**Practical Mindfulness**

Professional - Mindfulness Practitioner & Teacher

Lived Experience Trainer

Photograph of the whitewash of the sea splashing against pebbles on the beach.  
Photo by Quentin Lagache on Unsplash

**Welcome to Practical Mindfulness**

**Working together, over the next six weeks we will:**

* Always keep a learning focus
* Maintain ‘Confidentiality’: what’s said in the room stays in the room
* Listen to each other
* Give each other the time and space to talk and have our say
* Respect each other’s experiences and opinions
* Be honest
* Keep our phones on silent   
  (but you are more than welcome to nip out to take a call if need be)

**If you are unable to attend any session, please let us know**

**Objectives:**

**By the end of the six week’s you will:**

* Understand and be able to explain what mindfulness is and its benefits to your wellbeing
* Understand ‘Beginners Mind’ and be able to use during mindful practice
* Understand ‘Busy Mind’ and be able to use your breath as an anchor
* Understand ‘Automatic Pilot’ and how it affects how we react in situations
* Have a clearer understanding of how stress, anxiety and feeling low can affect our mind and body
* Understand how our thoughts and feelings can affect our behaviour and how we ‘react’ or ‘respond’ to situations etc.
* Understand the ‘attitudes of mindfulness’
* Be clear about the difference between formal and informal mindful practices
* Have developed your own personal ‘practical mindfulness toolkit’
* Understand the importance of your own personal ‘practice’, ‘practice’, ‘practice’

**Practical mindfulness: Week 1**

Photo by [Natalia Figueredo](https://unsplash.com/photos/f1O4eekgz44?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/search/photos/female-doing-breathing-meditation?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText)



**Objectives:**

* To become familiar with what Mindfulness is, where it originated from and how it can help benefit our health and wellbeing
* To understand the difference between formal and informal mindful practice
* To complete ‘A taste of mindfulness’ practice as a first mindful meditation
* To introduce ‘Beginner’s Mind’
* To recognise ‘A mindful attitude’
* To complete breathing practice and timing your breath practices
* To listen to weekly ‘Wise Words’

**What is mindfulness and what does it mean?**

“Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way; **on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally**.”

(Jon Kabat-Zinn)

…………………

**Mindfulness** means to be present. ‘Being in the moment’, experiencing life directly as it unfolds, rather than being distracted, caught up and lost in thought.

**It implies resting the mind in its natural state of awareness, which is free from any bias or judgement.**

It’s about being aware of everything including distractions and discomfort.

(Andy Puddicombe, Get Some Headspace, 2011)

…………………

"**An important part of mindfulness is reconnecting with our bodies** and the sensations they experience. This means waking up to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the present moment. That might be something as simple as the feel of a banister as we walk upstairs.

"Another important part of mindfulness is **an awareness of our thoughts and feelings** as they happen moment to moment.

"It's about **allowing ourselves to see the present moment clearly**. When we do that, it can positively change the way we see ourselves and our lives."

(Professor Mark Williams, former director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre) and taken from NHS Moodzone (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness>)

**Mindfulness of the breath meditation**

**Introduction**

Your breath is always with you. It provides you with a mindful meditation tool that you can bring your awareness to at any given moment – no matter where you are!

It’s quite common for you not to pay attention to your breathing until someone draws your attention to it. However, it’s something that we all do moment by moment; we are just not always aware that we are doing it!

By bringing your focus on purpose, in the present moment, to your breath you can anchor yourself to what is taking place right now – right now in this present moment.

It may be that during your mindfulness meditation practice that your mind will wander; thoughts, feelings, sounds may well pop into your head, distracting you from your breathing – but that’s fine. When it does happen, you can just acknowledge it and then bring your focus back to your breath. It doesn’t matter if this happens once or many times – you just kindly and gently bring your attention back to focussing on your breath each time.

Don’t be critical about yourself or even judge yourself if your mind wanders. During meditation you want to be non-judgemental; instead you want to treat yourself with kindness and compassion. After all - this is your gift of time!

**Posture**

Mindfulness of breath can be carried out sitting up or lying down; the main thing is that you are comfortable, and your back/spine is supported when sitting upright, if possible.

You may choose to close your eyes or keep them open if you are feeling a bit sleepy; or you can opt to slightly close your eyes and gently focus your gaze lower, perhaps to a point on the floor. The thing to remember is that in mindfulness you are not trying to fall asleep but to fall awake.

Position your hands so that they lie gently in your lap; palms up or palms down. Some people find it helps to use a cushion on their lap or to tie a scarf around their waist (to hold their hands in a comfortable position). This helps to support their shoulders; removing any pain or discomfort if they suffer with pain in their shoulders. This is totally optional – the main thing is that you are comfortable.

**Noticing your breath**

Drawing your attention to your breath; take a few deep, gentle breaths; noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens moment by moment.

Turning your attention to your own natural breathing rhythm (not forcing your breath in any way), notice where it is that you first feel the sensation of your breath. Is it around the nostrils where cool air enters and warms air leaves you, in your throat, your chest or perhaps even lower down in your belly – noticing how your belly gently expands as you breathe in and contracts as you breath out.

Bringing your awareness to the breath, notice the sensation of each breath as it happens; allowing your awareness to be there and gently noticing every in and out breath. Not trying to change your natural breathing rhythm in any way – just being aware and noticing your breathing in and out as it happens in the moment.

Continuing this practice, you may find your awareness wandering; caught up in thoughts, the sounds around you or sensations in your body. Knowing that this distraction is fine, accepting it as part of your mindful meditation practice; gently and kindly bring your awareness back to focus on your breath. It doesn’t matter how many times your awareness wanders away, just softly and gently lead it gently back to your breathing.

Continue with this practice for 5-10 minutes. When you are ready to end the practice invite yourself to bring your awareness back into the room and when you are ready, and in your own time, open your eyes and have a gentle stretch.

Take a few moments to reflect on this mindfulness breathing practice; exploring curiously your own personal experiences during the practice and those experiences when your awareness came back into the room.

*(adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living, p58)*



WISE WORDS

A monk was quoted as saying:

‘The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.’

The journey of mindfulness is to discover how to live this way.

(Mindfulness for Dummies, Shamash Alidina)

**Practical Mindfulness – Week 1 home practice**

* Practice sitting meditation – mindfulness of breath (5-10 mins daily)
* A ‘taste of mindfulness’. Eat at least ‘one’ meal mindfully and make notes of any feelings/sensations on the table below
* Complete one other daily activity in a mindful way
* Reflect in journal (voluntary)

**Remember:** treat yourself with kindness and compassion during your practice. The aim is to be non-judgemental!

**A ‘taste of mindfulness’ (mindful meditation practice)**

Imagine that you have just arrived on planet ‘earth’ from another planet and you have never seen or tasted anything on planet ‘earth’ before. (Beginner’s Mind).

Thinking back to our ‘taste of mindfulness’ exercise and using the words in the left-hand column to remind you, try following the ‘taste of mindfulness’ practice with another item of food, cup of tea etc. Curiously explore how you felt during this practice. What where your thoughts, feelings, sensations as you did this practice and note them below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Item of food/drink** |
| **Holding** |  |
| **Sounding** |  |
| **Seeing** |  |
| **Touching** |  |
| **Smelling** |  |
| **Lips** |  |
| **Tasting** |  |
| **Swallowing** |  |
| **Following eating** |  |

**You can repeat this practice with everything that you eat or drink.**

**Your Personal (Home Practice) Mindful Practice – Record Form**

Use this form to keep a record of your mindfulness practice - do at least once daily. Use it also to make a note of any sensations, thoughts/feelings etc. that come up about or during your practice. Remember, it’s important for you to treat yourself gently, with kindness and compassion and not to be judgemental when you are practicing mindfulness. It is not a goal - it’s an ongoing journey!

See which mindful practices suit your daily routine and keep a record on your ‘Personal Toolkit Form’. Also, record the practices that you’re struggling with as a reminder; making sure you don’t forget about them but also acknowledging what difficulties you have engaging with them – but continue to practice them. Some take longer than others to get used to – practice, practice, practice!

| **Day/Date:** | **Mindful Practice:** | **Comments** |
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**Practical mindfulness: Personal practice toolkit form**

Use this form to develop your own personal mindfulness practice toolkit. Simply add the new tools or techniques weekly to grow your list. Tick yes or no depending on whether you engage with the new tools added and any comments you may have. Remember; if you don’t engage with a new tool/technique straight away to come back and revisit regularly – some may take time…

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mindfulness Practice (Tool)** | **Yes** | **No** | **Comments** |
| Mindful eating |  |  |  |
| Sitting meditation (breath) |  |  |  |
| Daily journal |  |  |  |
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**Practical mindfulness: Week 2**

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**Objectives:**

* To introduce ‘three-step breathing space’ practice
* To review ‘home practice’ from Week 1
* To share ‘lived experience’ story
* To understand different types of stress; the first signs of stress/anxiety/feeling low; how we may react
* To discuss ‘Automatic Pilot’ and how we ‘react or respond’ to stress
* To understand how we can change our mindset (neural pathways) and the need for practice, practice, practice
* To complete breathing practice and timing your breath practices
* To listen to weekly ‘Wise Words’

**Three-step breathing space meditation**

This three-step breathing space can be used anywhere - at home, in the workplace, travelling on the train, the bus, flying, walking or even waiting in the queue at the supermarket etc. Sometimes known as the three-minute breathing space; you can carry out the practice using one-minute during each step. You can use it to take some time out during the day or if you are feeling overwhelmed at any time; just check in and reconnect with yourself and your mindful practice.

You can carry this practice out sitting down, lying down, standing; choosing to close your eyes or leave them open with a soft gaze on a spot in front of you (helpful if you are feeling tired).

**Step 1: Checking in**

Noticing and bringing your awareness to the present moment; notice what you are feeling right now…. Checking in with your mind and your body; acknowledging any physical or emotional sensations that are present…. Noticing how your body is feeling…. perhaps quickly scanning the body to pick up any sensations and just acknowledging these…. Noticing any thoughts that are in your mind and observing them inquisitively and non-judgementally…. just simply noticing them as mental events.

**Step 2: Focusing on the breath**

Now, bringing your attention to your breathing…. noticing your natural breathing rhythm; not trying to change it in any way…. simply breathing in and breathing out…. You may find your mind wandering away from your breathing; if this happens, just acknowledge this non-judgementally…. and gently and with kindness bring your awareness back to focus your breath…. using your breath as an anchor; bringing your awareness to the present moment.

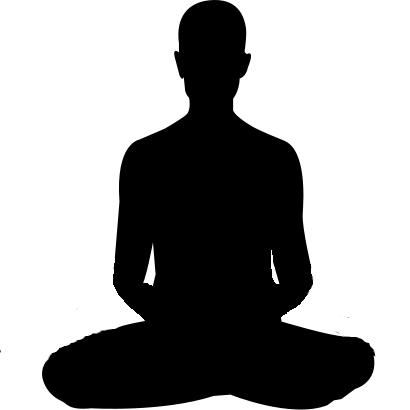
**Step 3: Expanding your awareness**

Allowing your awareness to expand once again to your entire body…. noticing your breathing throughout your whole body…. Bringing a more spacious awareness to your experience… noticing any sounds around you or any sensations in your body…. Try and hold your awareness towards these sensations while you are breathing in and breathing out.

You are now invited, in your own time and when you feel ready to do so, to gently bring your awareness back into the room, open your eyes and have a stretch.

**Journey of Awareness**

This practice helps us to calm our minds, and switch on our internal state of awareness.



Settle into the chair, move your weight from side to side in order to find the left and right sides of your buttocks. Then, sitting up straight, take some deep belly breaths.

Find your feet on the floor by spreading and pressing into the floor (make sure your knees are in line with your hips.

Wiggle your toes and find the balls of the feet and heels by rocking the feet forwards and backwards, and then press down into the floor, activating the legs.

Lift all ten toes, and keep them raised, wiggle them again, then spread the toes and lower to the ground.

Make sure your body is symmetrical and the spine is straight. Adjust the head so the neck is comfortable.

Now close your eyes if that feels comfortable. Begin by bringing your awareness to the sounds around you. Start with those that are farthest away first. See if you can focus from sound to sound like a bee or a butterfly moving from flower to flower. Just rest the awareness on one sound, and then move to the next sound.

Try to notice if your mind starts to categorise the sounds or judge them. For example, it might be telling you that the sound of machinery or coughing is bad, and the sound of birds is good.

Try to ignore this judging part of the brain, and just focus on moving your awareness from one sound to another.

Next, move your awareness to sounds that are closer. It could be sounds in the building or the room.

Bring your awareness to the sound of your breath. Listen to the sound of the in-breath, the sound of the out-breath and the pauses in between. Do not try to change the breath: simply listen to the sounds.

From the sounds of the breath, bring your attention to the sensations involved in breathing, for example, the feeling of the chest rising and falling, the feeling of the breath in the belly, or maybe the sensation of the cool air entering the nostrils and the slightly warmer air leaving them.

However, you notice the feelings and sensations associated with breathing, just focus on that. Once you have focused on the breath for a while, see if you can notice if the breath feels long or short, deep or shallow. Notice if it is even or uneven.

Next, begin to notice other physical sensations within the body. It could be an ache or pain, or the feeling of clothes touching the skin, or the contact of the body on the chair or on the floor. It doesn’t matter what you notice; simply notice the physical sensations within the body. As with the sounds you might begin to find that the mind starts judging the sensations or providing a running commentary. Be aware that all sensations within the body will arise, stay for a while, and pass. Try not to get caught up in them, observe them for a short while, and then move on to the next sensation.

From focusing on the physical sensations move your attention to the emotions within the body. Recognise if you are feeling happy or sad; energetic or lethargic; strong or weak; confident or shy; calm or anxious. Maybe you feel many different emotions or maybe you feel none of the above. This doesn’t matter; like the sensations, all emotions will arise, stay for a while, and then pass.

Try to be present with the emotional feeling within the body. If there is a strong emotional feeling, try to notice whereabouts in the body the feeling arises – is it in the heart, the stomach, the brain, the shoulders, etc?

Next, move your attention to your mind and the space behind the forehead where your thoughts play out. Try to notice if the mind is busy with lots of thoughts coming in, if it is slower, if it is pre-occupied with one particular thought or many. Again, try to avoid judging the mind; just sit quietly and allow thoughts to come and go. Stay for a while.

Now move slowly back through the stages, spending a little time in each. So, from mind awareness to emotional awareness. Then move your attention back to your physical body, then narrow it down to the physical sensations of breathing for a few breaths. Next, take your attention to the sound of the breath. Then finally, to the external sounds.

When you are ready to get up and move, take a few deeper breaths. Slowly open your eyes, stretch and move a bit, and observe how you feel.

**Mindful Body-Scan Meditation**

This mindful body-scan meditation allows you to check-in with every part of your body; bringing self-awareness and noticing any emotions and sensations that you might experience in the present moment.

The body scan can be carried out either lying down with your arms lying comfortably by your sides and your knees bent (if needed); or sitting in a chair with your hands comfortably in your lap (palms upwards or downwards), spine aligned and feet firmly on the floor. You might want to consider covering yourself with a blanket as you may feel slightly cold when sitting/lying still for a longer time when practicing this mindful body scan.

Allowing your eyes to gently close or, if you are feeling slightly tired, you may want to slightly open and focus softly on a spot in front of you….

Noticing the weight of your body and how it feels where it touches the mat or chair…. Continue to notice the feeling of lying or sitting; breathing in and out in your normal breathing rhythm; not changing your breath in any way…. Noticing yourself sinking a little lower into your mat or chair with each out breath….

Continuing to focus on your breathing; noticing your belly expanding or gently rising as you breathe in and lowering or contracting as you breathe out…. Noticing where you first feel your breath enter your body…. Perhaps where it first enters your nostrils or your mouth, chest or even down in your belly…. Just continue to just notice your breathing in and out for a few moments….

If your mind starts to wander, don’t be critical of yourself. Its normal for your attention to wander away from your breath and body at times. When this happens just be aware of it and acknowledge it and then softly and gently lead your awareness back to your body and breath and continue with your scan…. Recognising that your mind has wandered is being aware of what is happening with you in the present moment….

Moving your awareness away from your breathing and down to the toes on your left foot…. Focusing on each toe in turn - being aware of any sensations that you might notice; how it feels – is it warm or cold – does one toe lie close to another – can you feel that sensation…. Now bringing your awareness to the rest of your left foot – the sole, the ball of your foot, then the heel, top and sides of your foot and then moving up to your ankle.

Continuing with your awareness moving up your left leg; scanning your left shin, calf, knee and thigh; noticing any sensations, if there are any…. Don’t worry if you don’t feel any sensations – just be aware, let it go and move on….

Being aware of your breathing; try to direct your breathing right down your body and down your left leg into your toes…. As you breath out imagine your breath travelling right up your leg and your body until it leaves your nose. Continuing to do the same breathing into each part of your body as you move on through your body scan….

Extending your awareness to the toes on your right foot…. Once again, focussing on each toe in turn - being aware of any sensations that you might notice; how it feels – is it warm or cold – does one toe lie close to another – can you feel that sensation…. Now bringing your awareness to the rest of your left foot – the sole, the ball of your foot, then the heel, top and sides of your foot and then moving up to your ankle.

Continuing with your awareness moving up your right leg; scanning your right shin, calf, knee and thigh; noticing any sensations, if there are any…. Again, not worrying if you don’t feel any sensations – just be aware, let it go and move on….

Being aware of your breathing; try to direct your breathing right down your body and down your left leg into your toes…. As your breath out imagine your breath travelling right up your leg and your body until it leaves your nose.

Now gently bring your awareness to your hips…. Once again breathing down into that area; taking your time in each area and noticing any sensations you may feel – continuing to be aware of your belly moving in and out as you breathe – imagining that you are refreshing that part of your body with nourishing oxygen as your breathing moves throughout your body….

Being aware of your body as your attention gently continues up into your upper torso into your lower back and belly. Continuing to be aware of your belly rising as you breathe in and contracting as you breathe out…. Breathing down into that area, noticing any emotions or physical sensations and taking a few moments to explore what these may mean for you. Focusing your breathing into any areas of discomfort or paid you may feel in any part of your body….

Continuing to move your awareness up your torso, move your attention up into your upper back and chest…. Bringing your awareness to the rise and fall of your rib cage as it follows your natural breathing rhythm…. Noticing your lungs in action as you breathe in and out – seeing if you can notice your heart beating if you can feel it….

Moving your awareness down your left arm and right down into the fingers and thumb…. Just as you did with your leg – notice any sensations. Then moving up your arm be aware of the palm of your hand, the wrist, the back and sides of your hand…. Continuing to travel up the left arm, bringing your attention to your lower arm, elbow, upper arm and shoulder…. Once again breathing right down to the thumb and fingertips of each arm and back up the body again, noticing any sensations….

Moving on to your right arm…. Following the same routine as for the left….

Focussing your awareness back up into the shoulders and on up into the neck, throat, jaw and mouth and cheeks…. noticing any tension or sensations there…. Continuing up into the rest of the face…. Noticing your eyes, eyelids, eye brows, ears and nose – noticing here your in and out breaths…. Continuing with your awareness bringing your attention to your temples, forehead and up into the back and top of your head – an area where tension is often held….

Finally arriving at the top of your head…. Being aware of your breathing in and out…. Trying and focus your breathing in at the very top of your head – moving right down through your body to the tips of your toes and back up and out of the top of your head…. Finally, spending a few moments being aware of your whole body and your breathing…. Focus your attention on and taking a moment to thank yourself for taking care of you by giving yourself the time to spend time in awareness of your body and breath.

When you are ready, and in your own time, bring your attention back; feeling mindfully refreshed and noting that you can revisit this body scan at any time.

contemplate your return to whatever you will be doing shortly….



WISE WORDS

Being happy, being sad, forgiving or staying mad…

The Choice is Always Yours!

Wearing a smile or a frown, looking bright or feeling down…

The Choice is Always Yours!

Although at times it seems untrue,

It’s always others who make you blue.

Remember this…

Whatever it is that troubles you,

How you react will see you through…

**The Choice is Always Yours!**

(Mindfulness for Dummies, Shamash Alidina)

**Practical Mindfulness – Week 2 home practice**

* Complete Practical Mindfulness Trigger Sheet
* Practice Yoga Journey of Awareness or Body Scan Meditation (2 out of 7 days)
* Practice one non-formal mindfulness activity daily
* Practice Three Step Breathing Space (2 times daily)
* Reflect in journal (voluntary)

**Remember:** treat yourself with kindness and compassion during your practice. The aim is to be non-judgemental!

**Home practice: Week 2 - Practical mindfulness stress trigger sheet**

**Stress/anxiety/feeling low record sheet**

* Make a note of all the times you feel stressed/anxious/low during the week; your thoughts were; what it was that caused you to feel stressed/anxious/low; how did it affect you; did you react or respond to the situation and how did your body feel? See if you can notice a regular trigger.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What was it that caused you to feel stressed/anxious/low?** | **How did it affect you?** | **Did you react or respond to the situation?** | **How did your body feel?** | **Additional comments** |
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**Practical mindfulness: Week 3**

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**Objectives:**

* Sitting meditation: breath and body
* To review ‘home practice’ from Week 2
* Practical Mindfulness recap of Week’s 1 and 2
* Learning that change takes time: Autobiography in five short chapters, and discussion
* An introduction to ‘Mindful activities’
* Mindful Movement (include mindful walking and breathing)
* Mindful Yoga (seated/standing)
* Mindful colouring
* Breathing bubbles
* ‘Wise Words’

**Mindfulness of the breath and body meditation**

**Introduction**

**Bringing awareness of our body to the initial mindfulness of breath meditation practice.**

It’s quite common for you not to pay attention to your breathing until someone draws your attention to it. However, it’s something that we all do moment by moment; we are just not always aware that we are doing it!

By bringing your focus on purpose, in the present moment, to your breath you can anchor yourself to what is taking place right now – right now in this present moment.

Your breath is always with you. It provides you with a mindful meditation tool that you can bring our awareness to at any given moment – no matter where you are!

It may be that during your mindfulness meditation practice that your mind will wander; thoughts, feelings, sounds may well pop into your head, distracting you from your breathing – but that’s fine. When it does happen, you can just acknowledge it and then bring your focus back to your breath. It doesn’t matter if this happens once or many times – you just kindly and gently bring your attention back to focussing on your breath each time.

Don’t be critical or judge yourself if your mind wanders. During meditation you want to be non-judgemental; instead you want to treat yourself with kindness and compassion. After all - this is your gift of time!

**Posture**

Mindfulness of breath can be carried out sitting up or lying down; the main thing is that you are comfortable, and your back/spine is supported when sitting upright, if possible.

You may choose to close your eyes or keep them open if you are feeling a bit sleepy; or you can opt to slightly close your eyes and gentle focus your gaze lower, perhaps to a point on the floor. The thing to remember is that in mindfulness you are not trying to fall asleep but to fall awake.

Let your hands lie gently in your lap; either palms up or palms down. Some people find it helps them to use a cushion or even tie a scarf around their waist to support their shoulders, especially if they have pain or discomfort in their shoulder. This is totally optional – the main thing is that you are comfortable.

**Noticing your breath**

Drawing your attention to your breath; take a few deep, gentle breaths; noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens moment by moment.

Now turning your attention to your own natural breathing rhythm (not forcing your breath in any way), notice where it is that you first feel the sensation of your breath. Is it around the nostrils where cool air enters and warms air leaves you, in your throat, your chest or perhaps even lower down in your belly – noticing how your belly gently expands as you breathe in and contracts as you breath out.

Bringing your awareness to the breath, noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens; allowing your awareness to be there and gently noticing every in and out breath. Remember, you are not trying to change your natural breathing rhythm in any way – just being aware and noticing it happen in the moment.

Continuing this practice, you may find your awareness wandering; caught up in thoughts, feelings, the sounds around you or sensations in your body. Knowing that this distraction is fine, accepting it as part of your mindful meditation practice; gently and kindly bring your awareness back to focus on your breath. It doesn’t matter if your awareness wanders away, once, twice, or a thousand times, just lead it gently back to your breathing.

**Bringing awareness to your body**

Now, bringing your awareness to your body - noticing any physical sensations as you start to focus your attention on your body – noticing where it meets your chair or the floor, if you are lying down. Take a few moments exploring these sensations – can you notice any discomfort in your position? If so then gently and with kindness mindfully change your position.

Let yourself be aware, if you can, of breathing into your whole body; focussing your attention down to your feet, your toes, the soles of your feet, the heels, sides and the top of your feet; becoming aware of any feelings or sensations in both feet, moment by moment.

Moving your awareness to the rest of your legs; up to your pelvis and hips and up through the base of your spine, stomach, chest and then on up to the shoulders; left and right arms; right down your arms to your fingers and then back up your arms and on up into the neck and head.

Once again being aware that you may find your awareness wandering; caught up in thoughts, the sounds around you or sensations in your body. Knowing that this distraction is fine, accepting it as part of your mindful meditation practice; gently and kindly bring your awareness back to focus on your breath.

Focussing now on breathing right from the top of your body down to your toes; being aware of breathing right through your body; trying to notice all your body sensations without any expectations; simply being in the present moment and letting yourself just experience things as they are….

Allow your breathing and body awareness to continue for 5-10. When you are ready to end the practice, and in your own time, you are invited to bring yourself back into the room, open your eyes and have a gentle stretch….

Taking a few moments to allow yourself to reflect on this mindfulness of breath and body practice; explore your experience during and following this mindfulness of breath and body practice.

**“There’s a Hole in My Sidewalk”**

**Chapter One**

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost . . . I am helpless. It isn’t my fault . . . It takes forever to find a way out.

**Chapter Two**

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don’t see it. I fall in again. I can’t believe I am in this same place. But it isn’t my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

**Chapter Three**

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall . . . it’s a habit . . . but, my eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

**Chapter Four**

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

**Chapter Five**

I walk down another street.

**SMART FOUNDATIONS: Fact Sheet for Mindful Walking Meditation**

Walking meditation has the advantage of bringing the meditative experience into our activity. There are a number of different walking meditations and the one which follows is a very simple version to practice, preferably outdoors.

Start to walk at a fairly slow but normal walking pace, become mindful of how you are walking as opposed to changing it. Like breathing you know how to walk already! At first bring your attention in the soles of your feet, being aware of the alternating patterns of contact and release; being aware of your foot or heel as it makes contact with each step to the floor. Notice as your foot rolls forward onto the ball and then gently lifts into the air. Be aware of all the different sensations in your feet. Can you notice space between the toes, the feeling of the inside of your shoes, the material of your socks? Just be aware of the quality and sensations of movement throughout the feet. As with the Body Scan move up through the body becoming aware of the sensations in your ankle the joints and in the legs and knees.

Just naturally expand your awareness into your thighs, aware of the skin, contact with your clothing, the temperature. Bring your attention to the muscles. Now becoming aware of your hips – the muscles around your hip joints — and relaxing those muscles, consciously relax even more and notice how that changes your walk. Notice how the rhythm and the gait of your walk change as your hips relax. Be aware of the pelvis and how the legs carry the whole weight of the torso, move up through the spine, to the neck and shoulder, not any sensations in the shoulders and consciously relax them further.

Become aware of the arms are gently folded in front of you or are they hanging by your side. (note to gently place one palm over the other and slightly tilt the head forward invokes a beautiful sense of humility). Now be aware of how the neck support the weight of the head. Now simply scan your body again maybe you can be aware of the whole of your pelvis – and notice all of the movements that are going on your pelvis.

Remain mindful of your experience…. are you bored? Are your relaxed? Are you irritated? Is your mind clear, or busy? Are there things that feel pleasant; are there things that feel unpleasant – in your body, or outside of you. Like clouds let all of these thoughts just pass by observing them without getting involved in them.

<http://www.smartfoundations.co.uk/manager/templates/default/images/mindful_walking.pdf>

**How to Colour an Anti-Stress Colouring Book**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A picture containing indoor, table  Description generated with high confidence** | **Dig out your colouring supplies!**  Get out the colouring pencils, crayons, gel pens, paints etc – anything you have around the house. For fine line colouring the smaller the nib the better. |
| **A picture containing photo, indoor, sky, mirror  Description generated with high confidence** | **Make sure you have no distractions – this is your time!**  To get the best out of your colouring time; get rid of all distractions; turn off your mobile phone, music, laptop and TV. Notice what other distractions there are around you and minimise these so that they don’t interfere with your colouring time. This is your time and it is all about you being in the moment and bringing your awareness to your colouring. |
| A close up of a logo  Description generated with very high confidence | **Start to settle your busy mind**  Clear your mind in whichever way you find works best for you – this could be focussing on your breath; having a mindful cup of tea before starting to colour – whatever your find works best to clear your mind. Forget about everything else that is going on and get ready to colour using your anti-stress colouring book. Be in the moment and enjoy your colouring! |
| A picture containing person, man, object, holding  Description generated with very high confidence | **Get colouring!**  There is no right or wrong way to colour – just go with the flow! Just choose your colour and begin colouring; bringing your awareness to your colouring, letting go of everything that is going on around you. If you find yourself getting distracted – just acknowledge the distraction; focus on your breath and bring yourself back to your mindful colouring! Don’t forget – have fun! |

**Adapted from:** [**https://arttherapycoloring.com/**](https://arttherapycoloring.com/)



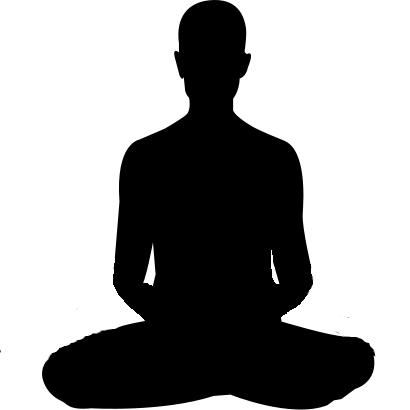
WISE WORDS

A martial arts student went to his teacher and said earnestly: ‘I’m devoted to studying your martial system. How long will it take me to master it?’ The teacher’s reply was casual: ‘Ten years.’ Impatiently, the student answered: ‘But I want to master it faster than that. I’ll work very hard. I’ll practice every day – ten or more hours a day if I have to. How long will it take then?’ The teacher thought for a moment and replied: ‘Twenty years.’

The meaning of this story shows that hard work and attaining a goal don’t necessarily go together. Sometimes, especially when practising something like mindfulness, you need simply to let things unfold in their own time. If you’re anxious, you may block your understanding. Mindfulness is about letting go, not trying harder.

(Mindfulness for Dummies, 2015 – Shamash Alidina)

**Sun Salutations**

Settle into the chair, move your weight from side to side in order to find the left and right sides of your buttocks. Then, sitting up straight, take some deep belly breaths.

Find your feet on the floor by spreading and pressing into the floor (make sure your knees are in line with your hips.

Wiggle your toes and find the balls of the feet and heels by rocking the feet forwards and backwards, and then press down into the floor, activating the legs.

Lift all ten toes, and keep them raised, wiggle them again, then spread the toes and lower to the ground.

Make sure your body is symmetrical and the spine is straight. Adjust the head so the neck is comfortable.

With arms by your sides, inhale, lift your hands high above your head, palms coming together, and stretch the spine tall. Keeping palms pressed together bring your hands down in front of you as you exhale. Repeat these 10 times with breath. Pressing palms together, notice how the fingertips feel, the palms feel. Are they warm or cold, dry or clammy? Is your breath slowing or quickening, is it shallow or deep? Each time you bring your hands up stretch the fingers wide, feel the air moving through your fingers.

Rest with palms on your thighs. Take a few breaths. Notice if you feel a little warmer or cooler, how is your breathing? What sensations are you feeling through your body?

On the next inhale, lift your hands high above the shoulders, palms facing forward and stretch the spine tall and straight.

As you exhale, bow down towards the floor, resting your hands either on your thighs, shins or the floor if you are able.

Inhale, straighten your spine and look up, resting hands on knees or shins. Exhale, bow the head again towards the knees, resting hands either on thighs, shins or the floor. Inhale - lift the head and torso back to the starting position.

Repeat this sequence 3 times – moving with breath, noticing all the sensations through all of your senses. When back in the starting position, shake out the head and neck.

Settle into the chair once more. On an inhale, cactus the arms, fingers wide. On an exhale, bring the right hand to the left shoulder, and the left hand to the right shoulder. Like you were giving yourself a big hug. Rounding your back and dropping your head as you hug. Inhale and cactus your arms, fingers wide, maybe you can put in a little back bend. Exhale and give yourself a hug, alternating which arm is on the top or bottom.

Repeat 10 times – moving with breath, noticing the stretching of the fingers, feeling and hearing the pops and the creeks, the muscles as they warm, the breath through the nostrils.

**Practical Mindfulness – Week 3 home practice**

* Complete ‘pleasant experiences’ diary
* Practice one seated meditation: breath/Yoga – Journey of Awareness/three step breath/breath and body daily
* Practice one non-formal mindfulness activity daily (mindful colouring/mindful movement/mindful crafting etc.)
* Reflect in journal (voluntary)

**Remember:** treat yourself with kindness and compassion during your practice. The aim is to be non-judgemental!

**Noticing One Pleasant Event Each Day – Diary**

**Notice one pleasant event at the time it is happening. Answering these questions can help to focus your attention on the event, as it is happening. Write it down later.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Day** | **What was the pleasant experience?** | **How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?** | **What moods and feelings accompanied the experience?** | **What thoughts went through your mind?** | **What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?** |
| example | On the way to work, stopping to watch new-born lambs in a field | Shoulders relaxed, and chest opened. Warm, cosy feeling | Peace, joy of life | Spring is here already. How beautiful nature can be. | I’m so please that I took a few moments to stop and look. |
| Day 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 6 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 7 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Practical mindfulness: Week 4**

Photo by [Natalia Figueredo](https://unsplash.com/photos/f1O4eekgz44?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/search/photos/female-doing-breathing-meditation?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText)



**Objectives:**

* Sitting meditation: breath, body, thoughts and feelings
* To review ‘home practice’ from Week 3
* Understanding thoughts and feelings
* Walking down the road exercise, and discussion
* Who is John?
* Mindful practice: STOP
* Emotional mind, rational mind, wise mind group exercise
* Yoga – Head, Shoulders but not Shampoo
* To introduce ‘Wise Words’

**Mindfulness of thoughts and Feelings**

**Noticing your breath**

Drawing your attention to your breath; take a few deep, gentle breaths; noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens moment by moment.

Now turning your attention to your own natural breathing rhythm (not forcing your breath in any way), notice where it is that you first feel the sensation of your breath. Is it around the nostrils where cool air enters and warms air leaves you, in your throat, your chest or perhaps even lower down in your belly – noticing how your belly gently expands as you breathe in and contracts as you breath out.

Bringing your awareness to the breath, noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens; allowing your awareness to be there and gently noticing every in and out breath. Remember, you are not trying to change your natural breathing rhythm in any way – just being aware and noticing it happen in the moment.

Continuing this practice, you may find your awareness wandering; caught up in thoughts, feelings, the sounds around you or sensations in your body. Knowing that this distraction is fine, accepting it as part of your mindful meditation practice; gently and kindly bring your awareness back to focus on your breath. It doesn’t matter if your awareness wanders away, once, twice, or a thousand times, just lead it gently back to your breathing.

Continue to focus your awareness on your breath for 5-10 minutes.

**Noticing your thoughts and feelings**

Now, I invite you to just allow you awareness to expand a little wider, from your breathing to include whatever thoughts and feelings come into your awareness…. So, instead of bringing your attention back from your thoughts and feelings, as you were doing before, now just explore and observe them in the same way that you did with breathing…. Once again allow your awareness to be non-judgemental and without self-criticism. Try and have an attitude of open acceptance….

You might like to think of thoughts as birds flying through your awareness landscape and disappearing into the distance, or clouds passing slowly overhead…. Maybe your thoughts could be printed onto helium filled balloons which, after you have read them just rise high into the air and eventually drift far away….

Sometimes we may seem to become stranded in a particular thread of thought…. This can be quite normal, but if it bothers you then just seeing your thoughts high above you can help to create a little space between you and the thoughts…. Be aware of any positive or negative feelings which you may have about that…. Remember you are not deliberately trying to hold onto thoughts or to let them go.

Start noticing also your emotions and ‘lay out the welcome mat’ for whatever comes into your conscious awareness, whether they feel welcome or not! If you can, just passively observe your reactions to your emotions – really allow yourself to experience them and notice what you feel like doing in respect of them.

If you can, notice emotions in a passive way and almost with the attitude that we are curious, as if being aware of it for the first time. Does the emotion feel ‘closed’ or ‘open’? This may sound an odd idea but sometimes we may feel as if an emotion can be opened and perhaps needs to be in order to explore the feelings inside…. Perhaps the emotion has layers of depth and we need to let ourselves float down through several layers to arrive at the core feeling.

Allow your awareness of thoughts and feelings to continue for up to about ten minutes.

(Mindfulness Now Teaching programme, 2017)

([www.mindfulnessnow.org.uk/](http://www.mindfulnessnow.org.uk/))

**Thoughts and Feelings – Exercise 1**

You are walking along a familiar street… You see someone you know on the other side of the street… You smile and wave… The person makes no response… just doesn’t seem to notice you… walks past without any sign of recognising your existence.

Imagine that scene now.

What thoughts and feelings went through your mind?

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**STOP: One-Minute Breathing Space**



Have you noticed times when you just needed some “breathing space”?

This, very brief practice provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and into the present moment. What we are doing is creating a space to reconnect with your natural resilience and wisdom.

You are simply tuning in to what is happening right now, without expectation of any particular result.

**If you remember nothing else, just remember the word “STOP”.**

**S – Stop and take Stock - checking in to head/heart/body**

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately asking - What is my experience right now?

Thoughts… (what are you saying to yourself, what images are coming to mind)

Feelings… (enjoying, neutral, upset, excited, sad, angry, etc.)

Sensations… (physical sensations, tightness, holding, lightness)

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is uncomfortable.

**T – “Take” a Breath - directing awareness to breathing**

Gently direct full attention to breathing, to each in-breath and to each out-breath as they follow, 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.

**O – Open and Observe - expanding awareness outward**

Expand the field of your awareness around and beyond your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression, then further outward to what is happening around you: sights, sounds, smells, etc.

As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments…

**P – Proceed/New Possibilities - continuing without expectation**

Let your attention now move into the world around you, sensing how things are right now.

Rather than react habitually/mechanically, you can be curious/open, responding naturally.

You may even be surprised by what happens next after having created this breathing space…

**STATES OF MIND**

**Emotional Mind Rational Mind**

**Wise Mind**

Your mind has two distinct parts. The Emotional part and the Rational part. When you are very emotional, this part of your mind gets a lot of exercise. You may over think things, catastrophize or imagine that you already know the outcomes, and this will lead to a lot of emotional feelings. You may then feel angry, upset, annoyed, anxious and vengeful or if it’s a positive emotional response, excited, enthusiastic, happy and jittery.

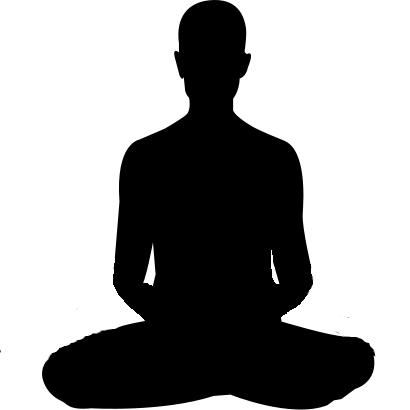
In reality, both sides of your mind need to be exercised. If you only ever really use the emotional part of your mind negatively you may well feel exhausted, overwrought, overly anxious, angry, petulant and as though no one listens to you or understands you. However, if you start to develop and encourage the Rational part of your mind, this ‘quietens’ the other part and allows you to think more clearly enabling you to make better decisions with your Wise Mind.

Wise Mind is a blend of both your Emotional Mind and your Rational Mind. It allows you to develop skills of decision making that are based in accuracy, reality and realism.

If you went to the gym and only exercised one side of your body, you would be out of balance. You wouldn’t be able to function well, part of you would be well developed and part of you would be under developed. You wouldn’t be able to feel equal and it is likely that you would feel uncomfortable and awkward. To rectify the position, you would need to start exercising the other side until you felt more balanced and then you would be able to function better.

The same applies to your mind. To get the balance right you need to use both parts and this in turn will bring you to your Wise Mind and this is where you can make decisions and choices more effectively.

**Head and Shoulders but not Shampoo**

Settle into the chair, move your weight from side to side in order to find the left and right sides of your buttocks. Then, sitting up straight, take some deep belly breaths.

Find your feet on the floor by spreading and pressing into the floor (make sure your knees are in line with your hips.

Wiggle your toes and find the balls of the feet and heels by rocking the feet forwards and backwards, and then press down into the floor, activating the legs.

Lift all ten toes, and keep them raised, wiggle them again, then spread the toes and lower to the ground.

Make sure your body is symmetrical and the spine is straight. Adjust the head so the neck is comfortable.

Take your hands behind your back, with palms facing down onto the chair, if you can turn your fingers backwards, but don’t force them, if you can’t do this, then face them forward. Use your arms to lift the spine and take your heart towards the ceiling, leaning back slightly if this is comfortable.

Breathe directly into the heart space, taking 5 -10 deep breaths. Imagine you are breathing into your heart and nourishing and nurturing your heart with each breath.

Now take your hands to your heart, palms together. \* Inhale - lift your hands above your head and turn palms facing forward. Exhale - turn your thumbs out so your palms face up and take your arms down in line with your shoulders. Inhale, (imagine you are holding a tray) and draw your hands back in line with your ribcage, lifting your heart up and forwards. Exhale - bring the palms of your hands back together in front of your heart.

Inhale - take your arms out wide to either side and in line with the chest. Exhale, twist to the right, bringing your left hand to your heart, looking towards your right thumb. Inhale, back to centre, bringing the palms of your hands together in front of your heart. Exhale, twist to the left, taking your right hand to your heart, looking towards your left thumb. Inhale, back to centre, bringing the palms of your hands together in front of your heart. Exhale - bow your head and fold forwards.

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Sit tall, back straight, head pulling up from the crown. Imagine your nose as a pencil and begin to make small circles in a clockwise direction, imagining you are drawing a small circle on a piece of paper in front of you. Gradually start to spiral out these circles, making them bigger and bigger. Focus on the feelings in the neck and the muscles gently moving and stretching.

Once you have reached your maximum capacity, begin to spiral back into the centre.

Repeat this in an anti-clockwise direction, focusing on the feelings in the neck and the muscles gently moving and stretching.

Take a moment to check in with your breath.

Inhale - lift your head to look to the ceiling (only as far as is comfortable for you), and exhale, lowering your head to look down at the floor. Move slowly with the breath and go a bit further each time if you can, keeping the shoulders and the back still. Are there any cracks /crunches and pops, how does it feel? Repeat for 5 full breaths.

Next, turn your head from right to left slowly. Exhale to turn the head, and inhale back to the centre. Try to imagine you are oiling your neck with your breath.

Then take your right ear to your right shoulder. Lift your right hand over your head to encourage a gentle stretch. Avoid pulling, it’s more about using weight and gravity to assist with the stretch. With your hand still over your left ear, look down toward your right thigh. This should move the stretch to the back of the neck. Repeat this on the left-hand side.

Interlace your fingers and take both hands behind the neck. With the base of the thumbs, lift the bottom ridge of the skull towards the ceiling. Notice where you feel the stretch. Is it just in your neck or can you feel it down your spine? If so how far does the stretch go?

Keeping your back straight take a breath in, exhale as you take the chin to the chest and the elbows come together. Inhale, chin up and elbows spread out, lift your heart up to the ceiling. Repeat 5 times with breath.

Finish by gently massaging the back of the neck, face and jaw with your hands and fingertips. Use fingertips to gently circle over your forehead and temples. Pay particular attention to where the upper jaw meets the lower jaw, as lots of tension is stored there. Now yawn really wide. Take a big breath in – exhale mouth stretched wide, stick your tongue out as far as you can and roar!! Lions breath.



WISE WORDS

Be thankful that you don’t already have everything you desire. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don’t know something, for it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations, because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you’re tired and weary, because it means you’ve made a difference.

It’s easy to be thankful for the good things.

A life of rich fulfilment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.

Find a way to be thankful for your troubles, and they can become your blessings.

(Mindfulness for Dummies, 2015 – Shamash Alidina)

**Practical Mindfulness – Week 4 home practice**

* Complete ‘unpleasant experiences’ diary
* Practice breath, body, thoughts and feelings meditation
* Practice 1 non-formal mindfulness activity daily (mindful colouring/mindful walk/mindful crafting etc)
* Reflect in journal (voluntary)

**Remember:** treat yourself with kindness and compassion during your practice. The aim is to be non-judgemental!

**Noticing One Unpleasant Event Each Day – Diary**

**Notice one unpleasant event at the time it is happening. Answering these questions can help you to focus your attention on the event, as it is happening. Write it down later.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Day | What was the unpleasant experience? | How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience? | What moods and feelings accompanied the experience? | What thoughts went through your mind? | What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down? |
| example | Roadworks on the way to work for the sixth week running and I left home late… | Nauseous, feeling hot and bothered, breathing faster and arms tense from gripping steering wheel. | Annoyed, frustrated, angry, mad. | When are they going to finish this roadworks? Why can’t they do them at night when it’s quieter? Why did I have to forget today about them – not forgotten any other day – it’s my own stupid fault. | I should have paid more attention and not driven to work on automatic pilot. I knew the roadworks were here. |
| Day 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 6 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 7 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Practical mindfulness: Week 5**

Photo by [Natalia Figueredo](https://unsplash.com/photos/f1O4eekgz44?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/search/photos/female-doing-breathing-meditation?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText)



**Objectives:**

* Mindfulness of breath and action step practice
* To review ‘home practice’ from Week 4
* Kindness and compassion exercise and discussion
* Metta Bhavna meditation practice
* Yoga – Stretch and Pour
* To introduce ‘Wise Words’
* Catch up: Emotional mind, rational mind, wise mind group exercise

**Mindfulness of breath and action step**

Find a comfortable position; spine upright; feet flat on the floor; hands on lap (palms up or down); eyes closed or gently focused on a point in front of you…. Remembering that in mindfulness you are not trying to fall asleep but to fall awake.

Drawing your attention to your breath; take a few deep, gentle breaths; noticing the sensations of each breath as it happens for you, moment by moment. Now bringing your awareness to your natural breathing rhythm; you are not trying to change your breathing rhythm in any way….

Starting to expand your awareness, becoming aware of any sensations in your body; taking a quick weather check, noticing which parts of your body are tense and which are relaxed; trying to focus your breathing directly to those areas where you are feeling tense….

Noticing how your body feels as a whole…. Becoming aware of your thoughts; noticing what, if any, thoughts are going through your mind at this present moment…. Becoming aware of your emotions; noticing what feelings are here for you right now…

It may be that your mind has wandered; if you find that this has happened, just gently and kindly bring your awareness back to focus on your breath…. Remember, this meditation is not about being critical and judgemental to yourself but about bringing kindness and compassion to yourself during your special meditation practice….

Breathing right down into your stomach; notice how your stomach rises on your in breath and contracts on your out breath…. Gently continue breathing to your stomach noticing your natural breathing rhythm and accepting it just as it is…. acknowledging your experience as it is…

Now expand your awareness so you are aware of your body as a whole; becoming aware of the sensations of your own breathing as part of your body; breathing into your whole body….

Taking a few moments, explore curiously your own personal experiences during this practice, without judgement or criticism…. letting whatever arises for you to just be there….

When you are ready, kindly and gently ask yourself ‘What do I need to do to take care of myself right now, how can I best take care of myself right now and spend a few moments reflecting on this….

When you are ready to end the practice invite yourself to bring your awareness back into the room, and in your own time, open your eyes and have a gentle stretch.

Reflecting on this mindfulness of breath and action step meditation; explore for a few moments what action step you need to take to take care of yourself…. Treating yourself with kindness and self-compassion….

**Kindness and compassion: How would you treat a friend?**

Think about a time when you are feeling good and a close friend was having a difficult time; they could be feeling bad about themselves, facing a difficult situation, feeling low, or really struggling in some way.

Now, think about how you would treat them or respond to them when they are feeling this way and jot it down below. For example; What would you do? How would you treat them? What would you say to them? What kind of tone of voice would you use?

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**Kindness and compassion: How would you treat you?**

Now change your thinking to you; how do you respond or speak to yourself when you are in the same situation as your friend?

Write down what you would normally do in this situation? Do you make time for yourself? Do you treat yourself kindly? What kind of things would you say to yourself? What tone of voice would you use?

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| Do you think that if you responded to yourself in the same way as you would do to your friend when you are feeling stressed, anxious, feeling low or suffering that things might be different for you? Do you think things would change how you are feeling?  Please write down how you think things might change. |
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**Why not try treating yourself like a good friend and see what happens?**

(Kristin Neff,PhD: <https://self-compassion.org/exercise-1-treat-friend/>)

**Metta Meditation Script by One Mind Dharma**

Find a comfortable position in which to sit for this period. As you allow your eyes to gently close, tune into the body and make any minor adjustments. It can be helpful to remember our intentions of both ease and awareness. Sit in a way that feels comfortable but alert.

We’ll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. As you allow the body to resume to natural breathing, see where in the body you can feel the breath. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it’s at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

You can pick one spot to stick with for this meditation practice. As you feel the body breathing, try to stay with the breath all the way through. Stick with it from the beginning of the inhale all the way through the end of the exhale

………………..

You may have noticed the mind wandering. When the mind wanders, it really offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we’re strengthening our ability to recognize our experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we’re strengthening our ability to focus on an object. Treat is as an opportunity rather than a problem and return to the breath.

………………..

You can begin the practice by bringing to mind yourself as you sit here right now. Try to connect with your own deepest intentions for happiness, ease, and safety. You don’t need to dive into stories of what will make you happy but connect with that natural desire you have.

You can cultivate this intention to open the heart to your own wellbeing by silently offering yourself some phrases of metta. In your head, slowly offer yourself the phrases:

“May I be happy.” “May I be healthy.” “May I be safe.” “May I be at ease.”

You can offer these phrases silently in your head, saying them slowly enough that you can connect with their meaning and the intention behind them.

………………..

You can now bring to mind a good friend. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher or mentor, or maybe a pet.

You can connect with your natural desire to see this person happy and at ease. Just like you, this person wants to be happy, to feel safe, and to be healthy.

In an effort to cultivate this intention of kindness, you can offer this person a few phrases of metta:

“May you be happy.” “May you be healthy.” “May you be safe.” “May you be at ease.”

………………..

You can let this person go from your mind and bring to mind a neutral person. This is someone you see, maybe regularly, but don’t know very well. It may be somebody who works somewhere you go a lot, a co-worker, or maybe a neighbour.

Although you don’t know this person well, you can recognize that this person wants to be happy as well. You don’t need to know what their happiness looks like necessarily. Again, offer this person the phrases of loving-kindness, connecting with the intention to care about their wellbeing.

“May you be happy.” “May you be healthy.” “May you be safe.” “May you be at ease.”

………………..

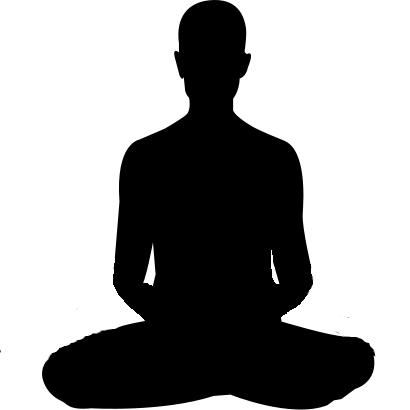
And as you let this neutral person go, you can bring to mind somebody who you find difficult. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life, instead choosing someone who is minorly difficult. Maybe it’s someone you find yourself agitated with or annoyed by.

You can offer the phrases, recognizing that this is connecting with our intention to care for this person. Although we may not mean it whole-heartedly every time we offer a phrase, we can make an effort with the phrases.

“May you be happy.” “May you be healthy.” “May you be safe.” “May you be at ease.”

………………..

**Twist and Pour**

Settle into the chair, move your weight from side to side in order to find the left and right sides of your buttocks. Then, sitting up straight, take some deep belly breaths.

Find your feet on the floor by spreading and pressing into the floor (make sure your knees are in line with your hips.

Wiggle your toes and find the balls of the feet and heels by rocking the feet forwards and backwards, and then press down into the floor, activating the legs.

Lift all ten toes, and keep them raised, wiggle them again, then spread the toes and lower to the ground.

Make sure your body is symmetrical and the spine is straight. Adjust the head so the neck is comfortable.

Palms together at heart centre. Inhale and sweep arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing right hand to left thigh and left hand behind left buttock, creating a twist. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath.

Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing left hand to right thigh and right hand behind right buttock, creating a twist. . Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale -bring the palms to heart centre.

Cross the right leg over the left. Inhale and sweep arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing right hand to left thigh and left hand behind left buttock, creating a twist. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath.

Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing left hand to right thigh and right hand behind right buttock, creating a twist. . Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale -bring the palms to heart centre.

Cross the left leg over the right. Inhale and sweep arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing right hand to left thigh and left hand behind left buttock, creating a twist. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath.

Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale bringing left hand to right thigh and right hand behind right buttock, creating a twist. . Inhale – stretch spine, exhale - twist a little further. Inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further, inhale – stretch spine, exhale – twist a little further. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms up overhead, palms together. Exhale -bring the palms to heart centre.

Keeping the left leg over the right, inhale and sweep the arms out level with the shoulders. Exhale and cross the right arm over the left. If able hold hands or keep the back of the hands facing. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath -

Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together. Exhale - bring the palms to heart centre. Cross the right leg over the left, inhale and sweep the arms out level with the shoulders. Exhale and cross the left arm over the right. If able hold hands or keep the back of the hands facing. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath. Inhale as you lift the elbows to shoulder height and look up. Exhale - bring the elbows down towards the belly. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together. Exhale - bring the palms to heart centre.

Un-cross legs and plant feet firmly on the ground, knees over ankles, shoulders over hips. Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together.

Exhale – sweep right arm down and stretch left arm over and ‘pour’ from your left hand. Inhale – straighten up, exhale – stretch left arm over and ‘pour’ from your left hand. Inhale – straighten up, exhale – stretch left arm over and ‘pour’ from your left hand. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together. Exhale - bring the palms to heart centre. Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together. Exhale – sweep left arm down and stretch right arm over and ‘pour’ from your right hand. Inhale – straighten up, exhale – stretch right arm over and ‘pour’ from your right hand. Inhale – straighten up, exhale – stretch right arm over and ‘pour’ from your right hand. Moving with breath. Inhale and sweep the arms overhead palms together. Exhale - bring the palms to heart centre. Take three deep belly breaths and relax.



WISE WORDS

Once upon a time there was a water bearer who carried two pots of water to his teacher each day. Each day he would walk to the nearest stream, fill both pots with water, and walk back, one pot on each side of a pole he carried across his neck.

One pot was cracked, and so by the time the water bearer reached his teacher, it was only half full. This continued for two years, with the water bearer only bringing one and a half pots of water. The perfect pot was proud of its achievements. The cracked pot was sad that he could only do half the job it was supposed to do. One day, the cracked pot said to the water bearer, ‘I feel so upset and ashamed. I’m imperfect and I can’t hold a full pot of water. What use am I to anyone?’ The water bearer told the cracked pot to look on the ground as he carried it. The cracked pot noticed the most beautiful wild flowers and plants on its side of the path. The water bearer explained, ‘When I realised you were cracked, I decided to plant seeds on one side of the path, and every day as you leak, you water that side of the path. If you weren’t cracked, those gorgeous flowers wouldn’t be here for all to enjoy.’

Sometimes you may think you’re not perfect, or your mindfulness practice is not perfect, but how do you know? This story goes to show that even a cracked pot can be seen as perfect just as it is. In the same way, you’re perfect just the way you are, with all your imperfections – they’re what make you unique.

(Mindfulness for Dummies, 2015 – Shamash Alidina)

**Practical Mindfulness – Week 5 home practice**

* Practice sitting meditation – mindfulness of breath and action step   
  (10 mins x twice daily)
* Complete one other daily activity in a mindful way
* Do one kind thing each day for someone (or different people) for 7 days but don’t let them know….
* Complete G.L.A.D (up to 2-3 times in week)
* Reflect in journal (voluntary)

**Remember:** treat yourself with kindness and compassion during your practice. The aim is to be non-judgemental!

**GLAD technique**

Don Altman, M.A. <http://www.mindfulpractices.com/>

Find GRATITUDE – one thing you’re thankful for today…

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Find one thing you LEARNED today…

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Find one ACCOMPLISHMENT you did today…

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Find one thing of DELIGHT that touched you today…

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9/5/2013

**Practical mindfulness: Week 6**

Photo by [Natalia Figueredo](https://unsplash.com/photos/f1O4eekgz44?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/search/photos/female-doing-breathing-meditation?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText)



**Objectives:**

* Mindfulness object meditation
* To review ‘home practice’ from Week 5
* Recap of objectives and 7 attitudes of mindfulness
* Mindfulness moving forward – planning (letter)
* Taking care of ourselves (replenish/drain exercise and mindful jar)
* Final ‘Wise Words’ – Crossing the river
* Congratulate yourself on completing your Practical Mindfulness course

**Mindfulness object meditation: Focus on a Single Object**

Focussing your attention on a single object is a mindfulness skill that will help you concentrate more fully on the present moment. Remember, one of the biggest traps of being unmindful is that your attention wanders from one thing to the next or from one thought to the next. As a result, you often get lost, distracted and frustrated. This exercise is to help you train your ‘mental muscle’. This means you will continue to learn how to maintain your focus on whatever it is you’re observing. With practice, you’ll get better at focussing your attention, just like an athlete who exercises certain muscles to become stronger.

If during the exercise, your mind starts to wander to thoughts, memories or other sensations; that’s ok. As before in our meditations; don’t criticise or be judgemental just notice when you mind wanders and gently and kindly return your focus to whatever you’re observing.

Pick an object to focus on. Choose something that you can rest on a table, is safe to touch and is emotionally neutral. It can be anything, such as a pen, a flower, a watch, a ring, a cup or something similar. Don’t choose to focus on something that could hurt you or a picture of someone you don’t like. These will stir up too many emotions for you right now.

Find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for a few minutes and put the object on a table in front of you. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you have a stopwatch or an alarm clock, set the timer for 5 minutes. Do this exercise once or twice a day for two weeks, choosing a different object to focus on each time.

**You may want to keep an object you use for this meditation in your pocket or handbag or even leave on your desk or coffee table – it can help remind you to take a mindful pause during the day.**

You can record the instructions in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device and play them while you’re exploring the object.

**Instructions:**

To begin, sit comfortably and take a few slow, deep breaths. Then, without touching the object, begin looking at it, using your beginner’s mind, and exploring its different surfaces with your eyes. Take your time exploring what it looks like. Then try to imagine the different qualities that the object possesses.

* What does the surface of the object look like?
* Is it shiny or is it dull?
* Does it look smooth or rough?
* Does it look soft or hard?
* Does it have multiple colours or just one colour?
* What else is unique about the way the object *looks?*

Take your time observing the object. Now hold the object in your hand or reach out and touch the object. Begin by noticing the different ways it feels.

* Is it smooth or is it rough?
* Does it have ridges or is it flat?
* Is it soft or is it hard?
* Is it bendable or is it rigid?
* Does the object have areas that feel different from each other?
* What does the temperature of the object feel like?
* If you can hold it in your hand, notice how much it weighs.
* What else do you notice about the way it feels?

Continue exploring the object with both your sight and your sense of touch. Continue to breathe comfortably. When your attention begins to wander, return your focus to the object. Keep on exploring the object until your alarm goes off or until you have fully explored all the qualities of the object.

**Practical Mindfulness: recap**

**Course objectives.**

By the end of the course you will:

* Understand and be able to explain what mindfulness is and its benefits to your wellbeing
* Understand ‘Beginners Mind’ and be able to use during mindful practice
* Understand ‘Busy Mind’ and be able to use your breath as an anchor
* Understand ‘Automatic Pilot’ and how it affects how we react in situations
* Have a clearer understanding of how stress, anxiety and feeling low can affect our mind and body
* Understand how our thoughts and feelings can affect our behaviour and how we ‘react’ or ‘respond’ to situations etc.
* Understand the ‘7 attributes of mindfulness’
* Be clear about the difference between formal and informal mindful practices
* Have developed your own personal ‘practical mindfulness toolkit’
* Understand the importance of your own ‘practice’, ‘practice’, ‘practice’

**What is mindfulness and what does it mean?**

“Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way; **on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally**.”

(Jon Kabat-Zinn)

…………………

**Mindfulness** means to be present. ‘Being in the moment’, experiencing life directly as it unfolds, rather than being distracted, caught up and lost in thought.

**It implies resting the mind in its natural state of awareness, which is free from any bias or judgement.**

It’s about being aware of everything including distractions and discomfort.

(Andy Puddicombe, Get Some Headspace, 2011)

…………………

"**An important part of mindfulness is reconnecting with our bodies** and the sensations they experience. This means waking up to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the present moment. That might be something as simple as the feel of a banister as we walk upstairs.

"Another important part of mindfulness is **an awareness of our thoughts and feelings** as they happen moment to moment.

"It's about **allowing ourselves to see the present moment clearly**. When we do that, it can positively change the way we see ourselves and our lives."

(Professor Mark Williams, former director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre) and taken from NHS Moodzone (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness>)

**Benefits of Mindfulness**

**These are just some of the published scientific evidence that mindfulness can assist with:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Stress reduction * Clarity and focus * Greater resilience * Enhanced creativity * Improved relationships * Improved concentration * Rapport and communication * Greater confidence and self-esteem | * Improved health and wellbeing * Ability to have better quality sleep * Reduced anxiety and depression * Improved work-life balance * Greater work satisfaction * Memory enhancement * Intuitive ability * Pain reduction |

**Beginner’s Mind**

A beginner’s mind is about having an attitude of openness and curiosity; being free from any preconceptions when we are approaching anything. We discussed this when doing a ‘taste of mindfulness’ with our grape. It is about approaching something as if it’s the first time you have ever seen or done it; as if you are experiencing something for the first time. Seeing everything with a fresh pair of eyes.

**Busy Mind**

Busy mind occurs when the mind gets packed full of thoughts and emotions which can leave us feeling depleted; losing focus, stressed and at times anxious or feeling low.

Being mindfulness can help us to settle our mind; develop our present moment awareness; allowing us to be with our experiences, accept them and then decide how best to respond to these experiences.

**Automatic Pilot**

We spend a lot of our time doing things on automatic pilot – just behaving mindlessly without really knowing what is going on both in ourselves and around us. The mind can be off wandering on its own while the body is doing a completely different activity. Examples we discussed include ‘how many people are in the shower with you in the morning’. Too often we are showering without noticing that we have planned our day, organised the meals, drafted a report; and all while in the shower. How often have we arrived at a destination without even remembering the journey as our minds had been somewhere else entirely. Being in autopilot means that your awareness of the present moment is misty. However, being mindful can change this.

**Formal and informal Mindfulness practice**

* **Formal mindful meditation** – meditating for a set amount of time. This involves giving ourselves time to ‘be’ in the present moment by setting aside a specific time to sit silently while being mindfully aware of our breathing or mindfully walking slowly and silently with our attention being solely on our breath and our walking. When we are ‘being’ mode - in the moment - we are at rest; having removed ourselves from the ‘doing’ mode which is where we can spend a lot of our time.
* **Informal mindful meditation** – mindful practices that can be introduced during your day that don’t require formal mindfulness meditation. It involves the complete focus on a simple act such as; taking a shower, cleaning our teeth, preparing food, housework, washing dishes, driving etc; anything that allows our mind to rest in the present moment.

**Developed your own personal ‘practical mindfulness toolkit’**

At the beginning of this course we discussed recording our mindful activities in the ‘Personal Practical Mindfulness Toolkit Sheet’; to allow us to record the different mindfulness activities that we covered during the last six weeks. In addition to what we have discussed you were also able to add to the list it any mindful activities that you found were beneficial to you. The aim was to identify those that you engaged with immediately and to continue to work with any that you found were a little more challenging.

The ones we discussed included:

* A taste of mindfulness
* Using beginner’s mind
* Mindfulness of breath – using your breath as an anchor
* A mindful moment – how many breaths in a minute!
* Mindfulness of breath and body
* Three-step breathing space
* Mindful journaling
* Wise words – Mindfulness
* Wise words – The choice is always yours
* Yoga – Journey of awareness
* Body scan or ‘mindful weather check’
* Stress trigger sheet
* Autobiography in five short chapters: There’s a hole in my sidewalk
* Mindful walking meditation
* Mindful colouring
* Wise words – “How long will it take me to master it?”
* Yoga – Sun salutations
* Pleasant experiences diary
* Unpleasant experiences diary
* Mindfulness of thoughts and feelings meditation
* Thoughts and feelings exercise – walking down the street
* Who’s John?
* STOP – one-minute breathing space
* States of Mind
* Yoga – Head and shoulders but not shampoo
* Wise words – be thankful you don’t already have…
* Mindfulness of breath and action step meditation
* Kindness and compassion: How would you treat a friend?
* Kindness and compassion: How would you treat you?
* Metta (Kindness and compassion) meditation
* Yoga – Twist and pour
* Wise words – The water bearer
* G.L.A.D.
* Being kind to yourself and another
* Taking care of yourself
* The Glitter Jar
* Taking care of yourself – nourishing/draining and mindful jar
* Mindful object meditation
* Wise words – Crossing the river
* Mindful letter to yourself (if you completed one – voluntary)

Don’t forget to practice, practice, practice!

**7 attitudes of Mindfulness Meditation – Jon Kabat-Zinn**

1. Non-Judgment: impartial witnessing, observing your evaluations and categorizations

* Noticing the automatic habit of labelling everything we experience as good, bad, or neutral.
* The habit of judging locks us into mechanical reactions that we are not even aware of and often has little objective basis.
* By becoming aware of your judgments, you can choose actions and behaviours more consciously rather than automatically reacting to situations in your environment.

*This principle will be useful as you start to engage in new mindfulness practices that your mind may judge as boring or a waste of time.*

1. Patience: allowing things to unfold in their time, bringing patience to ourselves and others

* This is an understanding that sometimes things must unfold in their own time.
* This principle reminds you to be patient with yourself as your mind is stretched in new ways

*Patience is a helpful quality to invoke when the mind is agitated. To be patient is to be open to each moment as it unfolds knowing that like the butterfly that some things can only unfold in their own time. So, when starting out your mindfulness practice or anything else please stick through whatever takes place trusting that some things will make more sense after you have practiced them for a while.*

1. Beginner’s Mind: willing to see things as if for the first time.

* We let our beliefs about a situation prevent us from seeing things as they really are.
* No moment is the same as any other.
* Beginner’s mind allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in our mind, which often thinks it knows more than it actually does.

*Try to cultivate your own beginner’s mind as an experiment. The next time you see someone familiar notice if you are seeing the person with fresh eyes or through the lens of your beliefs about that person. If you encounter a new activity you need to do for this course, notice if you are open to trying it out fully or have you already decided before doing it that you don’t like it. When you are out walking, see if you are noticing things you had overlooked before. Developing beginner’s mind opens you to possibilities in life you may be missing out on because you are viewing everything through the lens shaped by past experience that is not aware of what else there is to learn and explore.*

1. Trust: developing trust in your feelings and yourself is an integral part of the mindfulness practice.

* The act of trusting yourself and your basic wisdom is an important aspect of the mindfulness training.
* If you are feeling strongly about something it is important to attend to that rather than ignore because an outside authority is telling you to do so.
* Mindfulness is an objective process of inquiry and accepting what people of ‘authority’ tell you without questioning the validity of it for yourself is against the basic premise of mindfulness.
* It is important to stay open and learn from other sources but ultimately you have to live your life and make your choices that feel right to you.

*It is almost easier to trust external authorities to tell us how to live our lives. Mindfulness involves practicing trusting your own feelings and that doesn’t mean you react based upon all your feelings but that you explore any feelings that show up fully to see what they are telling you about a situation and then you trust yourself to come up with the right action.*

1. Non-striving: non-goal oriented, remaining unattached to outcome or achievement

* Even though everyone undertaking mindfulness practice has some goals intentions while they are taking their training, at the time of mindfulness practice itself, simply do the practice without any expectations.
* When you set expectations such as feeling more relaxed, you are introducing conditions that don’t allow you to be fully present with what is, because you are trying to change the present to be something else. If you are trying to change the present then you are not being with what is, which is what the mindfulness training is.
* Remember to allow anything and everything that you experience from moment to moment to be there, because it already is. If you are tensed, just pay attention to the tension. If you are criticizing yourself, just observe the activity of the judging mind.

*Non-striving may be the most difficult of all the principles because in our culture we are taught to be goal-oriented and to be constantly doing something in order to reach our goals. In mindfulness you will reach your goals by not trying to change the present but by being present to whatever arises, and in that way, you will find that the goals are ultimately reached. This is perhaps something you will need to experience for yourself to really understand.*

1. Acceptance: open to seeing and acknowledging things as they are. It does not mean approval or resignation.

* Acceptance is the willingness to see things as they really are.
* Acceptance does not mean that you have to be satisfied with the way things are or that you don’t do anything to change what you don’t like.
* When you have the ability to see things as they are you free up energy to take the appropriate actions instead of working with a mind that is clouded by denial, prejudices, fears, and self-judgments.

1. Letting go: non-attachment and the ability to put aside the tendency to elevate some aspects of our experience and to reject others

* Letting go is a way of letting things be, of accepting things as they are.
* When you observe your mind grasping or pushing away, you can remind yourself to let go of the impulse to grasp or push away and see what happens.
* If you can’t let go, try the opposite, of really holding on and seeing what that feels like. By looking at how you hold on you will learn how to let go.
* Letting go is something you naturally do when you sleep. If you have trouble sleeping, then it could be because you are not able to let go.

(Mindfulness Now, Training Programme 2017 - <http://mindfulnessnow.org.uk/>)

**What do I need to do now to take care of myself?**

When we do our mindfulness meditation of breath and action step; we ask ourselves the following question. “What do I need to do now, in this moment, to take care of myself?”

Life can become extremely busy and we need to look at how we can introduce mindfulness into our daily routine; our day-to-day activities at home or in the office or both! Not only will this enable us to slow down and be in the moment; aware of what is going on within and around us; it will also assist us in building up our resilience so that we are better able to manage experiences which may, at times, overwhelm us.

When we start feeling low, stressed or anxious it is so easy to neglect the nourishing activities that can help us feel better and focus on those things that drain or deplete our energy.

Draining/depleting activities can lower your mood, drain your energy and increase, stress, anxiety and feeling low.

**Nourishing activities can lift your mood, increase your energy and help you settle your mind and feel calm.**

So, how can we find ways to nourish and de-stress ourselves? One way is to look at what we do daily. We can do this by noticing and listing everything we do from waking up in the morning until going to sleep at night….

So, using the table on the next page list all your activities in an average day – no activity, chore, job etc. is too small! Sit with each one and notice what comes up for you – do some make you feel nourished and others drain (deplete) you. Now, alongside each activity place an ‘N’ if the activity is nourishing or ‘D’ if you feel it is depleting or draining.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Daily Activity** | **Nourishing** | **Depleting/**  **Draining** |
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You may well be amazed at how much time you spend doing things that you don’t enjoy or feel drain/deplete you in relation to those that nourish you; that you enjoy and make you feel good about thing.

However, there are certain activities that we need to do each day which may well be draining, so for the next part of this exercise we want you to think about what you could do to make these draining experiences more nourishing.

What is there that you enjoy doing? Is there anything that you used to do before that your enjoyed and that made you feel good that you have given up due to your busy life. It may be that you treat yourself to a nice relaxing mindful bath following a busy day doing housework; or perhaps go for a coffee with a good friend, watch a movie you enjoy etc.

If there are activities that are draining/depleting that you can’t change – look and see if there is a way you can change them; perhaps by rewarding yourself with a nourishing activity afterwards?

**Mindfulness Nourishing Jar activity:**

So, now it’s your turn.

Decide how you can maintain a mindful life balance by increasing your nourishing activities – make a list of things that you enjoy doing and make a Mindful Nourishing Activity Jar.

Just have a think and write down on the back of your cards 20 or so things you enjoy doing or would like to get back to doing (if they are things you have given up that you enjoyed doing).

Then, when you are feeling drained or depleted simply take out one of your nourishing cards and remind yourself of what you like to do to feel nourished.

Now just do it! Go off and treat yourself to something nourishing!



WISE WORDS

One day, a young man was going for a walk when he reached a wide river. He spent a long time wondering how he would cross such a gushing current. Just when he was about to give up his journey, he saw his teacher on the other side. The young man shouted from the bank: ‘Can you tell me how to get to the other side of this river?’

The teacher smiled and replied: ‘My friend, you are on the other side.’

You may feel that you have to change, when actually you just have to realise that perhaps you’re fine just the way you are. You’re running to achieve goals so that you can be peaceful and happy, but actually you’re running away from the peace and happiness. Mindfulness is an invitation to stop running and rest. You’re already on the other side.

(Mindfulness for Dummies, 2015 – Shamash Alidina)

**Congratulations on completing**

**The Practical Mindfulness Six Week Course**

**Don’t forget to: Practice, Practice, Practice**