

Practical Mindfulness



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)
- Come with an open mind and open heart

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’

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)

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"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 raisin/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. Noticing 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 mindful can help us to settle our mind; develop our present moment awareness; this allows us to be with our experiences, accept them and then decide how best to respond to these experiences with kindness and compassion.

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 within 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 mindfulness** – This requires setting aside specific time, energy and space to practice mindfulness exercises. It involves giving ourselves time to ‘be’ in the present moment by being mindfully aware of our breathing or mindfully walking slowly and silently with our awareness being solely on our mindful exercise, for example Breath Meditation. When we are in ‘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 and awareness 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 be aware of the present moment.

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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) Trust: developing trust in your feelings and in you 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.

5) 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.

- 6) **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.
- 7) **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/>)

Good practice for Mindful Meditation

Awareness of breath

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. It's a natural part of mindful practice but it's also an opportunity for you to pull your awareness back; therefore building up your mindfulness muscle. 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 (mindful body)

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. This is totally optional – the main thing is that you are comfortable.

Mindfulness of breath meditation

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)

Practical Mindfulness – 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)

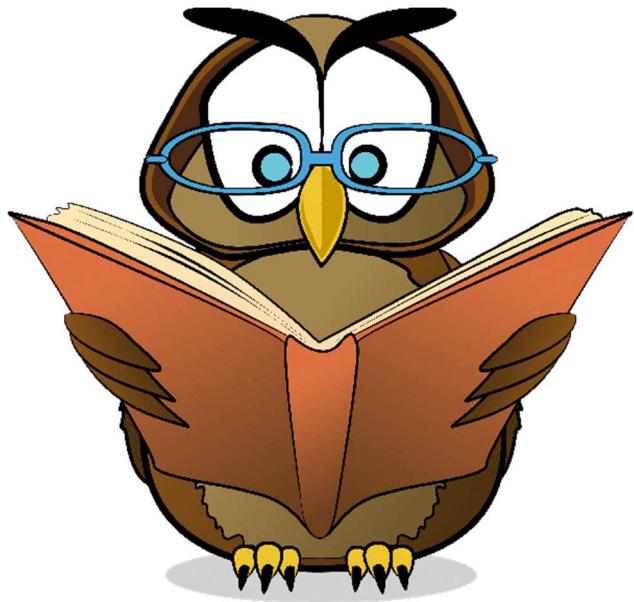
Practice this yourself with mindful eating

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. Did anything surprise you when you tried this practice at home? Did any memories pop up for you? How did it feel eating with such focused awareness on a single piece of food? What where your thoughts, feelings and 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.



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)

If I Had My Life to Live Over – by Nadine Stair

If I had my life to live over
I'd like to make more mistakes next time
I'd relax, I would limber up
I would be sillier than I have been on this trip
I would take fewer things seriously
I would take more chances
I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers
I would eat more ice cream and less beans
I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

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

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

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

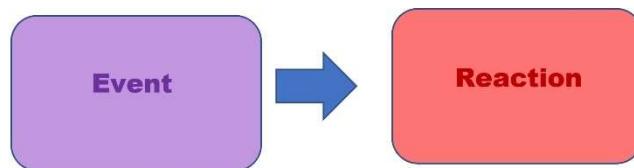
Allowing your awareness to expand once again to your entire body.... noticing your breathing throughout your whole body.... Bringing a more spacious awareness to your experience... noticing any sounds around you or any sensations in your body.... Try and hold your awareness towards these sensations while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

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

Mindfulness and Reactivity

Without
Mindfulness



With
Mindfulness



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 right 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 right 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 pelvic region – buttocks and 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 pain 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....

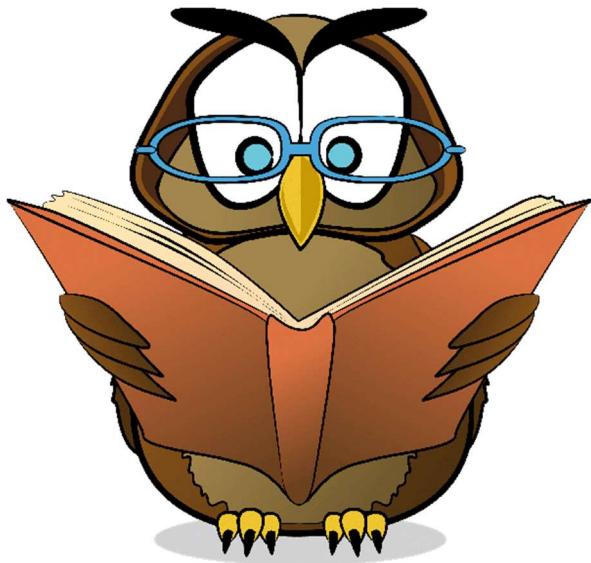
Moving your awareness down your left arm and right down into the fingers and thumb.... Just as you did with your leg – notice any sensations. Then moving up your arm be aware of the palm of your hand, the wrist, the back and sides of your hand.... Continuing to travel up the left arm, bringing your attention 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, eyebrows, 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 – home practice

- Complete Practical Mindfulness Trigger Sheet
- Practice 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: 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.

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

Mindfulness of the breath and body meditation

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

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.

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” by Portia Nelson

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 you 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



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.



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.



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!



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/>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Practice

If you have any aches and pains, make sure you take care of your body and only follow the parts of this relaxation that are right for your body, alternatively you can send soothing breath to this area.

Gently close your eyes and start to notice your breath as you begin to relax.... Continuing to focus on your breath.... Breathing into the diaphragm... feeling your belly rise.... Breathing out slowly.... Now, breathe in smoothly and deeply.... Now, breathe out slowly again, imagining yourself becoming heavier and heavier, sinking into the chair or floor..... Continuing to breathe in your own natural breathing rhythm..... begin to screw up the muscles in your face, holding it there for a few seconds..... and relax..... noticing any sensations in your face as it starts to relax.... and let go....

Moving on to the shoulders now..... lifting your shoulders up to your ears.... Holding them there for a few seconds.... and relax.... letting your shoulders return to their natural position.... Noticing the tension ease away from your neck and shoulders.... being aware of your muscles relaxing more and more deeply.... noticing the feeling of heaviness in your shoulders as they relax even more

Becoming aware of your hands.... Slowly curl your fingers into fists.... holding your arms straight out in front of you.... fists still clenched..... notice the tension in your hands and your forearms.... hold it and relax.... now let go.... gently dropping your arms by your side, visualising the tension draining away from your arms.... your hands....

Now, working up to your biceps, becoming aware of your upper arms as you clench them as if showing off your muscles.... hold for a few seconds.... and relax.... becoming aware of the sensations in your arms as they begin to feel heavy.... and floppy.... and relaxed....

Tensing your stomach and chest muscles.... take in a breath, and as you do, pull in your stomach and notice the muscles tighten.... becoming aware of any sensations you may feel.... noticing your chest muscles tighten.... hold the tension.... now slowly breathe out and notice any sensations as you let go of the tension in your stomach and chest muscles.... and you become aware of your stomach muscles relaxing.... your chest muscles relaxing.... noticing your stomach and chest muscles gently rise and relax as you return to your normal breathing rhythm....

Now, notice the sensations in the muscles of your hips as you tense these muscles.... lowering your back by squeezing your buttocks together.... arching

your back gently.... being aware of the tension as it arises.... holding the tension for a few seconds.... letting go and noticing your muscles relax.... Feel the muscles continue to relax deeper.... and deeper.... becoming more and more relaxed.... becoming heavier and heavier.... your hips are relaxed.... your legs are relaxed.... noticing the heaviness in your feet.... tension gently leaving your body....

Tensing your thigh muscles by pushing the tops of your legs together as hard as you can.... being aware of the tension.... hold it.... now gently let your legs relax and fall apart.... noticing the difference.... feeling the tension drain away from your legs.... being aware of the sensations of your legs feeling limp and heavy.... your thighs feeling heavy.... your calves feel heavy.... your feet feel heavy.... Visualise the tension draining away.... Leaving your legs.... leaving them feeling limp and relaxed.... feeling so heavy.... noticing them sinking into the floor or the seat of your chair....

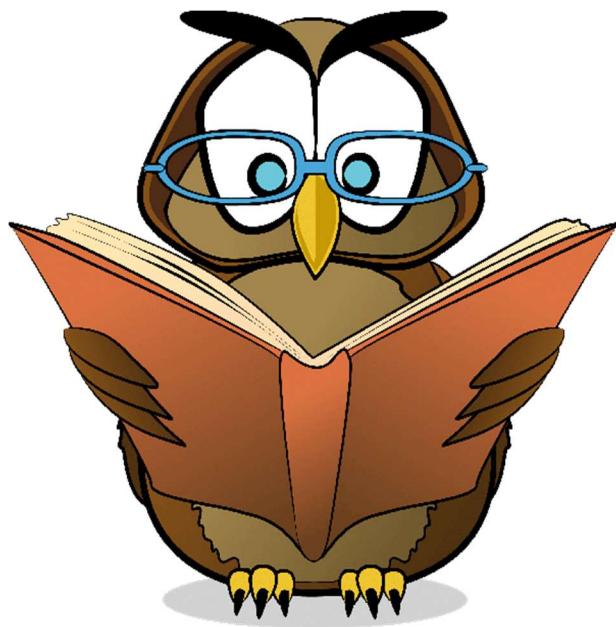
Let the sensations of relaxation spread from your feet.... up through your legs.... relaxing your hips and lower back....

Becoming aware of your calves.... Beginning to tense the muscles in your lower legs.... if you are sitting, lift your legs up and hold them in front of you, noticing the tension.... Gently stretching the muscles.... feeling this tension.... hold it.... now relax.... letting your feet come back to the floor.... and your legs going floppy and heavy.... feeling the difference..... being aware of the tension leaving your legs.... your calves.... Becoming aware of the sensations of heaviness in your calves... your feet.... leaving them feeling heavy and limp.... Visualise your legs and feet being so heavy that they are sinking into the floor.... feeling limp and relaxed.... growing more and more heavy and relaxed....

Relaxing the muscles of your body.... thinking of your feet.... tensing the muscles in your feet and ankles... gently stretching your toes.... gently stretching your muscles.... noticing the tension in your feet and ankles.... Hold it.... relax.... letting your feet go limp and floppy.... become aware of the difference in the sensations as you gently feel the tension leaving your feet.... Letting your feet roll outwards.... Growing heavier and heavier.... Visualising that they are so heavy now.... Sinking into the floor....

When you are ready.... I'd like to invite you to bring your awareness back into the room and when you are ready, wiggle your fingers and toes, open your eyes and have a gentle stretch....

(adapted from <https://www.otc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Relaxation-scripts.pdf>)



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)

Practical Mindfulness – Home practice

- Complete ‘pleasant experiences’ diary
- Practice one seated meditation: breath/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 pleased that I took a few moments to stop and look.
Day 1					
Day 2					

Day 3					
Day 4					
Day 5					
Day 6					
Day 7					

Mindfulness of thoughts and feelings

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.

Now, I invite you to just allow your 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 also noticing 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?

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...

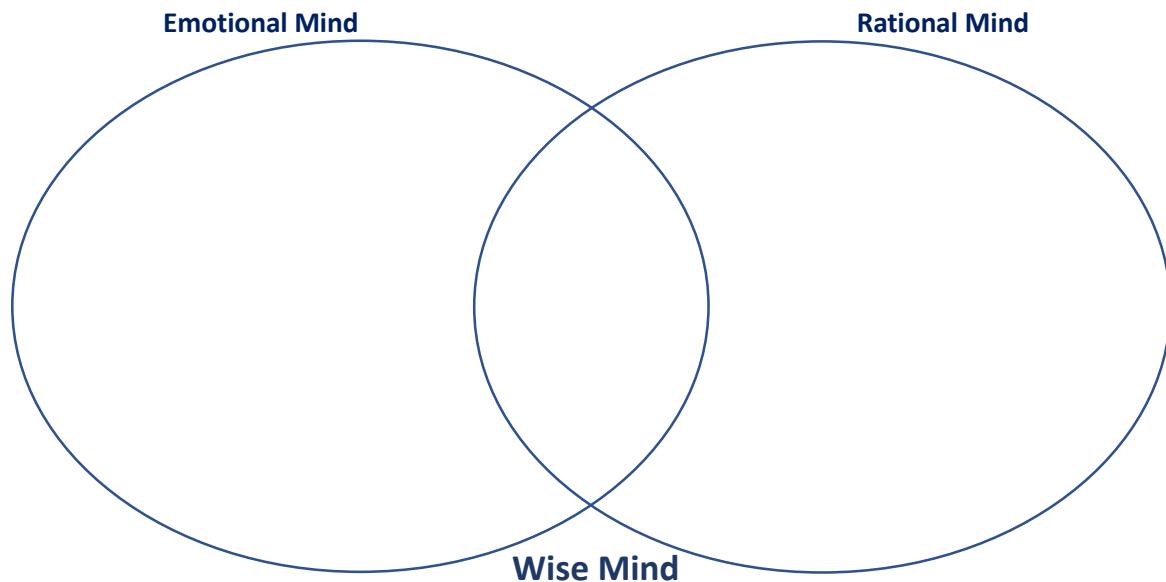
P – Proceed/New Possibilities - continuing without expectation

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



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 'quiets' 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 underdeveloped. 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.

Mountain Meditation Script

This meditation is normally done in a sitting position, either on the floor or a chair, and begins by sensing into the support you have from the chair or the cushion, paying attention to the actual sensations of contact.

Finding a position of stability and poise, upper body balanced over your hips and shoulders in a comfortable but alert posture, hands on your lap or your knees, arms hanging by their own weight, like heavy curtains, stable and relaxed.

Actually sensing into your body, feeling your feet... legs... hips... lower and upper body... arms... shoulders... neck... head... And when you are ready, allowing your eyes to close, bringing awareness to breath, the actual physical sensations, feeling each breath as it comes in and goes out... letting the breath be just as it is, without trying to change or regulate it in any way... allowing it to flow easily and naturally, with its own rhythm and pace, knowing you are breathing perfectly well right now, nothing for you to do... Allowing the body to be still and sitting with a sense of dignity, a sense of resolve, a sense of being complete, whole, in this very moment, with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness... (long pause)

As you sit here, letting an image form in your mind's eye, of the most magnificent or beautiful mountain you know or have seen or can imagine..., letting it gradually come into greater focus... and even if it doesn't come as a visual image, allowing the sense of this mountain and feeling its overall shape, its lofty peak or peaks high in the sky, the large base rooted in the bedrock of the earth's crust, it's steep or gently sloping sides...

Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving, how beautiful, whether from a far or up close...(pause) Perhaps your mountain has snow blanketing its top and trees reaching down to the base, or rugged granite sides... there may be streams and waterfalls cascading down the slopes... there may be one peak or a series of peaks, or with meadows and high lakes...

Observing it, noting its qualities and when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body sitting here so that your body and the mountain in your mind's eye become one so that as you sit here, you share in the massiveness and the stillness and majesty of the mountain, you become the mountain.

Grounded in the sitting posture, your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body and affording a panoramic view. Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs the solid base, rooted to your cushion or your chair, experiencing in your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine. With each breath, as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, alive and vital, yet unwavering in your inner stillness, completely what you are, beyond words and thought, a centred, grounded, unmoving presence...

As you sit here, becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, the light and shadows and colours are changing virtually moment by moment in the mountain's stillness, and the surface teems with life and activity... streams, melting snow, waterfalls, plants and wildlife. As the mountain sits, seeing and feeling how night follows day and day follows night. The bright warming sun, followed by the cool night sky studded with stars, and the gradual dawning of a new day...

Through it all, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment, constantly changing, yet always just being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment and day by day, calmness abiding all change...

In summer, there is no snow on the mountain except perhaps for the very peaks or in crags shielded from direct sunlight In the fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colours. In winter, a blanket of snow and ice. In any season, it may find itself at times enshrouded in clouds or fog or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is or how it's not a good day to see the mountain, that it's too cloudy or rainy or foggy or dark. None of this matters to the mountain, which remains at all times its essential self. Clouds may come and clouds may go, tourists may like it or not. The mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by whether people see it or not, seen or unseen, in sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, day or night. It just sits, being itself. At times visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unthinkable magnitude. Through it all, the mountain sits.

Spring comes, trees leaf out, flowers bloom in the high meadows and slopes, birds sing in the trees once again. Streams overflow with the waters of melting snow. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on its surface, by the world of appearances... remaining its essential self, through the seasons, the changing weather, the activity ebbing and flowing on its surface...

In the same way, as we sit in meditation, we can learn to experience the mountain, we can embody the same central, unwavering stillness and groundedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives, over seconds, over hours, over years. In our lives and in our meditation practice, we experience constantly the changing nature of mind and body and of the outer world, we have our own periods of light and darkness, activity and inactivity, our moments of colour and our moments of drabness. It's true that we experience storms of varying intensity and violence in the outer world and in our own minds and bodies, buffeted by high winds, by cold and rain, we endure periods of darkness and pain, as well as the moments of joy and uplift, even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own...

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength and stability and adopt them for our own. We can use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness and equanimity and clarity. It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms and crises, even the things that happen to us are very much like the weather on the mountain.

We tend to take it all personally, but its strongest characteristic is impersonal. The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied, it is to be encountered, honoured, felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness... And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom. Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can let it in... So if you find you resonate in some way with the strength and stability of the mountain in your sitting, it may be helpful to use it from time to time in your meditation practice, to remind you of what it means to sit mindfully with resolve and with wakefulness, in true stillness... So, in the time that remains, continuing to sustain the mountain meditation on your own, in silence, moment by moment.

(Free audio recording of this meditation and others are available on the Palouse Mindfulness website] [script adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mountain Meditation, available at <http://www.mindfulnessstapes.com>)



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 – Home practice

- Complete ‘unpleasant experiences’ diary
- Practice breath, body, thoughts and feelings meditation
- Practice 1 non-formal mindfulness activity daily
- 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					

Mindfulness of breath and action step

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?

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?

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.

Why not try treating yourself like a good friend and see what happens?

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

Mindfulness Soothing Touch Practice

As the mind and body takes cues from one another, we can use our own hands to encourage states of ease and comfort.

The basic premise is that the human body responds to touch, and touch can change the activity in the nervous system.

See if you can familiarise yourself with this practice, then utilise it in your daily life when you need a way to calm down.

Sit in a comfortable position and close the eyes. Breathe in deeply through the nostrils, allows the lungs to fully empty with the exhale. Continue breathing deeply for a minute. Spend a few minutes bring awareness to the body in this moment.

Without changing or fixing anything, observe what is present. Notice what physical sensations you can feel and where you can feel them. Try to really drop your awareness out of your head and down into the body.

Begin supporting yourself by bringing one of the hands to the top of the opposite arm, just below the shoulder. Gently rest the hand here with the intention of offering yourself support. This is a place of support in the human body. Allow yourself to feel the care and support you have for yourself. Tune into any relaxation in the mind or body. After a few minutes, release the hand.

Take a few deep breaths and bring the hand to the back of the head, where the spine meets the skull. This is a place where you were held and supported as an infant, and it can offer a sense of safety and ease. As you gently rest the hand here, allow the body to feel safe and comfortable. Allow a few minutes to pass.

Gently move the hand to the centre of the chest. Allow the hand to rest here, feeling care for yourself as you relax the body and mind. After a couple of minutes with the hand on the chest, allow the hand to relax once again.

Let a few minutes pass while you breathe and invite in relaxation to the mind and body before opening the eyes.

<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/giving-yourself-care-through-physical-touch/>

Kindness 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.”

.....

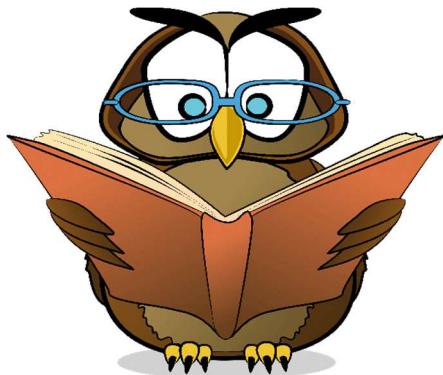
And as you let this neutral person go, you can bring to mind somebody who you find difficult. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life, instead choosing someone who is minorly difficult. Maybe it’s someone you find yourself agitated with or annoyed by.

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.”

.....



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 wildflowers 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 – 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....
- Reflect in journal (voluntary)

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

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.

GLAD technique

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

Find GRATITUDE – one thing you're thankful for today...

Find one thing you LEARNED today...

Find one ACCOMPLISHMENT you did today...

Find one thing of DELIGHT that touched you today...

9/5/2013

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.

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 you 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 pieces of card or lollipop sticks 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). You can use an old jar you have finished with in the house and decorate to suit your taste – pop the cards or sticks in. 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.

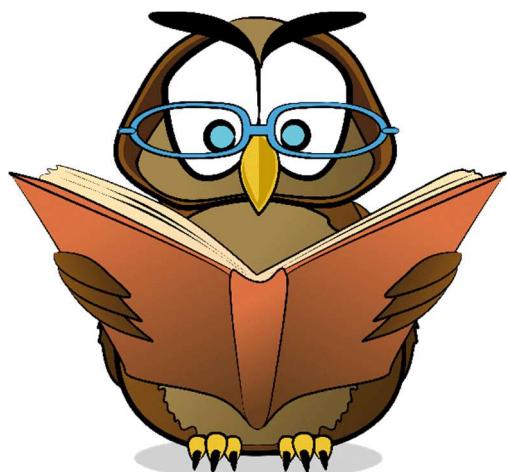
Now just do it! Go off and treat yourself to something nourishing!

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’



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)

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...

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

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Day/Date:	Mindful Practice:	Comments

Favourite Mindful Poems Shared by Course Attendees

Dust If You Must" by Rose Milligan

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better
to paint a picture or write a letter,
bake a cake or plant a seed,
ponder the difference between want and need?

Dust if you must, but there's not much time,
with rivers to swim and mountains to climb,
music to hear and books to read,
friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world's out there
with the sun in your eyes, the wind in your hair,
a flutter of snow, a shower of rain.
This day will not come 'round again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,
old age will come and it's not always kind.
And when you go – and go you must –
you, yourself, will make more dust.

Worst Day Ever - by Chanie Gorkin

Today was the absolute worst day ever
And don't try to convince me that
There's something good in every day
Because, when you take a closer look,
This world is a pretty evil place.

Even if

Some goodness does shine through once in a while
Satisfaction and happiness don't last.

And it's not true that
It's all in the mind and heart

Because

True happiness can be attained
Only if one's surroundings are good.

It's not true that good exists
I'm sure you can agree that

The reality

Creates

My attitude

It's all beyond my control

And you'll never in a million years hear me say that

Today was a very good day.

Now read it from bottom to top, the other way, and see what I really feel about my day.

This poems story: Because of her talents for music and rhythm, Chanie Gorkin has always had an appreciation for poetry. She especially enjoys the works of Shel Silverstein and other poets whose styles include humor and clever twists. Chanie lives with her parents and siblings in the Chassidic Community of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Chassidic philosophy stresses that God is good, and since He is the cause of everything, everything is essentially good. Look for the good in all things and you literally create positive energy and a good reality for yourself. It all depends on how you look at it.

Source: <https://www.poetrynation.com/poems/worst-day-ever/>

The Cookie Thief by Valerie Cox

A woman was waiting at an airport one night, with several long hours before her flight

She hunted for a book in the airport shop; bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop

She was engrossed in her book but happened to see; that the man beside her as bold as could be

Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag between, which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene

She munched cookies and watched the clock as this gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock

She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by; thinking "If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye"

With each cookie she took he took one too; and when only one was left she wondered what he'd do

With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh; he took the last cookie and broke it in half

He offered her half as he ate the other; she snatched it from him and thought "Oh brother

This guy has some nerve and he's also rude; why he didn't even show any gratitude"

She had never known when she had been so galled; and sighed with relief when her flight was called

She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate; refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate

She boarded the plane and sank in her seat; then sought her book which was almost complete

As she reached in her baggage she gasped with surprise; there was her bag of cookies in front of her eyes

"If mine are here" she moaned with despair; "Then the others were his and he tried to share"

"Too late to apologize she realized with grief"; That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.

**Valerie Cox, "A story of wrong perceptions" in "Chicken Soup for the Soul,"
editor Jack Canfield**

My Brain and Heart Divorced – John Roedel

My brain and heart divorced a decade ago over who was to blame about how big a mess I
have become

Eventually, they couldn't be in the same room with each other

Now my head and heart share custody of me

I stay with my brain during the week and my heart gets me at weekends

They never speak to one another

Instead, they give me the same note to pass to each other every week and their notes
always say the same thing: "This is all your fault"

On Sundays my heart complains about how my head has let me down in the past
And on Wednesday my head lists all of the times my heart has screwed things up for me in
the future

They blame each other for the state of my life

There's been a lot of yelling – and crying

So, lately, I've been spending a lot of time with my gut who serves as my unofficial therapist
Most nights, I sneak out of the window in my ribcage and slide down my spine and collapse
on my gut's plush leather chair that's always open for me – and just sit, sit, sit, sit, until the
sun comes up

Last evening, my gut asked me if I was having a hard time being caught between my heart
and my head

I nodded

I said I didn't know if I could live with either of them anymore

"My heart is always sad about something that happened yesterday, while my head is always
worried about something that may happen tomorrow," I lamented

My gut squeezed my hand

"I just can't live with my mistakes of the past or my anxiety about the future," I sighed

My gut smiled and said:

"In that case, you should go stay with your lungs for a while,"

I was confused – the look on my face gave it away

"If you are exhausted about your heart's obsession with the fixed past and your mind's
focus on the uncertain future

Your lungs are the perfect place for you

There is no yesterday in your lungs, there is no tomorrow either

There is only now

There is only inhale

There is only exhale

There is only this moment

There is only breath, and in that breath you can rest while your heart and head work their
relationship out."

This morning, while my brain was busy reading tea leaves and while my heart was staring at
old photographs

I packed a little bag and walked to the door of my lungs

Before I could even knock she opened the door with a smile and as a gust of air embraced
me, she said:

"What took you so long?"

**Congratulations on completing
The Practical Mindfulness Six Week Course**

Don't forget to: Practice, Practice, Practice