, rather than a destination. Practically we can set our intention by choosing a time and place to practice. Often our intentions are unconscious and yet vividly play out in our life. Mindfulness invites us to be conscious of our intentions.

### **Attention**

In meditation we learn that we can choose where to focus our attention. We start by paying attention to the body and the breath, and in so doing we learn that, while we cannot stop our thoughts and feelings, we can choose how we want to attend to them.

### **Attitude**

We can intentionally cultivate attitudes which support a fruitful mindfulness meditation practice. These attitudes (see below) tend to evoke bodily sensations of openness, expansion, and ease, while their opposites (striving, judgment, impatience etc.) evoke bodily sensations of tightness or contraction.

## Attitudes to Cultivate When Practicing Mindfulness

1. **Non-judging:** Mindfulness is cultivated by assuming a stance of non-judging witness to our own experience. This requires that we become aware of the constant stream of evaluative and judging thoughts that we have—then try to step back. With a non-judging mind, things are neither “good” nor “bad”—but simply present or absent.
2. **Patience:** Patience demonstrates that we understand and accept that things have their own time for unfolding. We tend to be impatient with ourselves, expecting we “should” be able to calm the mind, stop the thoughts, or get over whatever is upsetting us. These things have their own schedule and patience allows us to simply observe the unfolding of the mind and body over time.
3. **Beginner’s Mind:** In order to be able to see the richness of the present moment, it helps to cultivate a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the very first time. With beginner’s mind, the joys of the world as it unfolds around us becomes new again, as if we are all children—freed from our old expectations based on past experiences.
4. **Trust:** You are your own best guide. This is true. It is far better to trust your own feelings, intuition, and experience than to get caught up in the authority of the “experts”. If at any time something doesn’t feel right to you, pay attention, examine your own feelings, and trust in your intuition and your own basic wisdom and goodness.
5. **Non-striving:** Meditation is different from all other human activity: we do it not with a goal or destination in mind, but rather with a mind towards simply being—not doing. There is no goal other than for you to be conscious of yourself as you are.
6. **Acceptance:** Acceptance involves seeing things as they are in the present. We may not like it, but if that’s the way things are, so they are. Sooner or later we all must come to terms with things the way they are and accept them. Acceptance allows us to cease struggling to change things that are beyond our ability to control and is the first step in any genuine process of change. Only with acceptance can the mind become free.
7. **Letting Go:** Letting go, also known as “non-attachment”, is fundamental to the mindfulness meditation practice. In our minds, there are often things we want to hold on to, whether they are good memories or bad feelings. Our minds tend to grasp some thoughts and push others away. With letting go, we put aside the tendency to elevate some parts of our experience and reject others—simply letting our experience be what it is, accepting things as they are without judging.

*Adapted from Full Catastrophe Living, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990*

## Taking care of yourself while learning to meditate



It is important to remember—especially if we have a personal history of trauma—to care for ourselves as we practice building tolerance for our difficult experiences. While we do need to venture outside of our comfort zone to grow (and this is uncomfortable!) it is important to notice if we are moving beyond the growth zone and into the panic/overwhelm zone.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or panicky, please take care of yourself in whatever way you need. You might want to use a 3-3-3 grounding practice: noticing three things you can see, three things you can hear, and three things you can touch or feel. Trust your own wisdom to know if you have to step away from the meditation.



## Common Myths About Mindfulness and Meditation

### 1) Mindfulness is a relaxation technique

The goal of mindfulness is **not relaxation or bliss** (although this may be a pleasant side effect at times). The only goal of mindfulness is nonjudgmental awareness.

### 2) Meditation means going into a trance.

We are not looking to go into a **trance, becoming unconscious or having a blank mind**. In fact, the opposite is true: Mindfulness allows us to become more attuned to our moment-by-moment thoughts, emotions and sensations.

### 3) Meditation is about escaping reality

In fact, meditation asks us to face reality! Mindfulness is an honest and compassionate meeting of reality, just as it is. Mindfulness asks us to fully experience our life and to be present with what we discover.

### 4) Meditation is 'self-centered'.

Mindfulness is **not selfish**. Compassion for the self leads to compassion for others. When we learn to forgive and love ourselves despite our own frailty and imperfections, compassion for others naturally arises.

### 5) A few weeks of Meditation practice and all my problems will be solved!

Mindfulness is **not a quick fix**. You may see some changes quite quickly but, it takes time and effort to witness lasting change.

*Adapted from Mindfulness in Plain English, by Henepola Gunaratana (2011)*

## 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 are 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 whatever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

—Jelaluddin Rumi,



## On Commitment

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic and power in it.

Begin it now.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

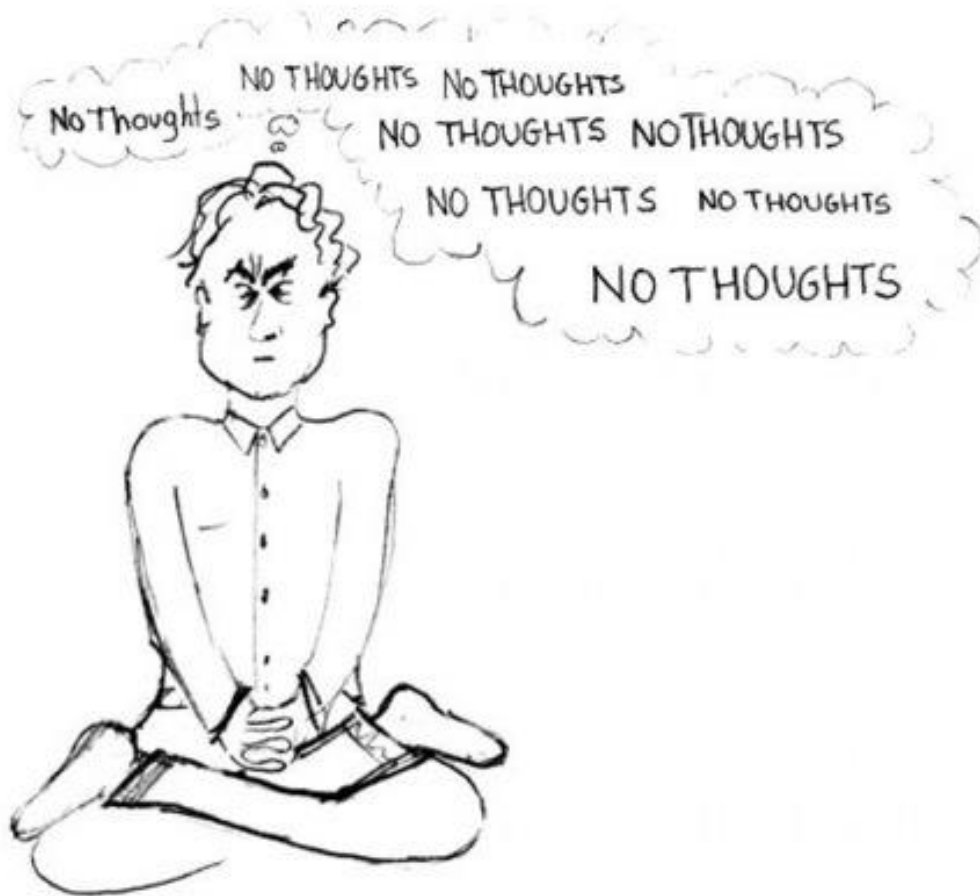
## Contract of Commitment

- I am committed to attending the full 90+ minutes a week for 8 weekly classes of the Art of Living Mindfully and to doing the meditation practice and home practice exercises required (up to 30 minutes per day).
- I will leave my judgements at the door and be open to the lessons, challenges, and gifts that the experience in the sessions may offer.
- I will honour this as a sacred time and space – committing to a vow of confidentiality regarding any personal content I encounter during the course and maintaining a sense of respect for myself, the other students, and the facilitator(s).
- I will endeavour to arrive on time to the sessions and bring with me a sense of curiosity and trust and a commitment to the work required.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Facilitator(s)** \_\_\_\_\_



HOW NOT TO MEDITATE

## Relaxation Breath

The Relaxation Breath is a practice of grounding. It is a practice of returning to this moment and to this breath in your body, right here and right now.

Start by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance for a few minutes. Take a moment to be mindful of this time in which you are allowing yourself to just be, and to release anything that is not serving you.

Allow your eyes to close if this is comfortable, or else just soft focus them on an area in front of you. Sense your body here and now. Let your face be soft and your jaw loose. Let your shoulders drop away from your ears and let your arms and hands rest easily.

Begin again by taking 5-7 deep full inhalations and exhalations, maximizing the air entering and leaving your body. Sometimes it is useful to place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest. As you begin your inhalation, allow your abdomen to expand. As your in-breath maximizes the expansion of your abdomen, continue to inhale into your chest. As you exhale, reverse the process, releasing slowly and completely in your chest and then your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose and then out through your nose or mouth, each exhalation carrying energy of surrender and release.

With each breath in be aware of any areas of tension, busyness or holding in your body or mind. As you breathe out, soften, and let go of this tension, this busyness ...and of anything that is not serving you.

With each inhalation, breathe in vitality, wakefulness, and awareness. As you exhale, soften, lighten, and surrender, settling into your body, into this space and into this moment...

The Relaxation Breath is a portable tool to use casually in your life whenever you are feeling stressed, dissociated, or overwhelmed. It is also the first skill to bring formally into your sitting meditation practice. When we sit, we use the Relaxation Breath to come back to the moment, and to ground ourselves right here and right now, leaving all of our details and tensions and busyness aside in order to allow our breath, and our awareness itself, to take center stage.

## Body Scan

Keeping your awareness on the breath, begin scanning your body from head to toe, using your breath to let go of the tension within your body and mind.

With every inhalation, be aware of any sensation in your physical body. *Feel* this sensation, and then as you exhale, letting go of any tension you notice as you breathe out.

Begin in your scalp, then your forehead, your face, ears, nose, eyes...

Continue noticing any sensations and, with each exhalation, releasing any tension or *holding*.

Continue to gently shift your awareness to the rest of your body, slowly, mindfully. Your mouth, chin, jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers...

Each time your thoughts, emotions, or fatigue carry you away, bring your attention to these as mental events, anchor back into the breath and then, gently, escort your attention back to the part of the body you were last breathing into.

Noticing any sensation in your upper back, in your chest, your heart, lungs, diaphragm...

Move as slowly as you need to, allowing yourself to be aware of the sensations with your inhalation, and the release of any tension with your exhalation.

Breathe into your mid-back and lower back, your abdomen, liver, stomach, gut...

Breath by breath, bringing awareness into each part of the body and releasing anything you are holding onto in your pelvis, your hips, your thighs, your legs, your feet, your toes. Your thoughts may carry your focus away time and again, and each time, gently bring your awareness back to the breath and to the sensations in your body.

Breath by breath, moment by moment...

Once you have scanned your entire body (anywhere from 5-30 minutes), rest for a bit in the feeling of relaxation and calm.

Savour how your body and mind feel...

Remind yourself that this body scan is a gift to yourself. This is a place that you can return to anytime – for a few moments, or much longer – when you need to calm yourself, to heal, to ground, or to just relax.



## Home Practice Log – Week 1

DATES	Practice	Minutes	Comments
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 2

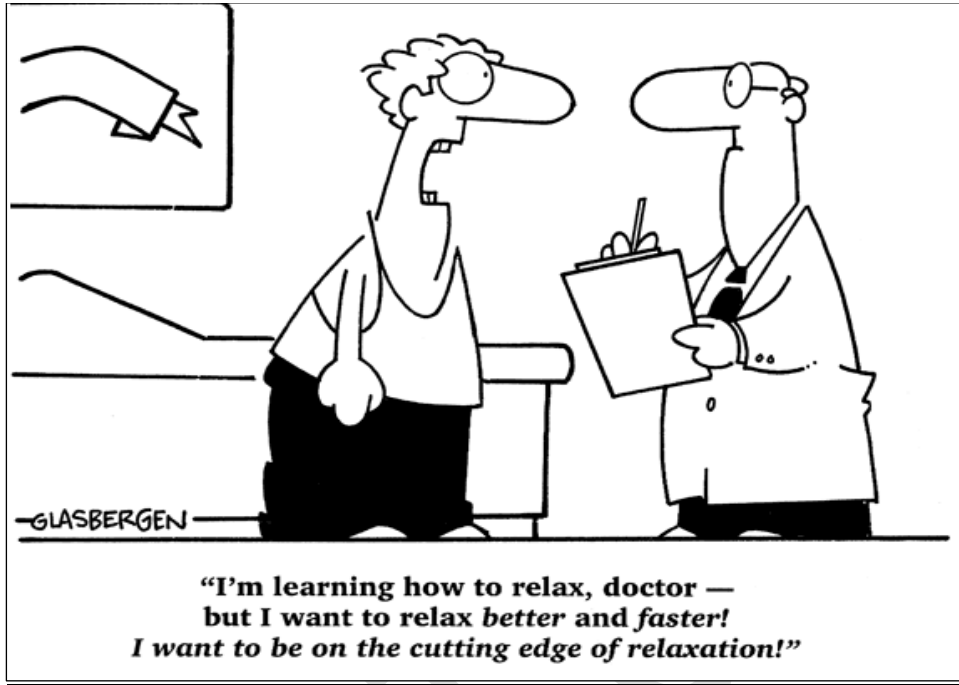
### *Understanding Stress Through the Lens of Mindfulness*

#### Objectives:

1. To understand stress reactivity and response
2. To understand the difference between autopilot and intentional noticing of the present moment
3. To recognize obstacles to meditation as opportunities for learning

#### Skill:

- Introduction to the core practice of mindfulness meditation on the breath



## Common Challenges in Meditation Practice

There are some challenges that arise so commonly in the course of meditation practice that the list of these challenges has remained steady over thousands of years. These experiences are not bad or wrong; they are simply part of meditation practice, and they do not mean that our meditation is “not working” or that we are doing the practice incorrectly.

These challenges are tricky because when they arise they can be extremely distracting, and people often feel defeated by them.

Learning to recognize these experiences as they arise and knowing that they are simply part of the experience of meditation practice can be helpful. It’s not just you!

By learning to recognize these challenges in our practice, we can also learn to notice them in our daily lives and notice, too, the ways in which we tend to react to them.

**AVERSION:** This is the experience of “not wanting.” Anytime we experience something and have the reaction of dislike, or the desire to make that experience go away, it could be described as “aversion”. This might include feelings of fear, anger, irritation, disgust, or resentment.

**CRAVING OR DESIRE:** This is the experience of “wanting” things to be different than they are. It can be as subtle as wanting to be relaxed and peaceful or as extreme as an intense urge to use a substance.

**RESTLESSNESS OR AGITATION:** This may be a sort of itchy discomfort. It can be experienced physically, as in a strong desire to move during meditation, or as mental agitation, in which the mind feels restless or uncomfortable.

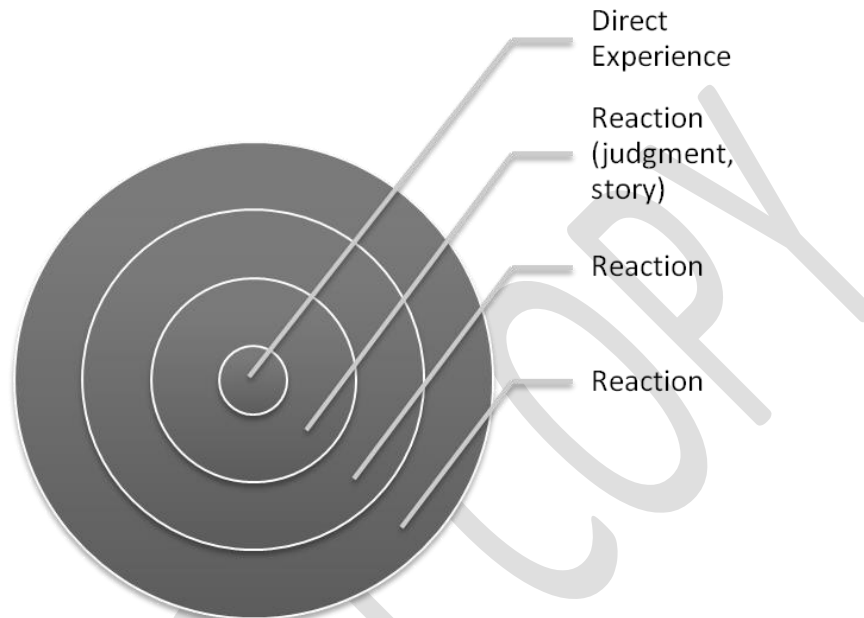
**SLOTH OR SLEEPINESS:** This might be physical drowsiness or mental sluggishness. It might be in the mind, the body, or both.

**DOUBT:** Doubt may be experienced as a sense of personal doubt (“I can’t do this practice”) or doubt about the practice and its utility (“This is ridiculous. Why would people just sit there and watch their breath?”) Doubt is an especially tricky challenge because it can be very convincing.

It may help to remember that meditation has been around for thousands of years and has helped millions of people transform their lives. There is no one who cannot participate in meditation; it is accessible to anyone who wishes to practice. It can also be a challenging practice. The important thing is to stay with it, and when these challenges arise to bring them, too, into our awareness.

*From Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention by S Bowen, N Chawla, A Marlatt (2011)*

## Mind's Process



When practicing mindfulness, we learn to notice the difference between direct experience (e.g., noticing sensations from the 5 senses, noticing emotions etc.) and the reactions we have to those experiences (e.g., stories and judgments).

Our primary intention is to observe our direct experiences, and then notice when our attention is pulled away by recognizing reactions to these experiences. These reactions might be physical (such as tension or resistance), mental (such as thoughts or stories) or emotional (such as frustration or yearning) and may trigger further reactions.

For example, there may be a primary experience, such as intense physical sensation, followed by a thought about the experience, such as “I can’t do this”, and then an emotional reaction to the thought, such as a feeling of defeat, which is followed by another thought, such as “I knew I shouldn’t have come to this group”.

With practice, we can learn to recognize when we are caught in stories or reactions and realize that we have a choice to pause and return to the present experience. Practicing this process of recognizing our cascade of internal events and returning to the present plants seeds of awareness and non-reactivity, thereby alleviating some of the undue suffering our minds can cause.

## **Self-Compassion: Not Sending the Second Arrow**

There is a two and a half thousand-year-old story attributed to the Buddha.

The story, passed down through the centuries, is called “The Second Arrow”.

The Buddha thought of all the difficulties and misfortunes that come into most of our lives and pictured them as an arrow shot deeply into us.

Then, the Buddha said, that for most of us humans, one arrow is not enough; in our reactivity to the situation, a second arrow is shot, a mental arrow, fired from ourselves to ourselves.

This is our reaction to being hurt and distressed. It is usually made up of a fair amount of self-criticism, self-loathing, self-blame, and anger at ourselves. Although we cannot often control what happens to us in life, we can learn to respond to it differently. We can, over time, learn to refuse to fire the second arrow.

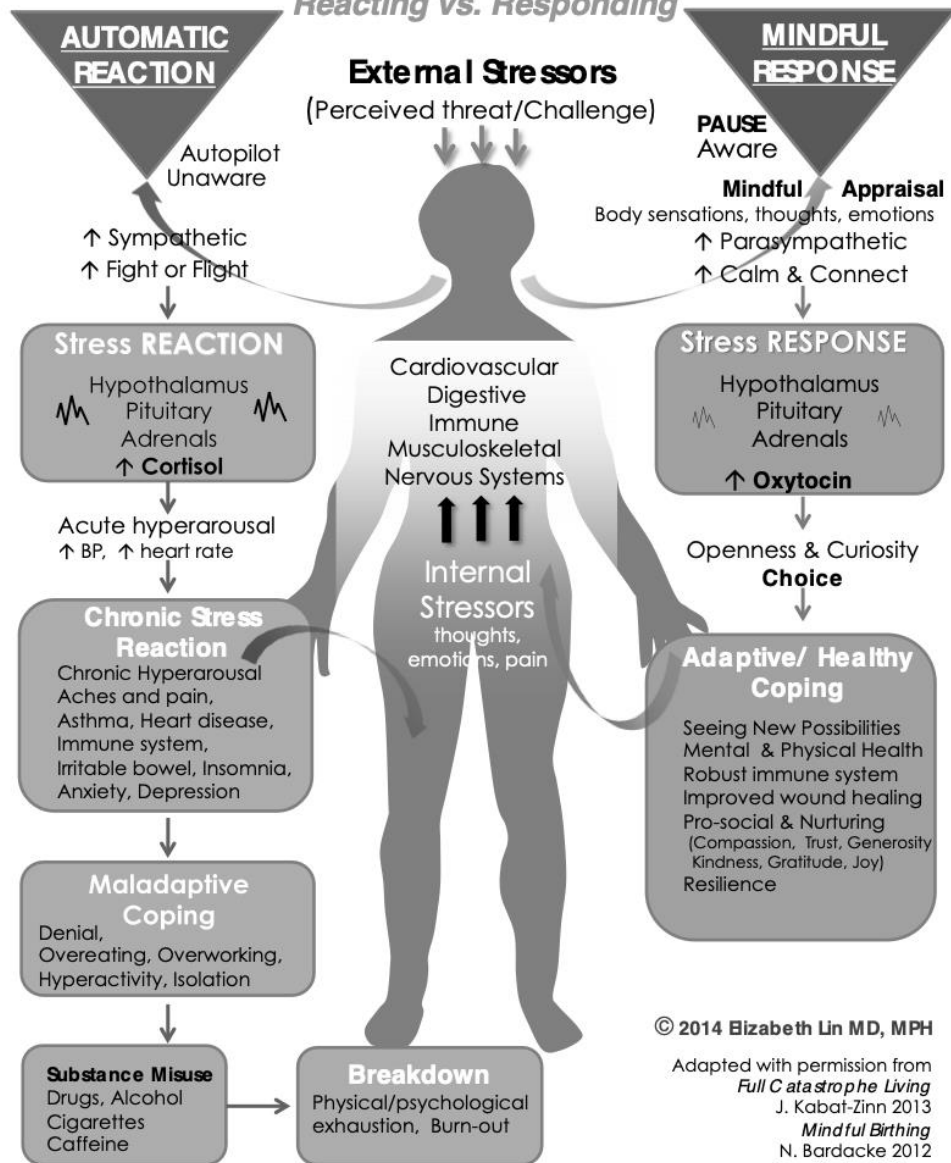
Awakening self-compassion, and learning to refrain from sending the second arrow, is often the greatest challenge we humans face on the path to wellness. We can have many difficulties in our lives, from addictions in the family, to failing relationships, to sickness of a child or family member, to a physical or mental illness, and more. These bring the pain of the first arrow, and we often have little control. Yet, when we begin to investigate, we can see that the greatest pain comes from how we feel about ourselves in the difficult situation - how we condemn ourselves, blame ourselves, and attack ourselves. This suffering is the second arrow.

The good news is that we do have some choice about the second arrow. We can stop attacking ourselves. We can learn to recognize when we are at war with ourselves and decide to pause and deepen our attention. And then we can allow ourselves to enter the gateway of self-compassion.

*Adapted from Graeme Armstrong as well as Tara Brach, Ph.D., from her book “True Refuge” Bantam Books 2012.*

# COPING WITH CHANGE

*Reacting vs. Responding*



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Adapted with permission from  
*Full Catastrophe Living*  
 J. Kabat-Zinn 2013  
*Mindful Birthing*  
 N. Bardacke 2012  
 Graphics by R. Ryan

## **Here, Now, Aware: The Power of Mindfulness**

*It's the essence of the contemplative path and the key to transforming our lives. In this teaching from his new book, A Heart Full of Peace, Insight Meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein describes the simple yet profound expression of our mind's natural awareness.*

Mindfulness is the key to the present moment. Without it we cannot see the world clearly, and we simply stay lost in the wanderings of our minds. Tulku Urgyen, a great Tibetan Dzogchen master of the last century, said, "There is one thing we always need, and that is the watchman named mindfulness- the guard who is always on the lookout for when we get carried away by mindlessness."

Mindfulness is the quality and power of the mind that is deeply aware of what's happening- without commentary and without interference. It is the mirror that simply reflects whatever comes before it. It serves us in the humblest ways, keeping us connected to brushing our teeth or having a cup of tea.

Mindfulness also keeps us connected to the people around us, so we don't just rush by them in the busyness of our lives.

Dalai Lama is an example of someone who beautifully embodies this quality of caring attention. After one conference in Arizona, His Holiness requested that all the employees of the hotel gather in the lobby so that he could greet each one of them before he left for his next engagement.

Mindfulness is the basis for wise action. When we see clearly what is happening in the moment, wisdom can direct our choices and actions, rather than old habits simply playing out our patterns of conditioning. And on the highest level, Buddha spoke of mindfulness as the direct path to enlightenment: "This is the mindfulness for the purifications of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearing of pain and grief, for the attainment of the Way, for the realization of nirvana."

I began to practice meditation when I was in the Peace Corps in Thailand. At the time I was very enthusiastic about philosophical discussion. When I first went to visit Buddhist monks, I arrived with a copy of Spinoza's *Ethics* in my hand, thinking to engage them in debate. Then I started going to discussion groups for Westerners held at one of the temples in Bangkok. I was so persistent in my questions that other people actually stopped coming to the group. Finally, perhaps out of desperation, one of the monks said, "Why don't you start meditating?"

I didn't know a thing about meditation at the time, and I became excited by the prospect of what I saw as an exotic Eastern practice. I gathered all the paraphernalia together, sat myself down on a cushion- and then set my alarm clock for five minutes. Surprisingly, something important happened even in those few minutes. For the first time I realized there was a way to look inward: there was a path for exploring the nature of my mind.



This realization is the turning point in everyone's spiritual life. We reach a certain point in our lives when something connects, and we acknowledge to ourselves "Yes I can do this." All of this was so new and interesting to me that, for a while, I'd invite my friends over to watch me meditate. Of course, they didn't come back often.

### **The Practice of Mindfulness**

We can start the practice of mindfulness meditation with the simple observation and feeling of each breath. Breathing in, we know we're breathing in breathing out, we know we are breathing out. It's very simple, but it is not easy. After just a few breaths, we hop on trains of association, getting lost in plans, memories, judgments, and fantasies. Sometimes it seems like we are in a movie theater where the film changes every few minutes. Our minds are like that. We wouldn't stay in the theater where the film changes so rapidly, but what can we do about our own internal screening room?

This habit of wandering mind is very strong, even when our reveries aren't pleasant and, perhaps, aren't even true. As Mark Twain put it "Some of the worst things in my life never happened." We need to train our minds, coming back again and again to the breath and simply beginning again. As our minds slowly steady, we begin to experience some inner calm and peace. From this place of greater stillness, we feel our bodies more directly and begin to open to both the pleasant and unpleasant sensations that might arise. At first, we may resist unpleasant feelings, but generally they do not last long. They are there for a while, we feel them, they are unpleasant- and then they are gone and something else comes along. And even if they come up repeatedly over a period of time, we begin to see their impermanent, insubstantial nature and to be less afraid of feeling them.

A further part of the training is becoming aware of our thoughts and emotions, those pervasive mental activities that so condition our minds, our bodies, and our lives. Have you ever stopped to consider what a thought is, not the content but the very nature of the thought itself? Few people really explore that question "What is a thought?" What is the phenomenon that occurs so many times a day, to which we pay so little attention?

Not being aware of the thoughts that arise in our mind, nor of the very nature of thought itself, allows thoughts to then dominate our lives. Telling us to do this, say that, go here, go there, thoughts often drive us like we're their servants.

Once, when I was teaching in Boulder, Colorado, I was sitting quite comfortably in my apartment. Thoughts were coming and going, when one arose in my mind that said, "Oh, a pizza would be nice." I wasn't even particularly hungry, but this thought lifted me out of the chair, took me out the door, down the stairs, into the car, over to the pizza place, back into the car, up the stairs, and into my apartment, where I finally sat back down to eat the pizza. What drove that whole sequence of activity? Just a thought in my mind.

Obviously, there is nothing wrong with going out for pizza. What does merit our attention, though, is how much of our lives is driven by thoughts. Unnoticed, they have great power. But when we pay attention, when we observe thoughts as they arise and pass away, we begin to

see their essentially empty nature. They arise as little energy bubbles in the mind, rather than as reified expressions of a self.

Just as there was no all-powerful wizard behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*, the only power our thoughts have is the power we give them. All thoughts come and go. We can learn to be mindful of them and not be carried away by the wanderings of our mind. With mindfulness, we can exercise wise discernment: “Yes, I will act on this one; no, I’ll let that one go.”

## **Working with Emotions**

In the same way, we can train ourselves to be mindful of emotions, those powerful energies that sweep over our bodies and minds like great breaking waves. We experience such a wide range of emotions, sometimes within quite a short period of time: anger, excitement, sadness, grief, love, joy, compassion, jealousy, delight, interest, boredom. There are beautiful emotions and difficult ones—and for the most part, we are caught up in their intensity and the stories that give rise to them.

We easily become lost in our own melodramas. It’s illuminating to drop down a level and look at the energy of the emotion itself. What is sadness? What is anger? Seeing more deeply requires looking not at the emotion’s “story,” but at how the emotion manifests in our minds and bodies. It means taking an active interest in discovering the very nature of emotion.

The American monk Ajahn Sumedho expressed this kind of interest and investigation very well. He suggested that in a moment of anger or happiness, we simply notice: “Anger is like this,” “Happiness is like that.” Approaching our emotional life in this way is quite different from drowning in the intensity of feelings or being caught on the rollercoaster of our ever-changing moods. To do this takes mindfulness, attention, and concentration. We need to take care, though, not to misunderstand this practice and end up suppressing emotions or pushing them aside. The meditative process is one of complete openness to feelings. From the meditative perspective, the question is, “How am I relating to this emotion?” Am I completely identified with it or is the mind spacious enough to feel the grief, the rage, the joy, the love without being overwhelmed?

## **The Practice of Letting Go**

As you meditate, keep bringing your attention back to what is happening in the moment: the breath, a feeling in the body, a thought, an emotion, or even awareness itself. As we become more mindful and accepting of what’s going on, we find—both in meditation and in our lives—that we are less controlled by the forces of denial or addiction, two forces that drive much of life. In the meditative process we are more willing to see whatever is there, to be with it but not be caught by it. We are learning to let go.

In some Asian countries there is a very effective trap for catching monkeys. A slot is made in the bottom of a coconut, just big enough for the monkey to slide its hand in, but not big enough for the hand to be withdrawn when it’s clenched. Then they put something sweet in the coconut,

attach it to a tree, and wait for the monkey to come along. When the monkey slides its hand in and grabs the food, it gets caught. What keeps the monkey trapped? It is only the force of desire and attachment. All the monkey has to do is let go of the sweet, open its hand, slip out, and go free—but only a rare monkey will do that. And similarly, the twentieth-century Japanese Zen teacher Kosho Uchiyama speaks of “opening the hand of thought.”

Another quality that develops in meditation is a sense of humour about our minds, our lives, and our human predicament. Humour is essential on the spiritual path. If you do not have a sense of humor now, meditate for a while and it will come, because it's difficult to watch the mind steadily and systematically without learning to smile. Someone once asked Sasaki Roshi whether he ever went to the movies. “No,” he replied. “I give interviews.”

Some years ago, I was on retreat with the Burmese meditation master Sayadaw U Pandita. He is a strict teacher, and everyone on the retreat was being very quiet, moving slowly, and trying to be impeccably mindful. It was an intense time of training. At mealtime, we would all enter the dining room silently and begin taking food, mindful of each movement.

One day, the person online in front of me at the serving table lifted up the cover on a pot of food. As he put it down on the table, it suddenly dropped to the floor making a huge clanging noise. The very first thought that went through my mind was, “It wasn't me!” Now, where did that thought come from?

With awareness, one can only smile at these uninvited guests in the mind.

Through the practice of meditation we begin to see the full range of the mind's activities, old unskillful patterns as well as wholesome thoughts and feelings. We learn to be with the whole passing show. As we become more accepting, certain lightness develops about it all. And the lighter and more accepting we become with ourselves, the lighter and more accepting we are with others. We're not so prone to judge the minds of others once we have carefully seen our own. The poet, W.H. Auden, says it well: “Love your crooked neighbor with all your crooked heart.” Spacious acceptance doesn't mean that we act on everything equally. Awareness gives us the option of *choosing wisely*: we can choose which patterns should be developed and cultivated, and which should be abandoned.

Just as the focused lens of a microscope enables us to see hidden levels of reality, so too a concentrated mind opens us to deeper levels of experience and more subtle movements of thought and emotion. Without this power of concentration, we stay on the surface of things. If we are committed to deepening our understanding, we need to practice mindfulness and gradually strengthen concentration. One of the gifts of the teachings is the reminder that we can do this—each and every one of us.

## **Practicing in Daily Life**

In our busy lives in this complex and often confusing world, what practical steps can we take to train our minds?

The first step is to establish a regular, daily meditation practice. This takes discipline. It's not always easy to set aside time each day for meditation; so many other things call to us. But as with any training, if we practice regularly, we begin to enjoy the fruits. Of course, not every sitting will be concentrated. Sometimes we'll be feeling bored or restless. These are the inevitable ups and downs of practice. It's the commitment and regularity of practice that is important, not how any one sitting feels. Pablo Casals, the world-renowned cellist, still practiced three hours a day when he was ninety-three. When asked why he still practiced at that age, he said, "I'm beginning to see some improvement."

The training in meditation will only happen through your own effort. No one can do it for you. There are many techniques and traditions, and you can find the one most suitable for you. But regularity of practice is what effects a transformation. If we do it, it begins to happen; if we don't do it, we continue acting out the various patterns of our conditioning.

The next step is to train ourselves in staying mindful and aware of the body throughout the day. As we go through our daily activities, we frequently get lost in thoughts of past and future, not staying grounded in the awareness of our bodies.

A simple reminder that we're lost in thought is the very common feeling of *rushing*. Rushing is a feeling of toppling forward. Our minds run ahead of us, focusing on where we want to go, instead of settling into our bodies where we are.

Learn to pay attention to this feeling of rushing—which does not particularly have to do with how fast we are going. We can feel rushed while moving slowly, and we can be moving quickly and still be settled in our bodies. Either way, we're likely not present. If you can, notice what thought or emotion has captured the attention. Then, just for a moment, stop and settle back into the body: feel the foot on the ground, feel the next step.

The Buddha made a very powerful statement about this practice: "Mindfulness of the body leads to nirvana." This is not a superficial practice. Mindfulness of the body keeps us present—and therefore, we know what's going on. The practice is difficult to remember, but not difficult to do. It's all in the training: sitting regularly and being mindful of the body during the day.

To develop deeper concentration and mindfulness, to be more present in our bodies, and to have a skillful relationship with thoughts and emotions, we need not only daily training, but also time for retreat. It's very helpful, at times, to disengage from the busyness of our lives, for intensive spiritual practice. Retreat time is not a luxury. If we are genuinely and deeply committed to awakening, to freedom—to whatever words express the highest value you hold—a retreat is an essential part of the path.

We need to create a rhythm in our lives, establishing a balance between times when we are engaged, active, and relating in the world and times when we turn inward. As the great Sufi poet Rumi noted, "A little while alone in your room will prove more valuable than anything else that could ever be given you."

At first this "going inside" could be for a day, a weekend, or a week. At our meditation center, we

also offer a three-month retreat every year, and at the new Forest Refuge, people have come for as long as a year. We can do whatever feels appropriate and possible to find balanced rhythm between our lives in the world and the inner silence of a retreat. In this way we develop concentration and mindfulness on deeper and deeper levels, which then makes it possible to be in the world in a more loving and compassionate way.

*Joseph Goldstein is a cofounder and guiding teacher of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre Massachusetts. He is also a founder of the Forest Refuge, a center for long-term meditation practice. This teaching is adapted from his new book [A Heart Full of Peace](#)*

**“Between stimulus and response there is a space.  
In that space is our power to choose our response.  
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”**

***Viktor E. Frankl***

## Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver

## Calendar of Pleasant Events

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings while the event was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write about this event?
MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					
SUNDAY					

## Calendar of Unpleasant Events

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings while the event was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write about this event?
MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					
SUNDAY					



# Mindful Consumption

Mindful consumption includes the diet of the body, the diet of the mind and sensory experiences.

What am I consuming through my reading, media, conversations, etc.? How does this contribute to my ill-being or well-being?

What have you consumed this week that may be contributing to your level of stress or well-being?

<b>Nourishing Consumption</b>	<b>Depleting Consumption</b>

## Inviting a Media Fast

In the spirit of a curious exploration of your consumption and its effects on your wellness, invite a '*media fast*' into your life for the duration of the course. The nature and details of this '*fast*' may differ for each person as only you know where your relationship and attachments to media are more *sticky*. Is it news or Facebook, texting, or email? Is it Netflix or Twitter, radio or TV? Be gentle but purposeful. What would happen if you did not listen to CBC on the way to and from work? What would happen if you only checked your Facebook or email inbox once or twice a day?

"I am constantly surrounded by noise: TV, texts, the internet, music, meaningless small talk, my thinking. All of it blocks my consciousness, my ability to hear the ME that exists beneath the cacophony. I am my consciousness, my awareness of my circumstance, my presence in every moment. So, I cultivate silence every morning. I sit in it, bask in it, wrap it around myself, and hear and feel me. Then, wherever the day takes me, the people I meet are the beneficiaries of my having taken that time - they get the real me, not someone shaped and altered by the noise around me. Silence is the stuff of life."

Richard Wagamese, *Embers, One Ojibway's Meditations*

## Meditation – focused awareness using the breath as an anchor

- Start by sitting comfortably in a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance. Take a minute to be mindful of this sacred and healing time you are allowing yourself. Settle into the present.  
-
- Close your eyes, and begin by taking 5 deep, full breaths in and out (abdominal breaths, in through the nose, out through the mouth), allowing your exhalation to be slow and full, and releasing any tension in your body as you exhale the air from your lungs.  
-
- Now allow your breath to find its own rate and rhythm. Surrender to the wisdom of your own body and breath. Become an observer of your breath as it rises and falls... expands and contracts. Soften your attention to the breath as much as you can.  
-
- Begin to scan your body, from head to toe, moving slowly with the rhythm of the breath, inviting your awareness into each part of your body, and letting go of any tension you encounter simply by breathing it out. With each inhalation, being aware of any sensation in that part of the body – any holding, emotion -- and as you exhale, allowing whatever is there to soften and lighten, to slow and to dissipate. Continue until you have moved through your whole body. Take approximately 5-10 minutes.  
-
- Gently bring your focus back to simply observing, or ‘*witnessing*’ the breath at your abdomen. Feel the breath. See if you can suspend any judgements or stories and simply watch and witness whatever *is*. The mind will likely continue its banter of thoughts and stories, memories, and plans. However, ‘you’ can continue your attention on the breath. As a thought, feeling, sensation, or emotion arises, simply name it for what it is. You might say in your mind, “thinking”, “remembering”, “planning”, or maybe “anger”, “peace”, “loneliness”. Perhaps notice where you feel this in the body. If there is a physical sensation that grabs your focus, simply describe what you feel: “tight”, “heavy”, “tingling”, and “buzzing”. Try to just witness these thoughts, feelings, and sensations and to avoid any analysis or over thinking. If these thoughts, feelings, and sensation take you away from your focus for a moment or awhile, and into the stories, and judgements, and tangents of our mind’s movements, know that this is common, especially at the beginning of practice. Do not give energy to frustration or disappointment. Whenever you notice that you are no longer witnessing the breath, simply smile an inner smile, and gently bring yourself back to the breath – time and time again.  
-
- At the end of your meditation, keep your eyes closed and just sit easily for two or three minutes. Allow yourself to come out of the meditation gradually before opening your eyes and resuming your activity.  
-

## Home Practice Log – Week 2

DATES	Practice	Minutes	Comments
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 3

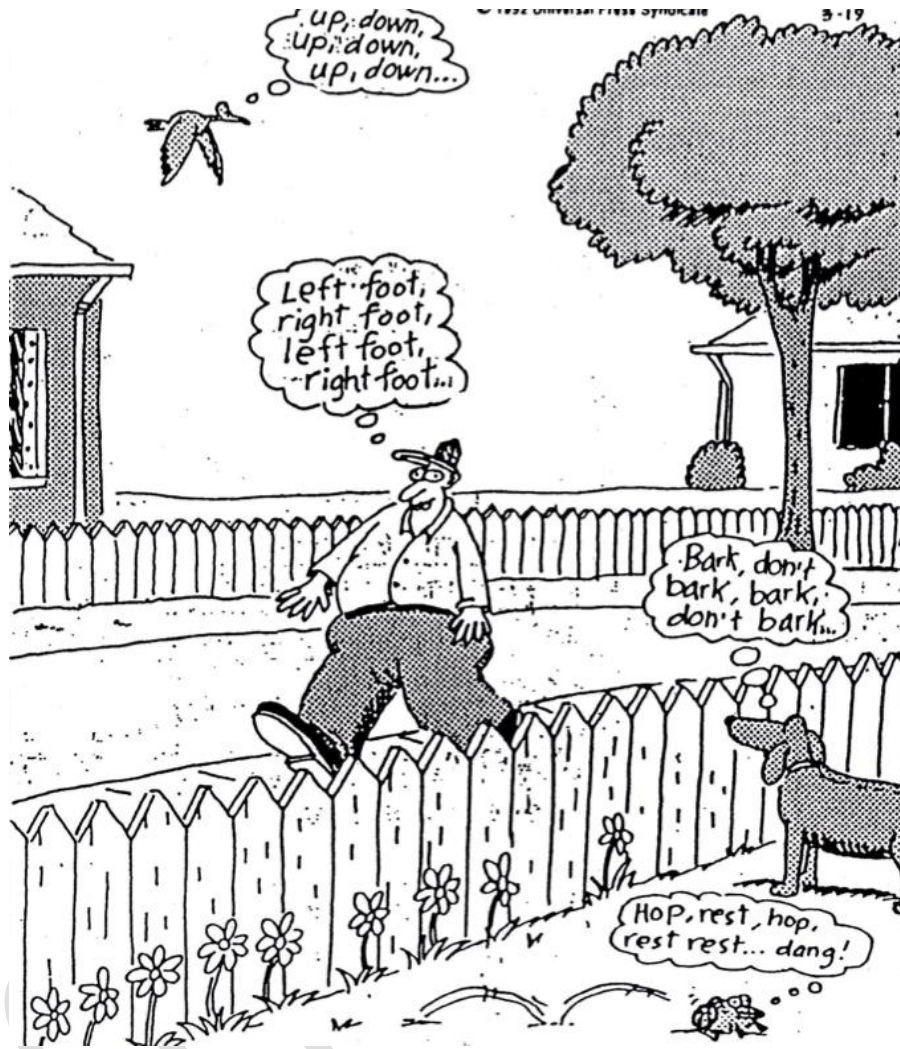
### *The Power of Interpretations and Beliefs*

#### Objectives:

1. To introduce the Triangle of Experience
2. To notice some of your patterns and habits
3. To explore how our perception and beliefs influence how we 'see' the world.

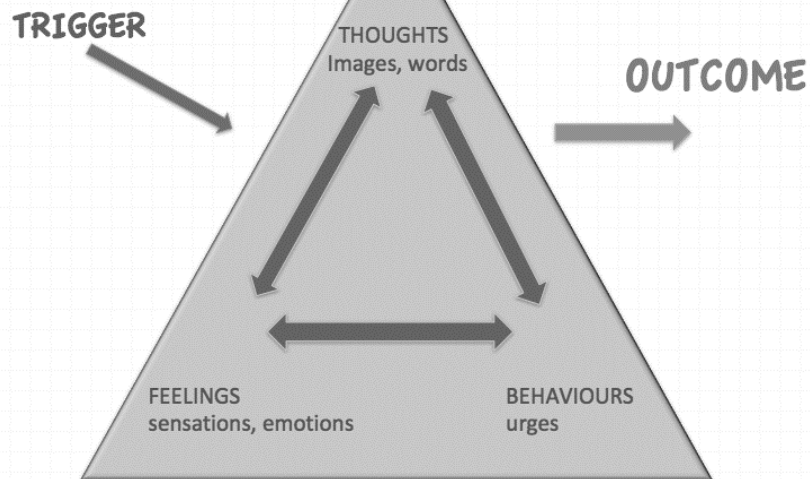
#### Skill:

- Introduction to Walking Meditation



Basic Lives (Farside)

## The Triangle of Experience



Every experience we have has three components: thoughts, feelings and urges or behaviours. Thoughts are images, words, or phrases. Feelings are both the physical sensations we 'feel' in the body as well as the emotions we 'feel'. Behaviours are the outward action(s) one can see. Behaviours are prefaced by an urge (which is not visible).

The thoughts, feelings and urges of an experience are interconnected and all exist together, influencing and driving each other. This is where the power of the triangle lives, because if you can change just one part of the triangle, the other parts of the triangle are obliged to change as well.



**Perception: what do you see?**



## **A Comparison of CBT and Mindfulness**

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy/Techniques (CBT) and Mindfulness Meditation (MM) are complementary practices.

MM, although not passive, is more about observing than interacting. When we are mindful, we are increasingly more and more aware of our body sensations, our thoughts, and our emotions - but we do not engage with them. The practice is about being non-judgmentally aware of ourselves (mind, body, and emotion), and accepting what is present.

CBT is about active engagement, specifically in the cognitive or thinking realm. Cognitive Behavioural therapy or techniques are analytical and active. In CBT thoughts are assessed and reframed or replaced. CBT is based on the powerful inter-relationship that exists between our physical, emotional, and thinking self, in other words between our Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours.

MM creates space around what is present and that allows us to make clearer choices than we were able to make before.

MM practice gives us the awareness and time to make choices that we explore and practice using CBT.



## Getting More Familiar With Your Habits

*“Whatever you think or do regularly becomes a habit, a strongly conditioned pathway in the brain.*

*The more you think about what can go wrong, the more your mind is primed to anticipate trouble. The more you think about how you are a failure, the more you notice situations that make you feel inadequate. The more you lash out in anger, the more your body and mind are geared toward aggression. The more you think about how you might help others or be less judgmental, the more your mind and heart are inclined to be compassionate and accepting.*

*Just as weightlifters build muscles, the way you direct your attention can strengthen anxiety, hostility, and addiction or can lead you to healing and awakening”*

—Tara Brach

*Adapted from “True Refuge” by Tara Brach, Ph. D, Bantam Books (2012)*

## Habits of Thought

We sometimes refer to repetitive thoughts, especially those that cause us suffering, as *sticky thoughts*. Just as we have habits of action, such as brushing our teeth in a particular way each time, so we have habits of thought.

When we bring the power of awareness to our thoughts, we begin to see these habits – familiar cycles of thought that our minds habitually fall into. Mindfulness teaches us to see that “thoughts are just thoughts”. They do not always represent reality. In fact, they commonly include distortions, such as catastrophization or generalization.

Have you seen the bumper sticker that has captured this perfectly?

***“Don’t Believe Everything You Think!”***

**“The mind is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.” Robin Sharma**

## What Mindfulness Does to Your Brain: The Science of Neuroplasticity

*Maggie Seaver (Real Simple, October 01, 2020)*

Your brain is plastic (no, not like that). The mind's many intricate networks of neural pathways are continually and automatically adjusting through a phenomenon called neuroplasticity (neuro-, meaning relating to nerves or the nervous system; and plastic, meaning easily shaped or molded).

“Neuroplasticity is the capacity of the brain to reorganize its connections based on experience,” says [Amishi Jha, PhD](#), an associate professor in the department of psychology at the University of Miami and the director of contemplative neuroscience for the [UMindfulness](#) initiative. “It’s very much related to something exciting we learned about just a couple of decades ago called neurogenesis, which means that even the adult brain can grow new neurons.”

The brain’s brilliant malleability allows us to acquire new skills, drop bad habits, adapt to novel environments, and even heal from severe trauma and injury. Neuroplasticity is catalyzed by these events, too. Every new experience or challenge, from breaking an ankle to shopping at an unfamiliar grocery store, compels the brain to rearrange its synaptic connections. And the more you do something, the more established—and less new—these connections become. Repetition is the key to rendering a behavior second nature. (That’s how you learned to ride a bike. Now, riding a bike is like, well, riding a bike.)

We have more control over our thoughts and behaviors than we think. While the brain does adapt on its own, we know there are ways to take matters into our own hands: to awaken, strengthen, create, and even rewire certain neural pathways intentionally in order to boost brain function and overall health.

Even simple swaps to everyday tasks and behaviors can keep your brain on its toes by forcing it to fire up fresh connections. Use your non-dominant hand for manual tasks. Learn to play a musical instrument. Take a new route to the pharmacy. Play memory games. Try reacting to an email with patience instead of exasperation. Practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness (an intentional state of focused, nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment) doesn’t just foster a pleasant moment of calm. Scientists find it can be a powerful tool for altering and strengthening key brain networks for the better. Mindfulness techniques have been proven to promote positive change in the brain pathways involved in stress, focus and attention, memory, and mood. Some research has even found that a steady dose of mindfulness over a certain amount of time can physically change brain structures long term, including age-related brain degeneration.

In a seminal study from 2011, Harvard-affiliated researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital studied the brain MRIs of participants before and after they underwent an eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. They also compared their brains to a control group who didn't go through mindfulness training. Researchers observed that, after engaging in mindfulness training, their brains indicated visible structural changes when compared to the controls. For instance, they noticed increased gray matter density in the hippocampus, a structure associated with storing memories and emotion control (which we do want more of). They also discerned decreased gray matter in the amygdala, a structure associated with stress, fear, and anxiety, including our fight-or-flight response (which most of us need less of). What's more, the less stressed out the subjects reported being, the smaller their amygdalas appeared to be.

This finding hinted that mindfulness techniques could reduce stress, not by eliminating the external stressors of everyday life, but by tempering the influence of the brain region responsible for our often out-of-proportion reactions to them. (You can watch the fascinating TEDx here, where senior study author, Sara Lazar, PhD, an associate researcher in psychiatry at MGH and assistant professor in psychology at Harvard Medical School, breaks down findings further.)

Almost a decade later, Jha studies attention and memory systems in the brain, finding ways to optimize mindfulness-based techniques to boost focus, improve emotion management, and build resilience in high-pressure groups, like military service members, elite athletes, and first responders. Through her years of research, Jha has indeed found that mindfulness training can actually train the brain to optimize—to be even better than its typical healthy functioning.

“There's something called cortical thickening, which means certain regions of the brain look healthier, because the thicker the brain, the healthier that tissue is,” Jha says. Think of the brain like sheets of cells—kind of like a stack of papers—that have been crumpled up as tightly as possible. The more tightly “crumpled” the sheets of brain cells (or the more gyrification, or folds, in the cerebral cortex), the healthier the brain.

As we age and experience stress, the cortex naturally thins out and loosens. This deterioration of the cortex helps explain why, for example, people forget their keys more often and find it harder to pick up new skills (among other frustrating changes) as they get older. But mindfulness training can actually help prevent the typical cortical thinning that comes with age.

“We know that when people are long-term mindfulness practitioners, they don't show normal declines as a function of aging,” Jha says. “They don't have as much de-gyrification [and] the brain looks healthier and younger.”

Just as you can deliberately lift weights to build strength and dexterity in a specific muscle over time, you can also exercise certain brain networks associated with core cognitive functions (like attention, logic, and memory) and emotion regulation (like quelling anxiety or negative reactions).

Some of the primary brain systems to benefit from mindfulness are those involved in our ability to focus and to regain focus when we get off track. One way we can fortify this crucial cognitive network is by applying a standard mindful breathing exercise that involves sitting quietly, breathing naturally, and focusing awareness on the breath for just a few minutes. Don't analyze, worry about, or force the breath. Instead, be an objective observer of the action of breathing. Any time your attention wanders beyond the simple act of breathing, take notice of it. Then, redirect your attention back to the breath.

Jha likens this deliberate mental training to a pushup. Each time you force yourself to focus on the breath, notice when your focus strays from it, and actively redirect focus back to the breath—that's one pushup. The more mindfulness "pushups" you do, the stronger your ability to control your attention and maintain concentration—not just during a mindfulness session, but throughout your entire day.

"It's like doing a core workout for your body," Jha explains. "If you've got core strength it will help you in a variety of ways—you're going to be able to maneuver through many different physically strenuous circumstances. Those brain routes become more accustomed to turning on and will start to fire instinctively the more you practice."

These basic mindfulness pushups can also help suppress the default mode network, a brain network associated with mind wandering, self-centered cravings, and other off-task distractions. Mind wandering is completely natural and beneficial; it promotes creativity and problem solving. But when you're trying to accomplish a cognitively demanding task (like paying attention in a meeting or making a rational decision), mind wandering can be a serious hindrance. When the default mode network is hyperactive, you're more likely to cave to things like sugar cravings, anxious thought loops, or procrastination. As with all things, the default mode network requires balance and moderation.

"The very exciting news is we can now see that those brain networks [associated with focusing, noticing, and redirecting] look different in people who undergo four-to-eight-week mindfulness training programs," Jha says. In these individuals, the focusing and noticing routes look more robust, while the mind-wandering, default mode network appears less active.

"What allows people to have better emotion regulation? It comes down to better attentional control," Jha says. Our emotions can lead the charge in a detrimental way. Distressing thoughts keep us awake at night. Anger colors our reactions. Fear of failure keeps us from achieving goals. At best, it's inconvenient; at worst, it contributes to debilitating mood disorders. Someone with consistent mindfulness experience, however, is equipped with powerful mental tools: the ability to step back and identify those emotional inhibitors and negative thought patterns, as well as the ability to actively steer away from them. They've developed the ability to reclaim power from problematic emotions.

“Typically we don’t even know our mind has a mind of its own—we don’t realize [we’re] obsessing over a very distressing thought and feel stuck,” she explains. “But now, with mindfulness training, you’ve got options: You can allow the thought to happen and then bring your attention back.”

This mindfulness method of decentering allows you to create mental space between yourself and your thoughts and emotions. “Think of it as being at a psychological distance from your own thoughts so you can watch what’s happening,” Jha explains. “Attention can’t be in two places at once: You can’t be watching a distressing thought and be in the distressing thought at the same time. So, in addition to focusing, noticing, and redirecting, the capacity to psychologically distance yourself—to watch your thoughts, to be a good detective—really helps control things.”

Over time, and thanks to neuroplasticity, consistent mindfulness practice can actually make the frustrating mental challenge of recognizing, distancing, and steering thoughts one of your brain’s core capacities.

“This matters for everybody. These processes—attention, working memory, control over mind wandering—are central to really every single thing we do: making plans, reading, having a conversation, thinking, making decisions,” Jha says. “We need this kind of cognitive control to regulate our emotions, our mood, and our ability to interact with other people.”

Four to eight weeks of rigorous, lab-guided training isn’t in the cards for most of us. Jha’s team looks for ways to optimize mindfulness benefits and minimize the time commitment. And even after reducing meditation time in their research to only two hours a week for four weeks, plus short at-home sessions, they’ve found exciting benefits in participants: notable improvements in attention, working memory, and resilience, as well as reductions in everyday cognitive slip-ups (think: forgetting your coffee on top of the car). So, imagine the small-but-mighty rewards we could all reap from, say, five to 10 minutes of mindfulness every day.

Your thoughts become your words.  
Your words become your actions.  
Your actions become your habits.  
Your habits become your character.  
Your character becomes your destiny.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

## Paradox of Noise

It is a paradox that we encounter so much internal noise  
when we first try to sit in silence.

It is a paradox that experiencing pain releases pain.

It is a paradox that keeping still can lead us  
so fully into life and being.

Our minds do not like paradoxes. We want things  
To be clear, so we can maintain our illusions of safety.  
Certainty breeds tremendous smugness.

We each possess a deeper level of being, however,  
which loves paradox. It knows that summer is already  
Growing like a seed in the depth of winter. It knows  
that the moment we are born, we begin to die. It knows  
that all of life shimmers, in shades of becoming--  
that shadow and light are always together,  
the visible mingled with the invisible.

When we sit in stillness we are profoundly active.  
Keeping silent, we hear the roar of existence.  
Through our willingness to be the one we are,  
We become one with everything.

--Gunilla Norris





## Getting to Know the Patterns in your Life

This is an exercise that will help you to see what you tend to do repetitively. We suggest that you do it at least 5 times – each time starting in a different column.

For example: you might notice that you are standing in front of the fridge at 7pm – that would go in the Behaviour column. Now work backwards and fill in the other columns – what am I thinking, feeling, and noticing in my body as I stand here? Can I identify what belief is present? Next time start with a Body Sensation or if you notice a particular emotion or thought or a belief – start in that column.

<b>BELIEFS</b>	
<b>BODY SENSATIONS</b>	
<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	
<b>THOUGHTS</b>	
<b>FEELINGS/ EMOTIONS</b>	

## Walking Meditation

*Like breathing meditation, walking meditation is a simple and universal practice for developing calm, connection, and awareness. It can be practiced regularly, before or after a sitting meditation or any time on its own, such as after a busy day at work or on a lazy Sunday morning. The art of walking meditation is to learn to be aware as you walk, to use the natural movement of walking to cultivate mindfulness and wakeful presence.*

Select a quiet place where you can walk comfortably back and forth, indoors or out, about thirty paces in length. Begin by standing at one end of this “walking path” with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Let your hands rest easily wherever they are comfortable. Close your eyes for a moment, center yourself and feel your body standing on this earth. Feel the pressure on the bottom of your feet and all the other natural sensations of standing. Then open your eyes and allow yourself to be present and alert.

Begin to slowly walk. Let yourself walk with a sense of ease and dignity. Pay attention to your body. With each step, feel the sensation of lifting your foot and leg off the earth. Relax and let your walking be easy and natural. Feel each step mindfully as you walk. When you reach the end of your path, pause for a moment. Center yourself, carefully turn around, and pause again so you can be aware of the first step as you walk back. You can experiment with speed, walking at whatever pace keeps you most present.

Continue to walk back and forth for about ten to twenty minutes, or longer. As with the breath in sitting, your mind will wander away many, many times. As soon as you notice this, acknowledge where it went softly: “wandering” “thinking” “hearing” “planning”. Then return to feel the next step. Like training a puppy, you will need to come back a thousand times. Whether you have been away for one second or for ten minutes, simply acknowledge where you have been and then come back to being alive here and now with the next step you take.

*After some practice with walking meditation, you will learn to use it to calm and collect yourself and to live more wakefully in your body. You can then extend your walking practice in an informal way when you go shopping, when you walk down the street or walk to and from your car. You can learn to enjoy walking for its own sake instead of the usual planning and thinking and, in this simple way, begin to be truly present, to bring your body, heart and mind together as you move through life.*

*Taken from “A Path with Heart- A guide through the perils and promise of a spiritual life” by Jack Kornfield*

### Home Practice Log – Week 3

DATES	Practice	Minutes	Comments
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 4

### *Exploring the Mindful Response -- Acceptance, Compassion and Kindness*

#### Objectives:

1. To cultivate an attitude of tenderness and acceptance towards ourselves and our experiences
2. To explore the role of kindness and compassion in opening us up to new possibilities and allowing for mindful change
3. To explore the Relaxation Response and the benefits of slowing down

#### Skill:

- Introduce Three Minute Breathing Space
- Introduce Metta (Loving Kindness) Meditation



"I've got a job for you Kretcher. I want you to infiltrate the IRS and sow seeds of kindness"

New Yorker Cartoon By: Robert Weber

## **Mindfully Responding**

### **Dr. Herbert Benson's Relaxation Response**

The term, 'Relaxation Response' was coined in the 1970s by Dr. Herbert Benson, professor, author, cardiologist, and founder of Harvard's Mind/Body Medical Institute. The response is defined as your personal ability to encourage your body to release chemicals and neurologic signals that make your muscles and organs slow down and increase blood flow to the brain. In his book *The Relaxation Response* (1975), Dr. Benson describes the scientific benefits of relaxation, explaining that regular practice of the Relaxation Response can be an effective treatment for a wide range of stress-related disorders.

The Relaxation Response is essentially the opposite reaction to the "fight or flight" response. According to Dr. Benson, using the Relaxation Response is beneficial as it counteracts the physiological effects of stress and the fight or flight response.

*- Marilyn Mitchell, M.D. in Heart and Soul Healing blog,  
Psychology Today online, March 29/13*

**Just as a bird needs two wings to fly,  
so, we think of the practice of mindfulness as having two wings.**

**The two wings are AWARENESS**

**(Clearly seeing what is true in the present moment)**

**and COMPASSION/FRIENDLINESS**

**(Embracing that which is seen with tenderness**

**and acceptance).**

**Acceptance arises as we cultivate awareness and compassion.**

*Jon Kabat-Zinn*

## Healing the Child Within

***The cry we hear from deep in our hearts, says Thich Nhat Hanh, comes from the wounded child within. Healing this inner child's pain is the key to transforming anger, sadness, and fear.***

In each of us, there is a young, suffering child. We have all had times of difficulty as children and many of us have experienced trauma. To protect and defend ourselves against future suffering, we often try to forget those painful times. Every time we're in touch with the experience of suffering, we believe we can't bear it, and we stuff our feelings and memories deep down in our unconscious mind. It may be that we haven't dared to face this child for many decades.

But just because we may have ignored the child doesn't mean she or he isn't there. The wounded child is always there, trying to get our attention. The child says, "I'm here. I'm here. You can't avoid me. You can't run away from me." We want to end our suffering by sending the child to a deep place inside and staying as far away as possible. But running away doesn't end our suffering; it only prolongs it.

The wounded child asks for care and love, but we do the opposite. We run away because we're afraid of suffering. The block of pain and sorrow in us feels overwhelming. Even if we have time, we don't come home to ourselves. We try to keep ourselves constantly entertained—watching television or movies, socializing, or using alcohol or drugs—because we don't want to experience that suffering all over again.

The wounded child is there, and we don't even know she is there. The wounded child in us is a reality, but we can't see her. That inability to see is a kind of ignorance. This child has been severely wounded. She or he really needs us to return. Instead, we turn away.

Ignorance is in each cell of our body and our consciousness. It's like a drop of ink diffused in a glass of water. That ignorance stops us from seeing reality; it pushes us to do foolish things that make us suffer even more and wound again the already-wounded child in us.

The wounded child is also in each cell of our body. There is no cell of our body that does not have that wounded child in it. We don't have to look far into the past for that child. We only have to look deeply, and we can be in touch with him. The suffering of that wounded child is lying inside us right now in the present moment.

But just as the suffering is present in every cell of our body, so are the seeds of awakened understanding and happiness handed down to us from our ancestors. We just have to use them. We have a lamp inside us, the lamp of mindfulness, which we can light anytime. The oil of that lamp is our breathing, our steps, and our peaceful smile. We have to light up that lamp of mindfulness so the light will shine out and the darkness will dissipate and cease. Our practice is to light up the lamp.

When we become aware that we've forgotten the wounded child in ourselves, we feel great compassion for that child, and we begin to generate the energy of mindfulness. The practices of



mindful walking, mindful sitting, and mindful breathing are our foundation. With our mindful breath and mindful steps, we can produce the energy of mindfulness and return to the awakened wisdom lying in each cell of our body. That energy will embrace us and heal us and will heal the wounded child in us.

### **Listening**

When we speak of listening with compassion, we usually think of listening to someone else. But we must also listen to the wounded child inside us. Sometimes the wounded child in us needs all our attention. That little child might emerge from the depths of your consciousness and ask for your attention. If you are mindful, you will hear his or her voice calling for help. At that moment, instead of paying attention to whatever is in front of you, go back and tenderly embrace the wounded child. You can talk directly to the child with the language of love, saying, "In the past, I left you alone. I went away from you. Now, I am very sorry. I am going to embrace you." You can say, "Darling, I am here for you. I will take good care of you. I know you suffer so much. I have been so busy. I have neglected you, and now I have learned a way to come back to you." If necessary, you have to cry together with that child. Whenever you need to, you can sit and breathe with the child. "Breathing in, I go back to my wounded child; breathing out, I take good care of my wounded child."

You have to talk to your child several times a day. Only then can healing take place. Embracing your child tenderly, you reassure him that you will never let him down again or leave him unattended. The little child has been left alone for so long. That is why you need to begin this practice right away. If you don't do it now, when will you do it?

If you know how to go back to her and listen carefully every day for five or ten minutes, healing will take place. When you climb a beautiful mountain, invite your child within to climb with you. When you contemplate the sunset, invite her to enjoy it with you. If you do that for a few weeks or a few months, the wounded child in you will experience healing.

With practice, we can see that our wounded child is not only us. Our wounded child may represent several generations. Our mother may have suffered throughout her life. Our father may have suffered. Perhaps our parents weren't able to look after the wounded child in themselves. So, when we're embracing the wounded child in us, we're embracing all the wounded children of our past generations. This practice is not a practice for ourselves alone, but for numberless generations of ancestors and descendants.

Our ancestors may not have known how to care for their wounded child within, so they transmitted their wounded child to us. Our practice is to end this cycle. If we can heal our wounded child, we will not only liberate ourselves, but we will also help liberate whoever has hurt or abused us. The abuser may also have been the victim of abuse. There are people who have practiced with their inner child for a long time who have had a lessening of their suffering and have experienced transformation. Their relationships with their family and friends have become much easier.

We suffer because we have not been touched by compassion and understanding. If we generate the energy of mindfulness, understanding, and compassion for our wounded child, we will suffer much less. When we generate mindfulness, compassion and understanding become possible, and we can allow people to love us. Before, we may have been suspicious of everything and everyone. Compassion helps us relate to others and restore communication.

The people around us, our family and friends, may also have a severely wounded child inside. If we've managed to help ourselves, we can also help them. When we've healed ourselves, our relationships with others become much easier. There's more peace and more love in us.

Go back and take care of yourself. Your body needs you; your feelings need you; your perceptions need you. The wounded child in you needs you. Your suffering needs you to acknowledge it. Go home and be there for all these things. Practice mindful walking and mindful breathing. Do everything in mindfulness so you can really be there, so you can love.

### **The Energy of Mindfulness**

The energy of mindfulness is the salve that will recognize and heal the child within. But how do we cultivate this energy?

Buddhist psychology divides consciousness into two parts. One part is mind consciousness, and the other is store consciousness. Mind consciousness is our active awareness. Western psychology calls it "the conscious mind." To cultivate the energy of mindfulness, we try to engage our active awareness in all our activities and be truly present with whatever we are doing. We want to be mindful as we drink our tea or drive through the city. When we walk, we want to be aware that we are walking. When we breathe, we want to be aware that we are breathing.

Store consciousness, also called root consciousness, is the base of our consciousness. In Western psychology it's called "the unconscious mind." It's where all our past experiences are stored. Store consciousness has the capacity to learn and to process information.

Often our mind is not there with our body. Sometimes we go through our daily activities without mind consciousness being involved at all. We can do many things by means of store consciousness alone, and mind consciousness can be thinking of a thousand other things. For example, when we drive our car through the city, mind consciousness may not be thinking about driving at all, but we can still reach our destination without getting lost or having an accident. That is store consciousness operating on its own.

Consciousness is like a house in which the basement is our store consciousness, and the living room is our mind consciousness. Mental formations like anger, sorrow, or joy, rest in the store consciousness in the form of seeds (bija). We have a seed of anger, despair, discrimination, fear, a seed of mindfulness, compassion, a seed of understanding, and so on. Store consciousness is made of the totality of the seeds, and it is also the soil that preserves and maintains all the seeds. The seeds stay there until we hear, see, read, or think of something that touches a seed and makes us feel the anger, joy, or sorrow. This is a seed coming up and manifesting on the level of mind consciousness, in our living room. Now we no longer call it a seed, but a mental formation.

When someone touches the seed of anger by saying something or doing something that upsets us, that seed of anger will come up and manifest in mind consciousness as the mental formation (cittasamskara) of anger. The word "formation" is a Buddhist term for something that's created by many conditions coming together. A marker pen is a formation; my hands, a flower, a table, a house, are all formations. A house is a physical formation. My hand is a physiological formation. My anger is a mental formation. In Buddhist psychology we speak about fifty-one varieties of seeds that can manifest as fifty-one mental formations. Anger is just one of them. In store consciousness, anger is called a seed. In mind consciousness, it's called a mental formation.

Whenever a seed, say the seed of anger, comes up into our living room and manifests as a mental formation, the first thing we can do is to touch the seed of mindfulness and invite it to come up too. Now we have two mental formations in the living room. This is mindfulness of anger. Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. When we breathe mindfully, that is mindfulness of breathing. When we walk mindfully, that is mindfulness of walking. When we eat mindfully, that's mindfulness of eating. So in this case, mindfulness is mindfulness of anger. Mindfulness recognizes and embraces anger.

Our practice is based on the insight of non-duality—anger is not an enemy. Both mindfulness and anger are ourselves. Mindfulness is there not to suppress or fight against anger, but to recognize and take care of it—like a big brother helping a younger brother. So, the energy of anger is recognized and embraced tenderly by the energy of mindfulness.

Every time we need the energy of mindfulness, we just touch that seed with our mindful breathing, mindful walking, smiling, and then we have the energy ready to do the work of recognizing, embracing, and later on looking deeply and transforming. Whatever we're doing, whether it's cooking, sweeping, washing, walking, being aware of our breathing, we can continue to generate the energy of mindfulness, and the seed of mindfulness in us will become strong. Within the seed of mindfulness is the seed of concentration. With these two energies, we can liberate ourselves from afflictions.

### **The Mind Needs Good Circulation**

We know there are toxins in our body. If our blood doesn't circulate well, these toxins accumulate. In order to remain healthy, our body works to expel the toxins. When the blood circulates well, the kidneys and the liver can do their job to dispel toxins. We can use massage to help the blood circulate better.

Our consciousness, too, may be in a state of bad circulation. We may have a block of suffering, pain, sorrow, or despair in us; it's like a toxin in our consciousness. We call this an internal formation or internal knot. Embracing our pain and sorrow with the energy of mindfulness is the practice of massaging our consciousness. When the blood doesn't circulate well, our organs can't function properly, and we get sick. When our psyche doesn't circulate well, our mind will become sick. Mindfulness stimulates and accelerates circulation throughout blocks of pain.

### **Occupying the Living Room**

Our blocks of pain, sorrow, anger, and despair always want to come up into our mind consciousness, into our living room, because they've grown big and need our attention. They want to emerge, but we don't want these uninvited guests to come up because they're painful to look at. So, we try to block their way. We want them to stay asleep down in the basement. We don't want to face them, so our habit is to fill the living room with other guests. Whenever we have ten or fifteen minutes of free time, we do anything we can to keep our living room occupied. We call a friend. We pick up a book. We turn on the television. We go for a drive. We hope that if the living room is occupied, these unpleasant mental formations will not come up.

But all mental formations need to circulate. If we don't let them come up, it creates bad circulation in our psyche, and symptoms of mental illness and depression begin to manifest in our mind and body.

Sometimes when we have a headache, we take aspirin, but our headache doesn't go away. Sometimes this kind of headache can be a symptom of mental illness. Perhaps we have allergies. We think it's a physical problem, but allergies can also be a symptom of mental illness. We are advised by doctors to take drugs, but sometimes these will continue to suppress our

internal formations, making our sickness worse.

### **Dismantling Barriers**

If we can learn not to fear our knots of suffering, we slowly begin to let them circulate up into our living room. We begin to learn how to embrace them and transform them with the energy of mindfulness. When we dismantle the barrier between the basement and the living room, blocks of pain will come up and we will have to suffer a bit. Our inner child may have a lot of fear and anger stored up from being down in the basement for so long. There is no way to avoid it.

That is why the practice of mindfulness is so important. If mindfulness is not there, it is very unpleasant to have these seeds come up. But if we know how to generate the energy of mindfulness, it's very healing to invite them up every day and embrace them. Mindfulness is a strong source of energy that can recognize, embrace, and take care of these negative energies. Perhaps these seeds don't want to come up at first, perhaps there's too much fear and distrust, so we may have to coax them a bit. After being embraced for some time, a strong emotion will return to the basement and become a seed again, weaker than before.

Every time you give your internal formations a bath of mindfulness, the blocks of pain in you become lighter. So give your anger, your despair, your fear, a bath of mindfulness every day. After several days or weeks of bringing them up daily and helping them go back down again, you create good circulation in your psyche.

### **The Function of Mindfulness**

The first function of mindfulness is to recognize and not to fight. We can stop at any time and become aware of the child within us. When we recognize the wounded child for the first time, all we need to do is be aware of him or her and say hello. That's all.

Perhaps this child is sad. If we notice this we can just breathe in and say to ourselves, "Breathing in, I know that sorrow has manifested in me. Hello, my sorrow. Breathing out, I will take good care of you."

Once we have recognized our inner child, the second function of mindfulness is to embrace him or her. This is a very pleasant practice. Instead of fighting our emotions, we are taking good care of ourselves. Mindfulness brings with her an ally—concentration. The first few minutes of recognizing and embracing our inner child with tenderness will bring some relief. The difficult emotions will still be there, but we won't suffer as much anymore.

After recognizing and embracing our inner child, the third function of mindfulness is to soothe and relieve our difficult emotions. Just by holding this child gently, we are soothing our difficult emotions and we can begin to feel at ease. When we embrace our strong emotions with mindfulness and concentration, we'll be able to see the roots of these mental formations. We'll know where our suffering has come from. When we see the roots of things, our suffering will lessen. So mindfulness recognizes, embraces, and relieves.

The energy of mindfulness contains the energy of concentration as well as the energy of insight. Concentration helps us focus on just one thing. With concentration, the energy of looking becomes more powerful and insight is possible. Insight always has the power of liberating us. If mindfulness is there, and we know how to keep mindfulness alive, concentration will be there, too.

And if we know how to keep concentration alive, insight will also come. The energy of

mindfulness enables us to look deeply and gain the insight we need so that transformation is possible.

*Adapted from Reconciliation: Healing the Inner Child (2010)*

*by Thich Nhat Hanh*

DO NOT COPY

## Love After Love

The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome, and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you  
ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the  
desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

Derek Walcott

## When I Am Among the Trees

When I am among the trees,  
especially the willows and the honey locust,  
equally the beech, the oaks, and the pines,  
they give off such hints of gladness,  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,  
in which I have goodness, and discernment,  
and never hurry through the world  
but walk slowly and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves  
and call out, "Stay awhile."

The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,  
"and you too have come  
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled  
with light, and to shine."

~ Mary Oliver ~

## Random Acts of Kindness and Senseless Deeds of Beauty

*“Remember there’s no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.”*      *Scott Adams*

1) This week, make a conscious decision to practice one random act of kindness per day. While it is sometimes easier to practice this with your partner, family, or friends, it can also be quite fun and liberating to practice this with people you do not know well (or yourself!) Describe what happened.

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2) Choose one day this week that you will act from your heart over your head. How would it feel to act on every kind, loving, or generous impulse that arises within your thoughts? It is often our logic or inner critic that convinces us against a sincere impulse of compassion or empathy. You might give change to someone living on the street; compliment someone you think looks nice; offer a hug to someone you think is having a really bad day...etc. Note what you did, and how it felt.

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## Ideas for Kindness

- ✓ Bring flowers to work and share them with coworkers.
- ✓ Extend a hand to someone in need. Give your full attention and simply listen.
- ✓ Offer a couple of hours of baby-sitting to parents.
- ✓ Slip paper hearts that say "It's Random Acts of Kindness Week! Have a great day!" under the windshield wipers of parked cars.
- ✓ Pay a compliment at least once a day for a week.
- ✓ Transport someone who can't drive.
- ✓ Say something nice to everyone you meet today.
- ✓ Give the gift of your smile.
- ✓ Send home a note telling parents something their child did well.
- ✓ Offer to answer the phone for the school secretary for ten minutes.
- ✓ Write notes of appreciation and/or bring flowers or goodies to teachers or other important people, such as the principal, nurse, custodian, and secretary.
- ✓ Give a hug to a friend.
- ✓ Tell your children why you love them.
- ✓ Write a note to your mother/father and tell them why they are special.
- ✓ Write a thank-you note to a mentor or someone who has influenced your life in a positive way.
- ✓ Give coffee to people on their way to work in the morning.
- ✓ Give blood.
- ✓ Give another driver your parking spot.
- ✓ Leave a treat or handmade note of thanks for a delivery person or mail carrier.
- ✓ Tell your boss that you think he/she does a good job.
- ✓ Tell your employees how much you appreciate their work.
- ✓ Let your staff leave work 20 minutes early.
- ✓ Have everyone in your office draw the name of a Random Acts of Kindness buddy out of a hat and do a kind act for their buddy that day or week.
- ✓ Leave an extra big tip for the waitperson.
- ✓ Drop off a plant, cookies, or donuts to the police or fire department.
- ✓ Open the door for another person.
- ✓ Pay for the coffee of the person behind you in line at the coffee shop.
- ✓ Pay for the person behind you in the movie line.
- ✓ Give friends and family kindness coupons they can redeem for kind favours.
- ✓ Renew an old friendship by sending a letter or small gift to someone you haven't talked with in a long time.



# Slowing Down

Where in your life do you feel rushed?

Write down three areas where you feel rushed. With each of these, make a concerted effort this week to purposefully slow down your pace and allow mindfulness and awareness to surface. What do you notice?

Areas I Feel Rushed	What I notice when I slow down
<i>In my eating</i>	<i>I notice the tastes and smells of my food more, and I notice when I am full</i>

“Some of us need to discover that we will not begin to live more fully until we have the courage to do and see and taste and experience much less than usual.

There are times when in order to keep ourselves in existence at all we simply have to sit back for a while and do nothing.

And for a person who has let themselves be drawn completely out of themselves by their activity, nothing is more difficult than to sit still and rest, doing nothing at all.

The very act of resting is the hardest and most courageous act a person can perform.”

*Adapted from the book Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander,  
by Thomas Merton*

## Metta (Loving Kindness) Meditation

Metta Meditation is perhaps one of the most powerful practices for our time. It nurtures a sense of forgiveness and compassion which allows us and others to heal and to flourish.

### The Five Circles of Metta Loving kindness

1. Focus your attention and awareness on the energy these words represent. Offer this metta to yourself first, and practice this for several weeks until it feels natural and easy.
2. Once the metta to yourself feels easy, expand your circle of loving kindness to include beings in your life for whom you have easy feelings of affection and love. Family, friends, children, pets, etc. Continue to offer the same energy and words to these beings. Practice for several weeks or months, until this feels natural and easy.
3. Expand the circle in the same way to people you feel neutral about- peers, acquaintances, etc. Practice for a few weeks again until it feels natural.
4. Now practice metta with people who have challenged you in your life. Bring to mind an image of the person (maybe as a small child) and offer metta. Sometimes this will begin as just words, because of the past strong emotions around this person or persons. Begin here.
5. Continue to expand this circle of metta to include any beings, human or otherwise. Metta does not depend on time or space and so offer this loving kindness whether the person is alive or not.

### Loving Kindness Practice Phrases

“May I be free from fear.”

“May I be free from stress or from physical or mental suffering.”

“May I be strong, healthy and vital.”

“May I take care of myself with ease.”

“May I be happy.”

Or if you prefer you can practice with these alternative phrases:

“May I be happy and live with a joyful heart”

“May I be peaceful and live with ease”

“May I be safe and protected from all forms of harm”

“May I be healthy and have energy and strength”

**Feel free to use phrases that resonate for you. Here are some ideas.**

## MAY I (YOU) BE HAPPY AND FREE FROM SUFFERING

*By being in touch with our ability to love and relating to the difficult thoughts and emotions of the mind skillfully, we can feel this happiness/contentment.*

Other phrases:

- May I be liberated
- May I be happy and free
- May I be happy with myself just the way I am
- May I be peaceful with whatever is happening in my life

## MAY I (YOU) BE SAFE FROM (INNER AND OUTER) HARM

*Without a feeling of safety, there is no refuge in our lives.*

Other phrases:

- May I be free from danger
- May I be free from fear
- May I have safety

## MAY I (YOU) BE HEALTHY AND STRONG

*We can receive physical pain with friendliness and patience and wish for the enjoyment of health.*

Other phrases:

- May I have physical happiness
- May my body serve me well
- May I make a friend of my body
- May I be well in body and mind
- May I experience physical health and wellbeing as much as possible

## MAY I (YOU) BE FILLED WITH COMPASSION AND LOVING KINDNESS

*Being free from struggle.*

Other phrases:

- May I take care of myself with ease
- May I live with joy and ease
- May I care for myself with loving kindness
- May I have a mind that is content and full of ease

## **Three Minute Breathing Space**

This is an exercise that you can do almost anywhere, anytime because it is very brief and quite simple. It can be used as a regular practice, in the midst of a stressful situation, or if you are upset about something. It can help you step out of “automatic pilot”, become less reactive, and more aware and mindful in your response.

### **Awareness**

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

Observe your experience right now, noting your body sensations, your thoughts, and any emotions that are present. Acknowledge and register what is happening for you, even if it is unwanted.

### **Gathering**

After a few minutes, gently redirect your attention from these thoughts to fully focus on your breathing, noticing each in breath and each outbreath as they occur, one after the other.

Your 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 to include the rest of your body, your experience, and the situation, seeing if you can gently hold it all in awareness.

After reconnecting with the present moment in this way, you may notice an increased capacity for responding effectively; with awareness of what is truly needed in the situation and how you can best take care of yourself.

Adapted from Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., Teasdale, J. D., *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse*, New York: Guilford Press, 2002, 351pp.

**Home Practice Log – Week 4**

<b>DATES</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			





# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 5

### *Attachment and Letting Go*

#### Objectives:

1. To recognize in life, and in meditation practice, we often wish things were different than they are, and that this can lead to non-acceptance and suffering
2. To practice loosening of attachments that do not serve us
3. To explore a practice of forgiveness and its role in cultivating wellness.

#### Skill:

- Introduce Metta Forgiveness practice

**“Forgiveness is giving up all hope of a different past”**

*Anon*

**“If I can not forgive my captors then they still have me imprisoned.”**

*Nelson Mandela*



## Forgiveness

### FOUR STAGES OF FORGIVENESS

1. To forego – to leave it alone
2. To forebear – to abstain from punishing
3. To forget – to aver from memory, to refuse to dwell
4. To forgive – to abandon the debt

#### *To Forego*

To begin to forgive, it is good to forego for a while; that is, to take a break from thinking about a person or event for a while. It is not leaving something undone, but rather more like taking a vacation from it. This prevents us from being exhausted, allows us to strengthen in other ways, to have other happiness in our lives.

This is good practice for the final letting go that comes with forgiveness later on. Leave the situation, memory, or issue as many times as you need to. The idea is not to overlook, but to become agile and strong at detaching from the issue. To forego means to take up that weaving, that writing, to go to that ocean, to do some learning and loving that strengthens you, and to allow the issue to drop away for a time. This is right, good, and healing. The issues of past injury will bedevil a woman far less if she assures the wounded psyche that she will give it healing balm now and deal with the entire issue of what caused what injury later.

#### *To Forebear*

The second phase is to forebear, particularly in the sense of abstaining from punishing; neither thinking about it nor acting on it in small or large ways. It is extremely useful to practice this kind of containment, for it coalesces the issue into one place instead of allowing it to flow everywhere. This builds focus toward the time when one goes to the next steps. This does not mean to go blind or deaf and lose self-protective vigilance. It means to give a bit of grace to the situation and see how it assists.

To forebear means to have patience, to bear up against, to channel emotion. These are powerful medicines. Do as much as you can. This is a cleansing regime. You need not do all; you can choose one, such as patience, and

practice that. You can refrain from punitive uttering, muttering, from acting resentful, hostile. To refrain from unnecessary punishing strengthens integrity of action and soul. To forebear is to practice generosity, thereby allowing compassionate nature to

participate in matters that have previously caused emotion ranging all the way from minor irritation to rage.

### *To Forget*

To forget means to aver from memory, to refuse to dwell – in other words, to let go, to loosen one's hold, particularly on memory. To forget does not mean to make yourself brain-dead. Conscious forgetting means letting go of the event, not to insist it stay in the foreground, but rather allow it to be relegated to the background or move off stage.

We practice conscious forgetting by refusing to summon up the fiery material, we refuse to recollect. To forget is an active, not a passive, endeavour. It means to not haul up certain materials, or turn them over and over, to not work oneself up to repetitive thought, picture, or emotion. Conscious forgetting means willfully dropping the practice of obsessing, intentionally outdistancing, and losing sight of it, not looking back, thereby living in a new landscape, creating new life and new experiences to think about instead of the old ones. This kind of forgetting does not erase memory; it lays the emotion surrounding the memory to rest.

### *To Forgive*

There are many ways and portions to forgiving a person, a community, a nation for an offense. It is important to remember that a "final" forgiveness is not surrender. It is a conscious decision to cease to harbour resentment, which includes forgiving a debt and giving up one's resolve to retaliate. You are the one who decides when to forgive and what ritual to use to mark the event. You decide what debt you will now say needs not be paid further.

Some choose blanket pardon – releasing a person from any restitution now or ever. Others choose to call a halt to redress in process, abandoning the debt, saying whatever has been done is done, and the payback is now enough. Another kind of pardon is to release a person without his having made any emotional or other sort of restitution.

To some, a finalizing of forgiving means to regard the other indulgently, and this is easiest around relatively benign offenses. One of the most profound forms of forgiveness is to give compassionate aid to the offending person in one form or another. This does not mean you should stick your head in the snake's basket, but instead respond from a stance of mercy, security, and preparedness.

Forgiveness is the culmination of all foregoing, forbearing, and forgetting. It does not mean giving up one's protection, but one's coldness. One deep form of forgiveness is to cease excluding the other, which includes ceasing to stiff-arm, ignore, act coldly toward,

patronizing and phony. It is better for the soul-psyche to closely limit time with people who are difficult for you, than to act like an unfeeling mannequin.

Forgiveness is an act of creation. You can choose from many ways to do it. You can forgive for now, forgive till then, forgive till the next time, forgive but give no more chances – it's a whole new game if there's another incident. You can give one more chance, give several more chances, give many chances, give chances *only if*. You can forgive part, all, or half of the offense. You can devise blanket forgiveness. You decide.

How does one know if she has forgiven? You tend to feel sorrow over the circumstances instead of rage; you tend to feel sorry for the person rather than angry with him. You tend to have nothing left to remember to say about it all. You understand the suffering that drove the offense to begin with. You prefer to remain outside the milieu. There is no lariat snare around your ankle stretching from way back there to here. You are free to go. It may not have turned out to be a *happily ever after*, but most certainly there is now a fresh *Once upon a time* waiting for you from this day forward.

*Women Who Run with The Wolves, Clarissa Pinkola-Estés*

## I Wonder

I wonder what would happen if  
I treated everyone like I was in love  
with them, whether I like 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 which 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*

Grant me the serenity  
to  
Accept the things | cannot change,  
The courage to change the things | can,  
And  
The wisdom to know the difference.

*Reinhold Neibuhr*

**“Forgive yourself for not knowing what you didn’t know before  
you learned it.”**

*Maya Angelou*

## Mindful Spring Cleaning

This week's home practice is an exercise in simplifying your physical spaces.

Where in your life is there clutter? Perhaps a room in your home? Your email inbox, the glovebox in the car, a closet shelf...etc.?

Choose 1 space to focus on simplifying. Choose an area where you spend a lot of time – your car, bedroom, and/or office are examples.


Begin by using the 3 Minute Breath and check in with how you feel when you are in this space. Notice the thoughts and emotions that arise in this space. Notice how your body feels here and whether there is an urge to do something.


Look around and take an inventory of what is in this space. **What in this space has meaning or an important function in your life?** What is simply creating clutter?


Now, remove everything from this space that does not have meaning or an important function in your life. Put these things away (temporarily), perhaps in a basement, storage room, or attic.



Rearrange and organize the things that remain in this space being mindful of how position and place can affect how a room feels.

When you are done, once again become mindful of your thoughts, your body, your emotions, and any urges that are present.


At the end of your week, once you have lived in this renewed space without the clutter, decide to give away or throw away what you have been storing. Note how it feels to let go of things that you realize you no longer need.


Is there anything else in your renewed space that is creating clutter and has no meaning or function? Perhaps that should go too?

## Letting Go

We all have things- people, emotions, memories, sensations, possessions.... to which we feel some attachment. Sometimes these attachments serve us and sometimes they bring us suffering.

List five things that you feel attached to in your life, where the attachment does NOT serve you. How might you be contributing to this attachment and any resulting suffering? Who would you be and what would your life look like if you were able to loosen this attachment?

Attachment that are not serving me	How I contribute to the attachment?	How would my life look if I was less attached?
<i>Caring so much how I look in front of other people</i>	<i>By changing my behavior and speech according to what I think others will like or respect</i>	<i>Be true to myself and to my values and needs.</i>

## Forgiveness Meditation

**“There is no peace without forgiveness”**

*Marianne Williamson*

Anger, hurt and resentment can cause us to suffer long after the moment of feeling wounded. We often carry lots of emotional energy in these wounds and offering ourselves and others these words of forgiveness can release and heal this emotion.

**Forgiveness Practice** is traditionally used at the beginning of Metta, and towards the end of your sitting meditation, as a means of loosening our emotional attachment to this suffering, to these wounds.

Please remember to be gentle with yourself as you practice this important meditation.

1. Begin with forgiveness. Within the quietness of your mind, repeat the phrases
  - “As much as I am able, I forgive myself for any harm I may have caused, intentionally or unintentionally to myself or others in my life”.
  - Then  
“As much as I am able, I forgive others for any harm or suffering they may have caused me, intentionally or unintentionally”.
  - And finally, “May I be forgiven for harm or suffering that I may have caused, intentionally or unintentionally”.
2. After forgiveness, allow love and well wishes to fill your heart and mind. Continue with Metta practice as described in Module #4:
  - “May I be free from fear.”
  - “May I be free from stress or from physical or mental suffering.”
  - “May I be strong, healthy and vital.”
  - “May I take care of myself with ease.”
  - “May I be happy.”

**Home Practice Log – Week 5**

<b>DATES</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 6

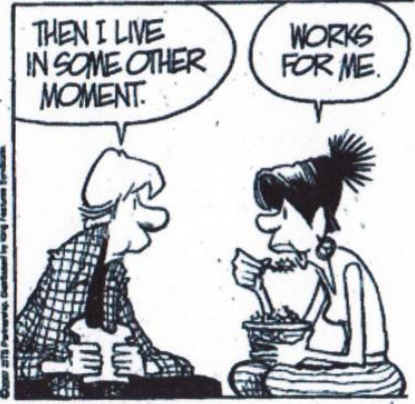
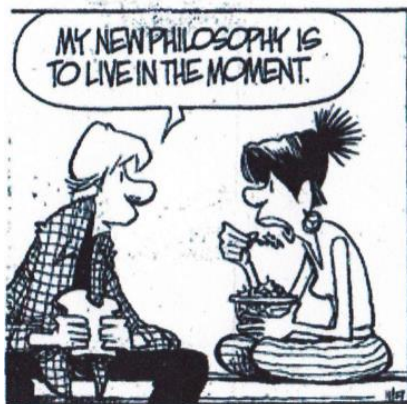
### *Aversion: Learning to Be With and Let Be*

#### Objectives:

1. To explore the roles of loving kindness and equanimity in being with unpleasant experiences
2. To develop skills for working with difficult sensations, thoughts, and emotions

#### Skill:

- RAIN – Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Non-identification



## Aversion

We spend much of our lives with a sense that something is missing, or that something is wrong with our circumstances, or with us. We may not even be aware of this. As a result, we are often grasping or avoiding, rather than living in the present moment.

Much of what we experience in life can feel painful, challenging, difficult, frightening, unpleasant or unfamiliar. But often the very behaviours we use to keep us from pain only fuel our suffering. We can have many different escape strategies. Some common ways we resist are by planning, consuming, overworking, avoiding, judging, controlling, keeping busy and misusing substances. These patterns of resistance can amplify the feeling that something is wrong with us, and also stop us from attending to the very parts of ourselves that most need our attention to heal.

What if we were to intentionally stop our mental computations and rushing around and for a minute or two simply pause and notice our inner experience? We can learn to be open to whatever is happening at that moment. Through compassionate acceptance (not necessarily agreement or approval) we can free ourselves to respond to circumstances in ways that bring genuine peace and happiness. By disrupting our habitual behaviors, we open to the possibility of new and creative ways of responding to our wants and fears.

*Adapted from "Radical Acceptance" by Tara Brach, Ph.D.,*

*Bantam Books, 2003*

A student asked the Dalai Lama,

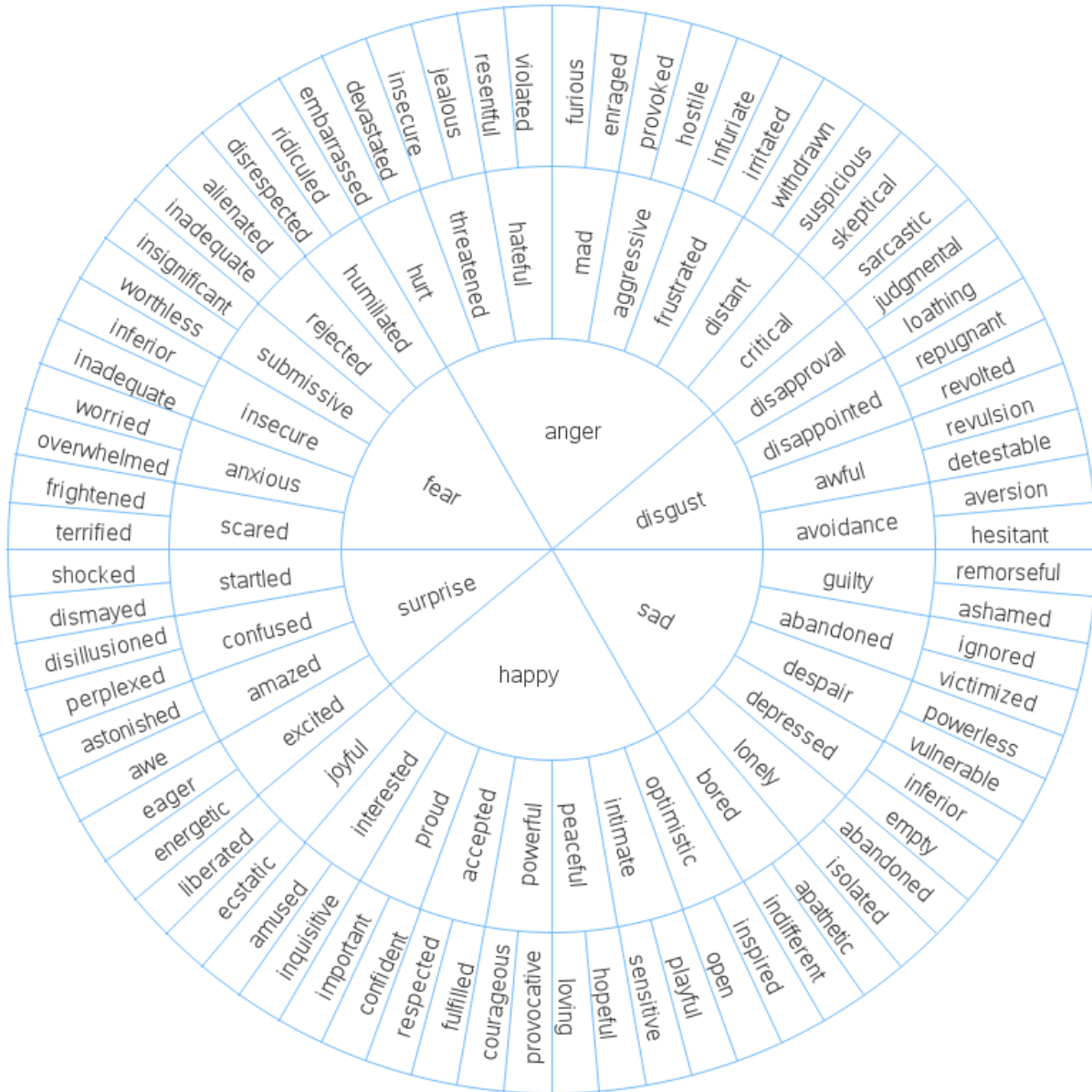
"Do you ever get angry?"

The Dalai Lama said, "Yes, I do."

Then the student asked, "What do you do about it?"

The Dalai Lama replied – "I watch it arise, and I watch it pass."

# Emotional Description Word Wheel



Based on Kaitlin Robbs' wheel-of-words





## What To Do When The Going Gets Rough

*Pema Chödrön on four ways to hold our minds steady and hearts open when facing difficult people or circumstances.*

The most straightforward advice on awakening enlightened mind is this: practice not causing harm to anyone—yourself or others—and every day, do what you can to be helpful. If we take this instruction to heart and begin to use it, we will probably find that it is not so easy. Before we know it, someone has provoked us, and either directly or indirectly, we've caused harm.

Therefore, when our intention is sincere but the going gets rough, most of us could use some help. We could use some fundamental instruction on how to lighten up and turn around our well-established habits of striking out and blaming.

The four methods for holding our seat provide just such support for developing the patience to stay open to what's happening instead of acting on automatic pilot. These four methods are:

1. not setting up the target for the arrow,
2. connecting with the heart,
3. seeing obstacles as teachers, and
4. regarding all that occurs as a dream.

First, if we have not set up the target, it cannot be hit by an arrow. This is to say that each time we retaliate with aggressive words and actions, we are strengthening the habit of anger. If we do this, without doubt, plenty of arrows will come our way. We will become increasingly irritated by the reactions of others. However, each time we are provoked, we are given a chance to do something different. We can strengthen old habits by setting up the target or we can weaken them by holding our seat.

Each time we sit still with the restlessness and heat of anger we are tamed and strengthened. This is instruction on cultivating the root of happiness. Each time we act on the anger or suppress it, we escalate our aggression; we become more and more like a walking target. Then, as the years go by, almost everything makes us mad. This is the key to understanding, at a completely real and personal level, how we sow the seeds of suffering.

So, this is the first method: remember that we set up the target and only we can take it down. Understand that if we hold our seat when we want to retaliate—even if it's only briefly—we are starting to dissolve a pattern of aggression that will continue to hurt us and others forever if we let it.

Second is the instruction for connecting with the heart. In times of anger, we can contact the kindness and compassion that we already have.

When someone who is insane starts to harm us, we can easily understand that she doesn't know what she is doing. There is the possibility of contacting our heart and feeling sadness that she is out of control and is harming herself by hurting others. There is the possibility that even though we feel fear, we do not feel hatred or anger. Instead, we might feel inspired to help this person if we can.

Actually, a lunatic is far less crazy than a sane person who harms us, for that so-called sane person has the potential to realize that in acting aggressively he is sowing seeds of his own confusion and dissatisfaction. His present aggression is strengthening future, more intense habits of aggression. He is creating his own soap opera. This kind of life is painful and lonely. The one who harms us is under the influence of patterns that could continue to produce suffering forever.

So this is the second method: connect with the heart. Remember that the one who harms us does not need to be provoked further and neither do we. Recognize that, just like us, millions are burning with the fire of aggression. We can sit with the intensity of the anger and let its energy humble us and make us more compassionate.

Third is the instruction on seeing difficulties as teachers. If there is no teacher around to give us direct personal guidance on how to stop causing harm, never fear! Life itself will provide opportunities for learning how to hold our seat. Without the inconsiderate neighbor, where will we find the chance to practice patience? Without the office bully, how could we ever get the chance to know the energy of anger so intimately that it loses its destructive power?

The teacher is always with us. The teacher is always showing us precisely where we're at—encouraging us not to speak and act in the same old neurotic ways, encouraging us also not to repress or dissociate, encouraging us not to sow the seeds of suffering. So with this person who is scaring us or insulting us, do we retaliate as we have one hundred thousand times before, or do we start to get smart and finally hold our seat?

Right at the point when we are about to blow our top or withdraw into oblivion, we can remember this: we are warriors-in-training being taught how to sit with edginess and discomfort. We are being challenged to remain and to relax where we are.

The problem with following these or any instructions is that we tend to be too serious and rigid. We get tense and uptight about trying to relax and be patient.

This is where the fourth instruction comes in: it is helpful to think about the person who is angry, the anger itself, and the object of that anger as being like a dream. We can regard our life as a movie in which we are temporarily the leading player. Rather than making it so important, we can reflect on the essencelessness of our current situation. We can slow down and ask ourselves: "Who is this monolithic me that has been so offended? And who is this other person who can trigger me like this? What is this praise and blame that hooks me like a fish, that catches me like a mouse in a trap? How is it that these circumstances have the power to propel me like a Ping-Pong ball from hope to fear, from happiness to misery?" This big-deal struggle, this big-deal self, and this big-deal other could all be lightened up considerably.

Contemplate these outer circumstances, as well as these emotions, as well as this huge sense of me, as passing and essenceless, like a memory, like a movie, like a dream. When we awaken from sleep, we know that the enemies in our dreams are an illusion. That realization cuts through panic and fear.

When we find ourselves captured by aggression, we can remember this: there is no basis for striking out or for repressing. There is no basis for hatred or shame. We can at least begin to question our assumptions. Could it be that whether we are awake or asleep, we are simply moving from one dreamlike state to another?

These four methods for turning anger around and for learning a little patience come to us from the Kadampa masters of eleventh-century Tibet. These instructions have provided encouragement for fledgling bodhisattvas in the past, and they are just as useful in the present. These same Kadampa masters advised that we not procrastinate. They urged us to use these instructions immediately—on this very day in this very situation—and not say to ourselves, "I will try this in the future when I have a bit more time."

# Allow

There is no controlling life.  
Try corralling a lightning bolt,  
containing a tornado. Dam a  
stream and it will create a new  
channel. Resist, and the tide  
will sweep you off your feet.

Allow, and grace will carry  
you to higher ground. The only  
safety lies in letting it all in -  
the wild and the weak; fear,  
fantasies, failures, and success.  
When loss rips off the doors of  
the heart, or sadness veils your  
vision with despair, practice  
becomes simply bearing the truth.

In the choice to let go of your  
known way of being, the whole  
world is revealed to your new eyes.

*Danna Faulds*

## The Well of Grief

Those who will not slip beneath the still surface on the well of grief,  
Turning downward through its black water to the place we cannot breathe  
Will never know the source from which we drink, the secret water, cold and clear,  
Nor find in the darkness glimmering the small round coins thrown by those who  
wished for something else.

*David Whyte*

**RAIN: Cultivating Mindfulness in Difficult Times** – this process can be like a healing rain in difficult times.

RAIN is an acronym for a mindfulness practice that can be used with any content of mind, but is typically applied to unpleasant, uncomfortable, or upsetting material

You can go through the steps (all 4 or just a couple of them) of R.A.I.N.:

1. During formal meditation practice, whenever difficult emotions arise.
2. While taking some quiet time for contemplation about a particular troubling issue or a difficult emotional reaction.
3. “On the spot” in daily life, just for a couple of minutes, to help us work with difficult emotions that arise throughout the day.

#### **THE FOUR STEP RAIN MODEL:**

**R** Recognize what is happening

**A** Allow life to be just as it is

**I** Investigate inner experience with kindness

**N** Non-identification: Resting in Natural Awareness

#### **RECOGNIZE WHAT IS HAPPENING:**

Recognizing is seeing what is present in your inner life right now. It starts the moment you focus your attention on whatever thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations are arising here and now. It can be useful to ask yourself: “**What is in awareness right now?**” “**What emotions** are there? What **sensations** are there? What **thoughts** are there?”.

Be curious, and listen, in a kind and receptive way, to your own body and heart.

#### **ALLOW LIFE TO BE JUST AS IT IS:**

Allowing means “letting be” the thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations you discover. You may feel a sense of aversion, of wishing the unpleasant feelings would go away, or thoughts that they “shouldn’t be here”. Yet, in allowing ourselves to be present with “what is”, a new kind of healing can take place. Some people find it helpful to whisper an encouraging word or phrase to themselves during this step. For instance, you might whisper a “yes” to yourself, or maybe “*this too*” or “*let be*”. You may need to say these words many times to yourself, as you breathe and let your thoughts,

emotions, feelings, and sensations just be. Even a small amount of this kind of allowing, can begin to soften the harsh edges of your discomfort.

### **INVESTIGATE WITH KINDNESS**

The first two steps may be enough to provide some relief. However, at times it can be helpful to investigate what you are experiencing more closely, with as much kindness towards yourself as possible. You have noticed sensations (e.g. heat, tightness, aches), emotions (e.g. fear, anger, shame, grief) and thoughts. Now asking:

- “What about this most wants/needs my attention?”
- “What most wants my acceptance?”
- “What beliefs do I hold about this?”
- “What does this suffering part of me need, in order to heal? Recognition? Acceptance? Forgiveness? Love?”

Pose your questions gently, with an inviting and kind inner voice.

### **NURTURE: EMBRACE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH COMPASSION**

Here we specifically provide care to ourselves in this experience of challenge. Send yourself whatever message you need to hear in this moment. “I’m sorry sweetheart...I care about this suffering...May I be well.” If you wish, you can offer yourself gentle physical contact by bringing a hand to your heart or wrapping your arms around yourself in a hug.

### **NON-IDENTIFICATION: REST IN NATURAL AWARENESS**

This step involves appreciating that your emotions do not define you. They are part of your experience, and they are not unique to you – all humans share and experience these emotions. As you loosen your identification with the narratives, emotions, and beliefs about yourself, you can begin to live more from an expanded place of openness – a sense of “just being”. You can become like an ocean – the thoughts, emotions, sensations, and beliefs are simply passing waves, while your natural awareness is the quiet, peaceful, infinite depth beneath the surface.

End your practice of RAIN by taking a few moments to simply rest in this spacious and kind awareness, **allowing whatever arises in your body or mind to freely come and go.**

You may want to offer yourself appreciation for doing the exercise.

*Adapted from “True Refuge” by Tara Brach, Ph.D, Bantam Books, 2012*

## Meeting Aversion

<p>This week, notice an unpleasant event – body sensation, thought, emotion or situation. Notice your autopilot reaction – usually one of tension, non-acceptance, wanting it to be over or different. Ask yourself how you may practice a more mindful response using the RAIN tool.</p>		
Unpleasant event or experience	Habitual reaction	Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Non-Identification
<i>Pain in lower back</i>	<i>Thinking “now my day is ruined” Limiting activity</i>	<i>I recognize the suffering that is present at this very moment. Right now, I need gentleness and to remember that I am more than this pain. This will pass.</i>



**Home Practice Log – Week 6**

<b>DATES</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 7

### *Mindfulness of Everyday Life*

#### Objectives:

1. To practice bringing mindfulness into your daily life
2. To explore mindfulness in communication

#### Skill:

- *Beginning Anew* – A tool for mindful communication

## Communicating Mindfully

Bringing what we learn in our formal practice into our everyday life is what this course is all about. This week, we focus on mindful communication. This requires the use of many of the concepts we have already explored.

In some of your everyday conversations, practice mindfulness by giving your full attention to the person you are talking to. Do not multi-task but focus on listening. Notice your own sensations, thought stories etc, and then return to the speaker.

When disagreements arise, take a moment to check in with yourself. What is going on inside –body sensations, thoughts, and emotions. Can you access a mindful response? If not consider taking a pause and giving some space from the situation before responding. When you do respond, slow down and deeply listen to the other. When it is your time to speak, have an awareness of your intention in speaking (intention speaks louder than words). Practice bringing compassion and mindfulness to your speech.

“When listening gets hard, I focus on taking the next breath. I pay attention to sensations in my body: heat, clenching, and constriction. I feel the ground beneath my feet. Am I safe? If so, I stay and slow my breath again, quiet my mind, and release the pressure that pushes me to defend my position. I try to wonder about this person’s story and the possible wound in them. I think of an earnest question and try to stay curious long enough to be changed by what I hear. Maybe, just maybe, my opponent will begin to wonder about me in return, ask me questions, and listen to my story. Maybe their views will start to break apart and new horizons will open in the process. Maybe the memory of the exchange will play a critical role in their transformation in the future. Then again, maybe not. It doesn’t matter as long as the primary goal of listening is to deepen my own understanding. Listening does not grant the other side legitimacy. It grants them humanity—and preserves our own.”

*Valarie Kaur, See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*

## **Beginning Anew**

*Adapted from the work of Thich Nhat Hanh*

*Beginning Anew* is a formal communication technique used to help bring reconciliation. It was developed by Thich Nhat Hanh for his community, Plum Village, as a way to engender mindfulness and compassion. It is based on deep listening and loving speech. We have adapted here into the following four steps.

One party moves through the four steps, while the other receives it in silence. Then, the first party listens while the second party moves through the four steps in order.

### *Gratitude*

- Begin with speaking to what you are grateful for about the other person (e.g., from this week)

### *Regrets*

- What are things that you regret, things you said or did, or incidents that you regret happened
- Focus on your contribution to incidents or moments where you acted in ways that were not as skillful as you might have liked

### *Hurts*

- Tell the other person how you have been hurt. It is important not to blame, but rather focus on your feelings. Mention how you felt “when this and this happened”, rather than “you made me...”

### *Hopes*

- End the conversation with the hopes you have for reconciliation. Focus on yourself/yourselves, not the other person

## **Communicating Mindfully in Conflict**

*If your house is on fire, the most urgent thing to do is to go back and try to put out the fire, not to run after the person you believe to be the arsonist. If you run after the person you suspect has burned your house, your house will burn down while you are chasing him or her. That is not wise. You must go back and put the fire out. So when you are angry, if you continue to interact with or argue with the other person, if you try to punish her, you are acting exactly like someone who runs after the arsonist while everything goes up in flames.*

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

Do not ask your children  
to strive for extraordinary lives.  
Such striving may seem admirable,  
but it is the way of foolishness.  
Help them instead to find the wonder  
and the marvel of an ordinary life.  
Show them the joy of tasting  
tomatoes, apples, and pears.  
Show them how to cry  
when pets and people die.  
Show them the infinite pleasure  
in the touch of a hand.  
And make the ordinary come alive for them.  
The extraordinary will take care of itself.

William Martin

## Domestic Poem

Nightfall | sink  
into dish wash meditation  
steaming china prayer wheels  
crystalline bells of the  
lost horizon.  
Crockery mandalas  
chanting din and lull of  
running water  
breathing slows  
moist heat, muscles soften  
Zen poems drip from  
silverware,  
my air humming out  
in a cleansing melody  
washing the frantic stew  
of a whole day  
down the drain.

E. Moller







## Mindfulness in Daily Life

### Eating Meditation

Remember your raisin? For three meals this week, consciously slow down your eating. Before you begin to eat, choose a prayer, an offering of thanks, or simply take a few moments to be grateful for the food that you have; for the many people – farmers, truck drivers, grocery store owners, etc. that made this food possible; and perhaps a moment of mindfulness of those who are not so fortunate in this world. As you begin to eat, be mindful of the full sensory experience of eating. What does the food look like and how does it smell? As you chew, be aware of the tastes and the pleasure of satisfying your hunger. When you eat, just eat. Avoid television, newspapers, books, etc. Light conversation and sharing is fine. Be mindful of when you are full and not eating beyond this point.

What have you learned from this practice?


### Telephone Meditation

How many times does the phone ring each day? Bring your mindfulness practice here as well. When you hear the phone ring, allow this to be a reminder to take a deep breath in and out. Do this first, before you answer the phone. Before you make a call, again take a few deep breaths to regain a sense of being present. Sit down and avoid multitasking when you are on the phone. Give your full attention to the person you are speaking with, and the conversation at hand.

How is this practice different from how you normally speak on the phone? What have you learned from this?


## Mindfulness in Daily Life Exercise

Choose 1-2 areas in your life to practice mindfulness this week.

How did you bring your awareness into this part of your life?

What are some examples?

What did you learn?

**Mindful Opportunity #1**

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**Mindful Opportunity #2**

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Can you think of other areas of your life that can benefit from your mindfulness practices?

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**Home Practice Log – Week 7**

<b>DATES</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			



# The Art of Living Mindfully

## Module 8

### *Sticking with It*

#### Objectives:

1. To explore how to sustain a practice of mindfulness for life
2. To discuss resources to nurture a commitment to practice
3. To review the *Art of Living Mindfully* journey

## Symptoms of Inner Peace

Be on the lookout for symptoms of inner peace. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to inner peace and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has up to now been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

Some signs and symptoms of inner peace:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people.
- A loss of interest in judging self.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of ability to worry (this is a very serious symptom).
- Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

**WARNING:** If you have some or all of the above symptoms, please be advised that your condition of inner peace may be so far advanced as to not be curable. If you are exposed to anyone exhibiting any of these symptoms, remain exposed at your own risk.

- *Saskia Davis, 1983*

## **Sticking With It: How to Sustain Your Meditation Practice**

A friend invited me out to lunch one day and during the meal offered the following confession: "I've been meditating for about three years now," he said "and I'd have to say honestly that my experience when I'm sitting isn't what I thought it would be or should be. I still have ups and down; my mind wanders and I start over; I still have bouts of sleepiness or restlessness.

"But I'm like a completely different person now. I'm kinder and more patient with my family and friends, and with myself. I'm more involved with my community. I think more about the consequences of my actions, and about what habitual responses I bring to a situation. Is that enough?"

"Yeah," I replied, beaming at him. "I think that's enough."

This is why we practice meditation-so that we can treat ourselves more compassionately; improve our relationships with friends, family, and community; live lives of greater connection; and, even in the face of challenges, stay in touch with what we really care about so we can act in ways that are consistent with our values.

One of the things I've always found so interesting about meditation practice is that the arena can seem so small-just you in a room-but the life lessons, the realizations and understandings that arise from it, can be pretty big.

The process is one of continually trying to greet our experience, whatever it is, with mindfulness, loving kindness, and compassion; it helps us to realize that everything changes constantly and to be okay with that. The effort we make in meditation is a willingness to be open, to come close to what we have avoided, to be patient with ourselves and others, and to let go of our preconceptions, our projections, and our tendency not to live fully.

Meditation practice helps us relinquish old, painful habits; it challenges our assumptions about whether or not we deserve happiness. (We do, it tells us empathetically.) It also ignites a very potent energy in us. With a strong foundation in how to practice meditation, we can begin to live in a way that enables us to respect ourselves, to be calm rather than anxious, and to offer caring attention to others instead of being held back by notions of separation.

But even when you know that these benefits make meditation well worth the effort it can be hard to keep up a new meditation practice. On the following pages you'll find some suggestions for strengthening your commitment.

I used to feel, very early in my practice, that mindfulness was awaiting me somewhere out there; that it was going to take a lot of effort and determination, but somehow, someday, after a great deal of struggle, I was going to claim my moment of mindfulness-sort of like planting a flag on top of a mountain.

My view of the matter was enlarged, and my understanding transformed when I realized that mindfulness wasn't inaccessible or remote: it was always right there with me. The moment I remembered it- the moment I noticed that I was forgetting to practice it- there it was! My mindfulness didn't need to get better or be as good as someone else's. It was already perfect. So is yours. But the truth is easily forgotten in the midst of our busy lives and complicated relationships. One reason we practice is to recall that truth, so that we can remember to be mindful more and more often throughout our day and remember more naturally. Regular practice makes mindfulness a part of us.

Meditation is never one thing: you'll experience moments of sadness, moments of joy, moments of anger, and moments of sleepiness. The terrain changes constantly, but we tend to solidify it around the negative: "This painful experience is going to last the rest of my life." The tendency to fixate on the negative is something we can approach mindfully; we can notice it, name it, observe it, test it, and dispel it, using the skills we learn in practice.

As you continue with your meditation practice, each session may be very different from the one that preceded it. Some sittings feel great, and some are painful, with an onslaught of all of the hindrances magnified. But these varied experiences are all part of our process. A difficult session is just as valuable as a pleasant one-maybe more so, because it holds more potential lessons. We can look mindfully at joy, sorrow, or anguish. It doesn't matter what's going on; transformation comes from changing our relationship to what's going on.

I was recently teaching with the psychiatrist and author Mark Epstein. He told the class that since beginning his meditation practice in 1974, he'd tried to attend a retreat each year. And from the start he has kept a notebook in which he jots the most compelling insight of the retreat, along with the teacher's single most illuminating, profound, or provocative statement. A few years ago, he told us, he decided to reread his notebook. He was startled to find that year after year, he'd recorded some variation of the same thing: "What arises in our experience is much less important than how we relate to what arises in our experience."

Mark's central discovery can be restated in several ways: "No matter what comes up, we can learn new ways of being with it." "We have a capacity to meet any thought or emotion with mindfulness and balance". "Whatever disagreeable emotion is coursing through us, we can let it go". Rereading these words may keep you going when sitting down to practice is the last thing you want to do.

Breaking away from our habitual ways of looking at things, thinking at a new level, and responding differently take a good deal of courage. Here are some ways to help you rally when your courage flags-when you feel too scared (or tired or bored or stiff in the knees) to continue your practice:

## **Start Over**

If your self-discipline or dedication seems to weaken, remember first of all, that this is natural, and you don't need to berate yourself for it. Seek inspiration in the form that works best for you- reading poetry or prose that inspires you, communicating with like-minded friends, finding a community of meditators, maybe a sangha to practice with. Or form your own meditation group. If you haven't been keeping a meditation journal, start one. And keep in mind that no matter how badly you feel things are going, no matter how long it's been since you last meditated, you can always begin again. Nothing is lost; nothing is ruined. We have this very moment in front of us. We can start now.

Guided meditations are meant to be read and listened to again and again. Don't dismiss them, saying to yourself "I heard that already and I get it." They repay revisiting; they are opportunities to practice, and they deepen overtime. Each time you use one of the meditations again, it's different. Work with these meditations daily and watch how you feel connected one day and drift off the next. The hard day and the easy day each teach you a lot. And the next day holds the promise of a fresh, new experience.

### **“Just Put Your Body There”**

I once complained to my teacher Munindraji about being unable to maintain a regular practice. “When I sit at home and meditate and it feels good, I'm exhilarated and I have faith and I know that it's the most important thing in my life,” I said.

“But as soon as it feels bad, I stop. I'm disheartened and discouraged, so I just give up.” He gave me quite a wonderful piece of advice. “Just put your body there” he said “That's what you have to do. Just put your body there. Your mind will do different things all of the time, but you just put your body there. Because that's the expression of commitment, and the rest will follow from that.”

Certainly, there's a time to evaluate our practice, to see if it's useful to us and worth continuing. But the evaluation shouldn't happen every five minutes, or we'll be continually pulling ourselves out of the process. And when we do assess our progress, we need to focus on the right criteria: Is my life different? Am I more balanced, more able to go with the flow? Am I kinder? Those are the crucial questions. The rest of the time, just put your body there.

You may think you are too undisciplined to maintain a practice. But you really can manage to put your body there, day in and day out. We're often very disciplined when it comes to external things like earning a living, getting the kids off to school, doing the laundry- we do it whether we like it or not. Why can't we direct that same discipline (for just a few minutes each day) toward our inner wellbeing? If you can muster the energy for the laundry, you can muster the energy to "put your body there" for a happier life.



## Remember That Change Takes Time

Meditation is sometimes described this way: Imagine you're trying to split a huge piece of wood with a small axe. You hit that piece of wood ninety-nine times, and nothing happens. Then you hit it the hundredth time and it splits open. You might wonder, after that hundredth whack: What did I do differently that time? Did I hold the axe differently? Did I stand differently? Why did it work the hundredth time and not the other ninety-nine?

But, of course, we needed all those earlier attempts to weaken the fiber of the wood. It doesn't feel very good when we're only on hit number thirty-four or thirty-five; it seems as if we aren't making any progress at all. But we are, and not only because of the mechanical act of banging on the wood and weakening its fiber. What's really transformative is our willingness to keep going, our openness to possibility, our patience, our effort, our humour, our growing self-knowledge, and the strength that we gain as we keep going. These intangible factors are the most vital to our success. In meditation practice, these elements are growing and deepening even when we're sleepy, restless, bored, or anxious. They're the qualities that move us toward transformation over time. They're what splits open the wood and the world.

## Use Ordinary Moments

You can access the forces of mindfulness and loving kindness at any moment, without anyone knowing you're doing it. You don't have to walk excruciatingly slowly down the streets of a major metropolis, alarming everyone around you (in fact, please don't); you can be aware in less obvious ways.

Rest your attention on your breath or feel your feet against the ground—in a meeting, during a telephone conversation, walking the dog; doing so will help you be more aware of and sensitive to all that is happening around you.

Throughout the day, take a moment to stop your headlong rush and torrent of doing to simply be-mindfully eating a meal, feeding a baby, or listening to the flow of sounds around you. Even in difficult situations, this pause can bring a sense of connection or of relief from obsessing about what you don't have now or about what event or person might make you happy someday in the future.

Once when I was teaching a retreat, I had to go up and down a flight of stairs many times a day. I decided to make walking on that staircase part of my practice. Every time I went up or down, I paused first to remind myself to pay attention. It was useful, and it was fun. I've also resolved to do loving kindness whenever I find myself waiting. Waiting in line in the grocery store. Sitting and waiting in a doctor's office. Waiting for my turn to speak at a conference. And I count all forms of transportation as waiting (as in waiting to get to the next place or event), so on airplanes, subways, buses, in cars, and when walking down the street, I begin: *May I be peaceful; may I be safe; may I be happy.*

Why not, in those "in-between" times, generate the force of loving kindness? You're likely to find that this weaving of meditation into everyday experience is a good way of bringing your meditation practice to life.

### **Make Sure Your Life Reflects Your Practice**

Many years ago my colleagues at the Insight Meditation Society and I hosted a teacher from India and accompanied him around the country, introducing him to various communities where interest in meditation was growing. At the end of the tour we asked him what he thought of America. "It is wonderful, of course," he said, "but sometimes students here remind me of people sitting in a rowboat and rowing with great earnestness, but they don't want to untie the boat from the dock."

"It seems to me," he went on, "that some people here want to meditate in order to have great transcendent experiences or amazing alternate states of consciousness. They may not be too interested in how they speak to their children or treat their neighbor."

The way we do anything can reflect the way we do everything. It's useful to see whether our lives outside of meditation practice are congruent with our lives as we sit. Are we living according to our deepest values, seeking the sources of real happiness, applying the skills of mindfulness, concentration, and loving kindness throughout all areas of our lives? As we practice, that begins to happen naturally over time, but in the meantime, we can look at our lives to see if there's any disharmony we want to address. Are there disconnections between our values in meditation and our values in the world- our habits of consumption, for example, or how we treat a particular person, or how well we take care of ourselves? If we find something off kilter, we have the tools to work for balance.

We all have cherished hopes about what our meditation practice should look like. However, the point is not to achieve some model or ideal but to be aware of all the different states that we experience. That's a difficult message to believe, and somehow we need to hear it again and again. ~

*Sharon Salzberg, Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation 2010.*

## Tips for Keeping Up the Practice

### Formally:

Every day aim to sit, practicing the body scan, mindfulness meditation on the breath, and/or metta. Listen to your body and mind, and their needs. Perhaps you need more metta, more relaxation body scan, or perhaps some walking meditation outside. Whatever life offers you, *meditate anyways*.

If you have absolutely no time- then practice for a few concentrated minutes daily. Sitting in the morning can have a positive effect on your whole day but practicing anytime is beneficial!

It can be very helpful to practice with a group of other meditators, in-person or virtually, building a sense of community and connection.

### Informally:

- Be mindful of the transitions in your day to day (sitting to standing, entering/leaving a place, beginning/ending a task. Etc)
- Be mindful for one minute every hour
- Touch base with breathing, wherever you are and as often as you can
- Allow the telephone/cell phone ring to be a spontaneous reminder for mindfulness
- Using little green dots in strategic places to remind you
- Put signs around: “reaching” on the fridge: “driving” on the steering wheel: “listening” on the phone.
- Bring attention to difficult situations
- Bring attention to the connections between physical symptoms of distress, e.g., headaches, increased pain, rapid breathing, muscle tension, and their preceding mental states and their origins.
- Be mindful of your needs -- for formal meditation, relaxation, exercise, a healthy diet, enough sleep, intimacy, connection, and humour -- and honour them, especially after a stressful day or event.

## The Summer Day

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean-  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down- who is  
gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes. Now she lifts  
her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face. Now she snaps  
her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields, which is  
what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?

*Mary Oliver*

Now is the time to know  
That all you do is sacred  
Now, why not consider  
A lasting truce with yourself and God

Now is the time to understand  
That all your ideas of right and wrong  
Were just a child's training wheels  
To be laid aside  
When you can finally live  
With veracity  
And love

Now is the time for the world to know  
That every thought and action is sacred.  
That this is the time  
For you to compute the impossibility  
That there is anything  
But Grace

Now is the season to know  
That everything you do  
Is Sacred.

*Hafiz*

