

Bangor University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Evaluation of a Mindfulness-based programme in public sector workplaces for stress management: A cost consequence business case analysis

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Mindfulness in the workplace programme



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Cultivating Mindfulness

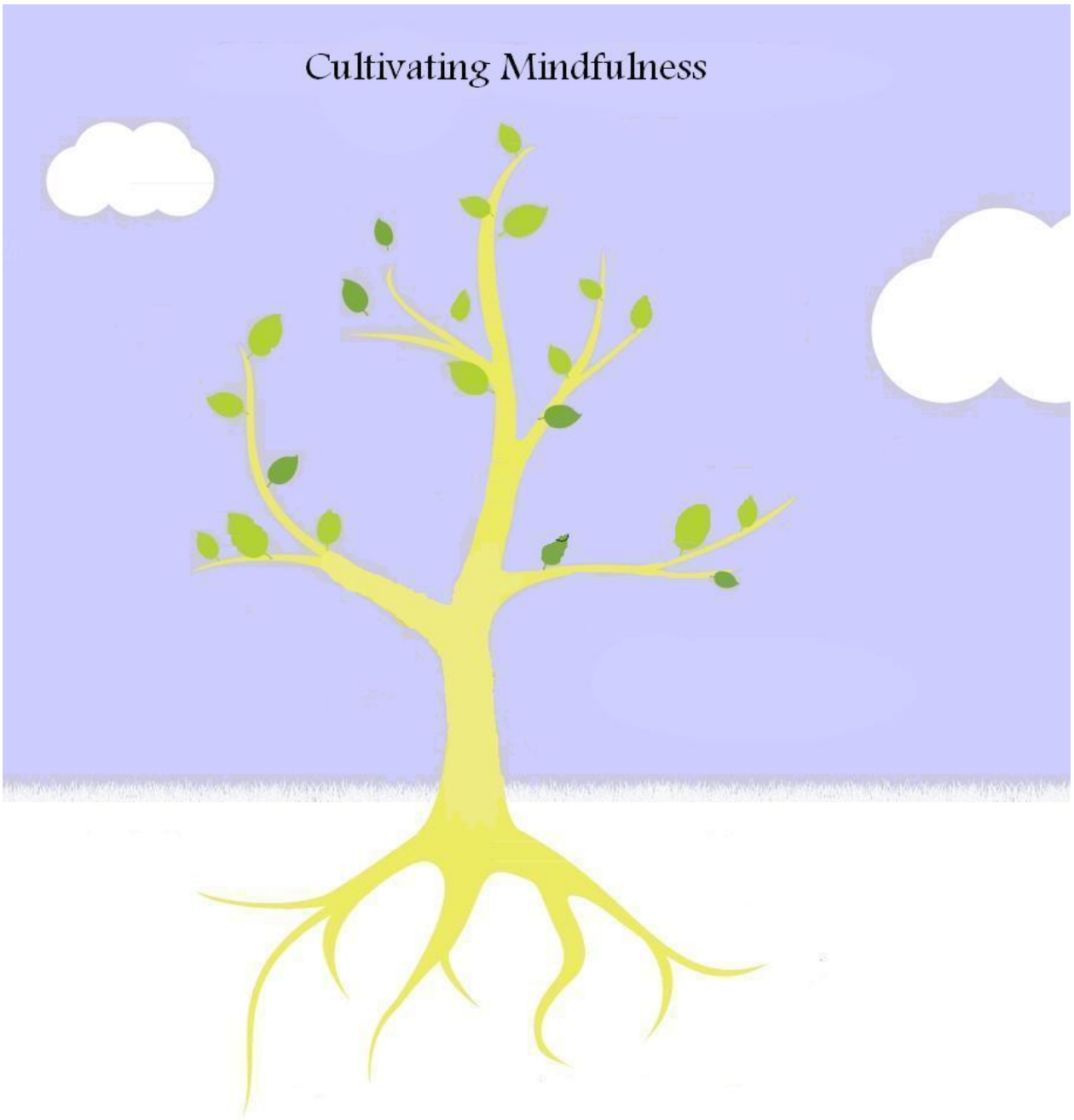


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Session	Title	Page
	Welcome / Introduction	4
Session 1	Introducing Mindfulness	11
Session 2	Keeping the Body in Mind	23
Session 3	Doing or Being?	37
Session 4	Stress Reactions... - Thoughts are not facts	49
Session 5	Stress: Reaction or Response?	58
Session 6	Mindful Communication	80
Session 7	How Can I Best Look after Myself?	92
Session 8	Keeping your mindfulness alive	106

Dear Participant

We have prepared this workbook for you to use as you go through your mindfulness course week by week.

It is helpful not to look ahead too much, but to stay focused on the week in hand and read the material relevant to the practices you are currently doing.

If you have any queries or concerns about the material or about any aspect of the course, do talk to your instructor.

We hope that the course offers you significant learning and that through practising mindfulness you find that your life is enriched and that you learn to face everyday difficulties differently.

With warm wishes

CMRP Team

8 WEEK MINDFULNESS WORKPLACE COURSE

General information about the course

Being mindful is something we all did very naturally when we were small children. When we are being mindful we are choosing to notice the details of our present moment experiences, without trying to change them in the first instance. Sometimes mindfulness is described as seeing clearly.

It is about being awake and aware and living in the present, rather than dwelling in the past or anticipating the future.

The course programme encourages us to develop the skill of being aware of our experiences (good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant) from moment to moment, with an attitude of acceptance rather than avoidance so that we can learn to respond more skilfully to situations rather than simply reacting automatically.

Staying in touch with the present in this way, from one moment to next, may lead to your experiencing things somewhat differently, perhaps feeling less stuck, or with a sense that you have more options, more strength, balance and confidence in your possibilities, more wisdom. The majority of people completing the programme report lasting physical and psychological benefits including:

- An increased ability to relax and experience calm
- Greater energy, enthusiasm and appreciation for life
- Heightened self-confidence and more acceptance for life as it is
- An increased ability to cope more effectively with both short and long-term stressful situations

Mindfulness in the Workplace

Mindfulness aims to help us develop ways to care for yourself better, especially when things are challenging. It can allow us to make positive choices about relationships, managing work-life balance and choosing ways to support ourselves physically and emotionally so that we can get the most out of our lives. Mindfulness can help us to improve our ability to focus and see our experience clearly. This can help us let go of unhelpful habits of body and mind. This important awareness allows us to broaden our repertoire of responses encouraging our creativity, engagement and connection to the activities in work and our lives generally.

Using This Book

In this workbook you will find the themes and content of each session. In 'Further Explorations' at the end of each chapter there is also some extra reading in the form of poems and stories and some suggested on line resources that will complement your learning. It is not essential to read everything – a selection is presented for your choice – discover what you are drawn to. There is also a list of suggested additional reading again these are suggestions you may find interesting and supportive to read.

It is helpful not to look ahead too much, but to stay focused on the week in hand and read the material relevant to the practices you are currently doing.

Home practice experience forms a large part of the programme. Our understanding of mindfulness comes most clearly from our direct experience of it, rather than just reading *about* it.

You will need to commit yourself to spending between half an hour and an hour each day -

- Listening and practising mindfulness, using the tracks provided
- Making notes of your experience
- Practising mindfulness within your life by bringing mindful awareness to your routine and ordinary activities
- Supporting your learning through background reading. Whilst it is not possible to fully understand mindfulness through reading or thinking about it, you may support your experiential learning in important ways by reading around the experiences you are noticing as you practice.

In our already busy and full lives, the time commitment required in undertaking this personal exploration may seem stressful. The amount of practice that you do through the course will certainly impact the learning available to you. Much of the understanding of mindfulness can only be reached through actually experiencing it so you will have more opportunities to develop your understanding the more practice you do. Previous participants would strongly recommend that you 'just do it'. Having said that, we encourage you to consider *all* your experiences as an opportunity to practice, including the times when the formal practices using the tracks aren't possible. Noticing the details of our experience in these moments can offer us important learning.

We would encourage you to approach this new learning as if you are planting a seed. Once planted, the seed will grow best by not being dug up regularly to check progress. It will need you to tend to it by clearing any weeds and watering regularly and allowing it to grow, at its own pace, into the plant that it will become. As individuals we are all different so what we discover and learn may also vary a great deal.

Committing to the practice as best you can is the most useful approach, waiting until the end of the course to consider and understand the outcomes.

There are also a range of courses and retreats that you may like to take when you have completed the 8-week course. Information about these is available on our website www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness. We also encourage you to seek out mindfulness meditation groups in your area, as practising with others is both supportive and powerful for many of us.

Background reading

Suggested readings are given but it is very much up to you whether or not to include this as part of the course. Depending on your style of learning you may find reading alongside your experiential practice helpful in developing understanding. If you are short of time or know that you tend to process experience by thinking about it is important to prioritise your practice rather than your reading.

What is important is to realise that this course is about your own experience and your awareness of your experience and it will not be possible for you to learn to be more mindful and aware by reading books!

Recommended reading:

There is a vast range of books which will support your on-going explorations in the use of mindfulness within your life. Please see the bibliography page on our website (www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness) for a comprehensive listing. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can contact us at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (see our contact details on the cover) and ask for a list through the post.

We particularly recommend:

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

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

Finding Peace in a Frantic World by Mark Williams and Danny Penman, published by Piatkus

This is a beautifully accessible book which talks you through an eight week course, adapted from the MBCT course and specifically designed for people in the midst of full lives. The book includes a CD with brief practices in the back

The Mindfulness Breakthrough by Sarah Silverton with chapters by Eluned Gold and Vanessa Hope published by Watkins

This illustrated book offers a clear and straightforward introduction to the concepts and practices of mindfulness. Part 2 also explores mindfulness' relevance to specific circumstances we may find ourselves in such as anxiety, depression, relationships, with our children and chronic illness.

The Mindful Workplace: Developing Resilient Individuals and Resonant Organizations with MBSR by Michael Chaskalson, published by Wiley-Blackwell

This book offers a practical and theoretical guide to the benefits of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in the workplace, describing the latest neuroscience research into the effects of mindfulness training and detailing an eight-week mindfulness training course. Provides techniques which allow people in organizations to listen more attentively, communicate more clearly, manage stress and foster strong relationships. Includes a complete eight-week mindfulness training course, specifically customized for workplace settings, along with further reading and training resources.

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

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

Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life by Jon Kabat-Zinn, published by Piatkus

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

Heal Thyself by Saki Santorelli, 1999, Bell Tower, USA

This book, written by the director of the Center for Mindfulness, Massachusetts, USA, is a beautiful description of the 8 week course.

Support

Your instructor is available via email during the week for you to contact should you encounter any difficulties in your practice that will not wait for your weekly class. It is important to access this support rather than get stuck or struggle with any difficulty. It may also be possible to phone your instructor (in addition to the weekly contact) if the need arises. This can be discussed between you as you set up your arrangement.

As our focus is on the meditation practice there is little opportunity or time during the classes to discuss any current on-going personal problems not related to the practices.

It can feel stressful at first to take this course as it encourages you to turn towards all your experiences and see these clearly. Finding the time to practice also involves a shift in routine. This forms an important part of the learning to be with and stay with problems and difficulties, rather than turn away from them or avoiding them.

Confidentiality

Our attitude towards confidentiality is underpinned by a stance of *mindful ethics*, where MINDFULNESS teachers have an overarching intention to do no harm. This is informed by staying mindfully aware of our intention in all our communications whether verbal or written, and not engaging in talking/recording/giving information in any way that aims to, or could result in causing damage or divisions. When a choice is made to share information, this will arise either:

1. From a transparent dialogue between teacher and class participant with the understanding that this is an open process in the interests of development and support. or
2. Where there is a perceived risk of immediate harm to self or others.

Discussions in the sessions will normally be held in complete confidence but with important exceptions:

All our teachers receive regular supervision of their work and therefore the instructor may take any appropriate matter arising from the course to his/her own supervision process in order to continue to develop their teaching skills. Care will be taken to ensure anonymity.

If a teacher is sufficiently concerned about something they consider has serious criminal, ethical or personal implications told to him/her by a course participant, every effort would be made to discuss this with the course participant in the first instance, but s/he reserves the right to break confidentiality by discussing this with another responsible person if deemed necessary.

Your instructor

Your teacher has been trained in this approach by Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice and now engages in a rigorous on-going process of further training and supervision in line with the UK Good Practice Guidelines for Mindfulness Teachers (see UK network <http://mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk/>).

Insurance and complaints

Up to date information on insurance or how to make a complaint can be obtained by contacting the Business Manager or CPPD Programme Lead at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice who will then signpost you to the relevant person depending on the nature of the issue.

At the start of the course you may find it interesting and useful to write down your responses to the following questions. You may like to reflect back on your original reasons for undertaking the course once you have completed the course.

What has drawn me to mindfulness?

What are my expectations of the course?

What do I want to be different by the end of the course? What do I want to get out of doing the course?

SESSION 1

Introducing Mindfulness – Stepping out of automatic pilot

*Jon Kabat –Zinn has defined **mindfulness** as the **awareness** that emerges from*

“paying attention.....

on purpose

in the present moment

and non-judgementally”

(Full Catastrophe Living, Piatkus London 1996)

So, if we explore what this definition tells us we find that:

Awareness is an openness to experience, being awake and “tuned in” to what we notice

Paying attention is choosing to focus on, notice and be curious about our experience (rather than us thinking about or analysing). Sometimes this is described as waking up to our experience.

On purpose - means that we are *choosing* to, forming an intention to or deciding to notice our experience.

In the present moment is focussing on what is already here, as they are just now (rather than how they were in the past or might be in the future).

Non-judgmentally This is sometimes quite difficult to understand clearly. It doesn't mean not judging, which we will, of course, find that our minds are very skilled at. In mindfulness this non-judgement means acknowledging or allowing things to be as they are. We are making space for our experience to be as we find it and bringing a friendly interest to our experience without needing to change/improve or fix things in this moment.

As you will discover being mindful is actually very simple – but not at all easy! We call the process “practice” because mindfulness is something we continue to develop, maybe over many years, rather than something we will achieve quickly.

“The present is the only time that any of us have to be alive - to know anything - to perceive - to learn - to act - to change - to heal”. (JON KABAT-ZINN, 1996 Full Catastrophe Living PIATKUS LONDON

Attention



We talk about paying attention in mindfulness but what is attention?

It has sometimes been compared to a torch beam. As we pay attention we are directing our focus in order to “shine a light” on what is here. And, just like a torch beam, this isn’t about changing what the attention beam finds but rather seeing things that are here clearly.

The beam of light can have a broad or a narrow focus so that we can become aware of a large field, or focus closely on particular details.

As we pay attention to our experience we can build our skills in tuning in to and describing what we are noticing. We are developing our curiosity and receiving the detail or “flavour/texture” of our experiences, being receptive and open both to the content and process of this noticing.

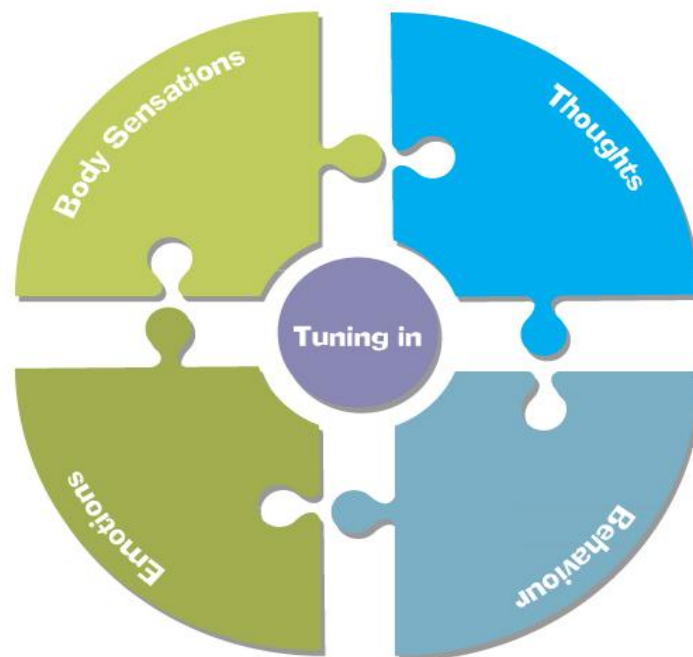
Why is it helpful to develop mindfulness skills?

There is growing evidence from neuroscience that how we use our mind actually shapes the structure of the brain. There are now a number of research studies that show that choosing to pay attention and focus our attention through mindfulness practice alters the structure and activation in specific regions of our brain such as the pre-frontal cortex, hippocampus and the amygdala. These changes are complex and

still being understood but have been directly connected to an improved ability to regulate emotions.

Mindfulness aims to increase our awareness so that we can learn to live our lives more fully. We are learning to open to pleasurable experiences that are already here in our lives. We are learning to recognize that we can choose to respond to situations (rather than reacting habitually and automatically), from detailed, broad, present moment information.

Mindfulness helps us to learn to pay attention to the full range of our experiences - our bodily sensations, thoughts, moods/ emotions, and our behavior or impulses, noticing how these all interrelate.



As we spend time exploring the full range of our experience we become aware of the way the facets of our experience will change and evolve moment by moment.

We notice how paying attention mindfully can change the quality of our experience, even of very ordinary things in our everyday lives.

We learn to have more choice about where we place our attention rather than be carried away by a mind that can take us to places that are unhelpful for us or we would rather not go.

We learn ways to steady our mind and body so that we can find balance even in challenging moments. Mindfulness is not about trying to get anywhere – but simply being aware of where you are - and allowing yourself to BE, as you are.

We can also learn to bring a friendly awareness to ourselves and our experience, whatever that may be, caring for ourselves in the midst of our complex lives.

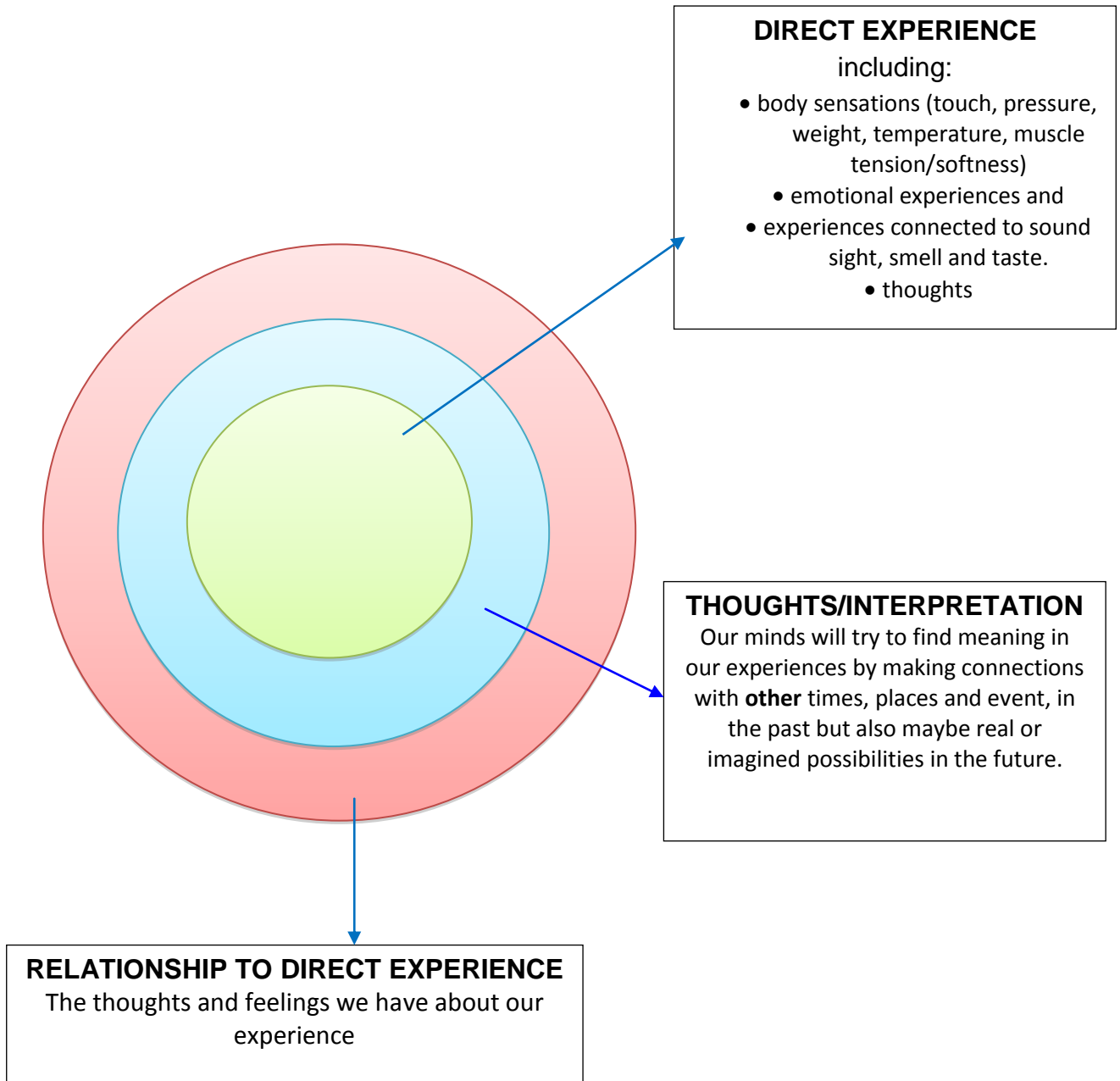
Research has shown that mindfulness can indeed lead us to improved health and well-being.

Automatic Pilot

Human beings are able to learn over time to do familiar tasks without giving them much thought. Those of us who drive are very aware of how this ability is essential in allowing us to manage such complex tasks as driving a car in busy traffic, listening to the radio, with children arguing in the back of the car. Continuing with the driving analogy, we can sometimes drive for miles on ‘automatic pilot’, without really being aware of what we are doing. We may have no recollection of whole sections of a familiar journey. Whilst the ability for our minds to do this is crucial in our busy lives, we find that, as human beings, we move into automatic pilot without actually choosing to do so. In this way, we may not be really ‘present’, moment-by-moment, for much of our lives. We can often be ‘miles away’ without knowing it.

Whilst we are on automatic pilot, we are much more likely to have our ‘buttons pressed’; events around us, and our own thoughts, feelings and sensations (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old habits of feeling, thinking and behavior. We can find that we are operating in the well-worn grooves of our habitual patterns of mind and body and that these may well be unhelpful to us. For some of us this may lead to worsening mood, or to physical and emotional symptoms of stress.

By becoming more aware of our bodily sensations, feelings and thoughts from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of noticing and, from there, a greater freedom with choices becoming available to us. With awareness we do not have to play out the same old patterns of body and mind that may have caused problems in the past.



*We have all been placed on this earth to discover our own path
and we will never be happy if we live someone else's idea of life.
-James van Praagh*

*Life was meant to be lived, and curiosity must be kept alive. One
must never, for whatever reason, turn her back on life.*

-Eleanor Roosevelt

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 1

1. Do track 1 (10 mins) twice each day before the class next week. Remember that we aren't aiming to feel anything in particular from listening to the meditation. In fact, as best you can, let go of all expectations about it. Just let your experience be your experience. Don't judge it, just keep doing it, and we'll talk about it next week.

If you would like to you can record your experience on the Session One Diary page each time you listen to the meditation. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice so that we can talk about it at the next class. The diary page is for your own record only.

2. Choose one ROUTINE ACTIVITY in your daily life and deliberately choose to bring moment-to-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it just as we did as we ate the raisin in class. Possibilities include – getting out of bed in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, drying your body, getting dressed, eating, driving, taking out the rubbish, shopping, starting the car..... anything that you do every day – simply zero in on really experiencing what you are doing as you are actually doing it.

3. Eat at least one mouthful of a meal mindfully each day this week: in the way you ate the raisin

4 Habit Releaser - Choose to sit in a different seat through the week. This may be at home at the dining table or in the sitting room or at work. May be you will choose a different place in the room or simply changing your chair for a different type of chair.

5. “.b” your “buddy” by once in the week sending them a text simply saying .b as a reminder to them to pause whatever they are doing and focus on a few breaths. This is inviting the mind to come to just be in the midst of the busyness of our day.

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

SESSION ONE DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Further Explorations

This section offers poetry, stories, images and You Tube links that we hope will help you investigate your mindfulness experiences and understanding further. What do you notice as you explore these, in your body, thoughts and emotions?

The Summer Day

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

- *From Mary Oliver, 'New and Selected Poems',
Boston, Beacon Press, 1992*

Story

Karen told us about a morning trip to get petrol. As she was filling the car she noticed a duck and seven tiny ducklings walking across the forecourt. The mother duck steadily led her youngsters across the busy forecourt, making their way to the stream beyond.

She watched the scene, seeing the colours of their feathers in the sunshine, the size of the ducklings and way they moved, the little ones jostling for position behind their mother. Karen saw how the ducklings stayed close to her as she wove through the cars coming and going in the rush of the morning at the garage. Karen also noticed that the other garage customers hadn't noticed this family in the midst of their fuelling of their cars and their focus on getting on with their days. She said she realised how lucky she had been to be awake to this beautiful moment.

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.

-Nadine Stair - 85 years old

From the Stress Reduction Workbook, University of Massachusetts Medical School

SESSION 2

Keeping the Body in mind

It is a truism to say we inhabit our body throughout our entire lives, however we are often not present with that experience - we live in our bodies but often there is no-one home!

We so often take our body for granted -perhaps even losing touch with the messages it offers us. Frequently we pay more attention to the thoughts we have, even about events that may not actually happen, than the sensations in our bodies. It isn't unusual for us to disregard signals from our body as it tells us, for example, it is hungry – or full - that it needs a drink or to go to the toilet or needs to move when we have sat at our computer for extended periods of time.

Our mindfulness practice invites us to reconnect with our body and the precious information that it has to offer. We can relearn to tune in to the vast range of signals that tell us both how our body is physically but also how we are emotionally. Our body frequently knows this more quickly than our thoughts and tells us what is actually present for us, now.

The interconnection between our body and our mind is very complex and still being understood. It is clear that subtle changes to our posture, even our facial expression, can influence our attitude and mood just as much as our mood will be reflected in our body posture.

We can tune into internal messages and those that tell us about connection with our lives through our environment and people we connect with.

As we practise mindfulness the initial invitation is to simply acknowledge the actuality of the situation we find ourselves in - without being immediately hooked into our automatic tendencies to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are.

The body scan provides an opportunity to practise noticing, simply by bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are, in each moment however they are and *without having to do anything to change things*. There is no goal to be achieved. Just to bring awareness to aspects of our experience as the guidance suggest.

As we do this we are practising both detailed noticing and letting go of the established tendency we have as human beings to interfere with, adapt or improve our circumstances. We are practising *being* rather than *doing*, having no goal other than to

focus our attention and see our experience as clearly as is possible for us. We are not trying to achieve a special state such as relaxation - it may happen – or it may not.

Guidelines for doing the body scan

- Regardless of what happens (falling asleep, losing concentration, being distracted by thoughts, emotions or other physical sensations, don't feel anything), just do it! These are your experiences in the moment. All you have to do is be aware of them, even if your mind is wandering a great deal. If you are distracted by wandering thoughts, emotions or other physical sensations, simply notice them as passing events, and then gently return to the instructions on the CD.
- Notice if you have ideas about “success,” “failure,” “doing it really well” or “trying to purify the body.” This is not a competition. It is not a skill that you are striving to perfect. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. See if it's possible to cultivate an attitude of openness and curiosity about whatever you happen to experience during the body scan.
- Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: "OK, that's just the way things are right now". If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, this may only require us to work hard and may even bring them more clearly into view, distracting you from experiencing anything else.
- Notice if you have expectations about what the body scan will do for you; instead you might imagine that you're planting a seed. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to develop. A growing seed needs space and time to become established. It needs to be offered nourishment and be cared for by creating conditions that are favourable.

The same is true for practising the body scan; you only have to give it conditions that allow it to flourish: uninterrupted time you set aside for yourself to practice, regularly.

- The most important guideline is: **JUST DO IT!**

***“If your mind isn't clouded by unnecessary things,
this is the best season of your life”.***

-WU-MEN

Developing greater awareness of what's good in your life.

In the same way that we can learn to tune out of our bodies' messages and experiences of living we can also come to disregard the aspects of our lives where things are going well and don't currently present us with challenge. Humans are designed to pay attention to threats and experiences that we want to change, meaning the rest of our experience can fade into the background of our awareness.

Mindfulness practice encourages us to open our awareness to the full range of experiences in our lives, those that challenge us but also the aspects of our lives that are enjoyable, rewarding and nourish us that otherwise can be missed. Our experience of eating the raisin during the first week's class may have shown you how we can access more detail of experience through paying attention mindfully.

We can choose to make space for the experiences in our life that we value. The way that we look at our experience can really shape our perception of our life.

The pleasant/unpleasant experiences diary for this week can help you to tune in to these experiences in your life as well as those that feel less pleasant or welcome. What is it that tells us that this is either pleasant or unpleasant?

PLEASANT/UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCES DIARY

Be aware of an experience at the time it is happening. Use these questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. See if you can explore one pleasant experience and one unpleasant each day. Write it down as soon as possible afterwards.

What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What thoughts and images accompanied this event? (write thoughts in words, describe images)	What moods, feelings, and emotions accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
EXAMPLE Heading home at the end of my shift – stopping, hearing and bird singing	Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping, uplift of corners of mouth	‘That’s good’ ‘How lovely’ (the bird) ‘It’s so good to be outside’	Relief, pleasure	It was such a small thing, but I’m glad I noticed it’
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				

What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What thoughts and images accompanied this event? (write thoughts in words, describe images)	What moods, feelings, and emotions accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				

from The Mindful Way Through Depression by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn, Copyright 2007 by the Guilford Press

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 2

1. Listen to the BODY SCAN (track 2 of the CD) once daily over the next 6 days. Record your reactions on the record form if you wish to.
2. Complete the Pleasant/Unpleasant Experiences Diary Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Be as detailed as you can in your noticing and describing of these experiences.
3. Choose a new ROUTINE, EVERYDAY ACTIVITY to be especially mindful of (brushing teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out rubbish, reading to children, shopping, eating, driving, walking the dog etc.)
4. Appreciation Exercise. As we practised in the class, each day giving yourself some time to name 5 things that you appreciate in your life right now. Remember it is important to stay with this practice until you have reached 5 opening to these experiences already present in your life, *no matter how small*.

SESSION TWO DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

Exploring Further

What do you see?

Story

Embracing life is actually a choice. When asked to describe her husband, another of my patients, laughing, tells a story about a visit to Hawaii that has become part of her family's mythology. An organised and frugal man, her husband had reserved compact rental cars on each of the four islands months in advance. On arriving on the Big Island and presenting their reservation to the car rental desk, they were told that the economy car they had reserved was not available. Alarmed, she watched her husband's face redden as he prepared to do battle. The clerk did not seem to notice. "I am so sorry, sir," he said. "Will you accept a substitute for the same price? We have a Mustang convertible." Barely mollified, her husband put their bags in this beautiful white sports car and they drove off.

The same thing happened throughout their holiday. They would turn in their car and fly to the next island, only to be told that the car they had been promised was not available and offered a same-price substitution. It was amazing, she said. After the mustang, they had been given a Mazda MR – 10, a Lincoln Town Car, and finally, a Mercedes, all with the most sincere apologies. The vacation was absolutely wonderful and on the plane back, she turned to her husband, thanking him for all he had done to arrange such a memorable time. "Yes," he said, pleased, "it was really nice. Too bad they never had the right car for us." He was absolutely serious.

From Rachel Naomi Remen, "Kitchen Table Wisdom", Riverhead Books, New York, 1996, p.176-7

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
Where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.*

THE ESSENTIAL RUMI. translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne, Harper: San Francisco, 1995.

Aimless Love

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,
I fell in love with a wren
and later in the day with a mouse
the cat had dropped under the dining room table.

In the shadows of an autumn evening,
I fell for a seamstress
Still at her machine in the tailor's window,
And later with a bowl of broth,
Steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.

This is the best kind of love, I thought,
without recompense, without gifts,
or unkind words, without suspicion,
or silence on the telephone.

The love of the chestnut,
The jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.
No lust, no slam of the door –
the love of the miniature orange tree,
the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower,
the highway that cuts across Florida.

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor –
just the twinge every now and then

for the wren who had built her nest
on a low branch overhanging the water
and for the dead mouse,
still dressed in his light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up
in a field on its tripod,
ready for the next arrow.

After I carried the mouse by the tail
to a pile of leaves in the woods,
I found myself standing at the bathroom sink
gazing down affectionately at the soap,

so patient and soluble
so at home in its pale green soap dish.

I could feel myself falling again
as I felt its turning in my wet hands
and caught the scent of lavender and stone.
-Billy Collins, from Nine Horses

Lucky/Unlucky Story

A farmer had only one horse, and one day the horse ran away. The neighbours came to condole over his terrible loss. The farmer said, "What makes you think that this is so terrible?"

A month later the horse came back, this time bringing with her two beautiful wild horses. The neighbours became excited at the farmer's good fortune. Such lovely strong horses! The farmer said, "What makes you think this is good fortune?"

The farmer's son was thrown from one of the wild horses and broke his leg. All the neighbours were very distressed. Such bad luck! The farmer said, "What makes you think this is bad?"

A war came, and every able-bodied man was conscripted and sent to battle. Only the farmer's son, because of his broken leg, remained. The neighbours congratulated the farmer. "What makes you think this is good?" said the farmer.

STAYING PRESENT

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

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

It is very simple. Practise bringing your attention back to your body again and again. This basic effort, which paradoxically is a relaxing back into the moment, gives us the key to expanding our awareness from times of formal

meditation to living mindfully in the world. Do not underestimate the power that comes to you from feeling the simple movements of your body throughout the day.

- Adapted from Joseph Goldstein 'Insight Meditation', Shambala Publications: Boston,1993

How we make assumptions

<http://www.simplyzesty.com/advertising-and-marketing/carlsberg-pull-brilliant-guerrilla-marketing-stunt-in-cinema/>



SESSION 3

Doing or Being? - Being with our experience in the midst of busy-ness

Use the breath as an anchor to tether your attention to the present moment. Your thinking mind will drift here and there, depending on the currents and winds moving in the mind until, at some point, the anchor line grows taut and brings you back.

-Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life

Many times in life we can get caught up in wanting things to be just the way they 'should'. In other words we have already decided what is going to happen, how long it's going to take, how others will behave, what is the outcome etc. etc. Anyone who has set off on holiday with high expectations only to get caught up in traffic jams - will be familiar with how this feels. We can easily get stressed and agitated often with circumstances outside of our control. Traffic jams can be a great time to practice acceptance - '*being*' with our experience - especially in those times when there is nothing to be *done* but perhaps wait for things to change - for the 'jam' to 'unjam' itself. This is not the same as giving in passively but rather using awareness and wisdom to make a 'real' assessment of the situation and deciding the best use of our skills and energy.

Mindful Movement

Mindful movement is simply mindfulness practice, which involves moving the body.

During this course you may practice movements drawn from yoga, qigong or even simply walking. Mindful movement can be done very simply in spaces already available in your life.

The intention in practising mindful movement is just the same as with the other practices, namely maintaining moment to moment awareness, and not striving to get somewhere or reach any goal, just allowing yourself to be as you are, and letting go of any judging of yourself. Moving slowly and consciously. **Mindful movement involves exploring your limits but not pushing beyond them.** Instead, pausing and gently playing with dwelling at the boundaries or "edges" you find, exploring and breathing.

This can help us to experience and see clearly the nature of these “edges” and honouring the messages your body and mind give you about when to stop or continue, and using this wisdom to know when it is important to choose not to do a posture, because of your particular condition or situation at that moment.

Mindful movement may be done standing, lying down on a mat or rug or sitting in a chair.

The key skill we are developing in mindfulness is to maintain awareness in the moment – nothing else

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

Focusing on the breath

The breath is always breathed in this moment, is always available to us – throughout our entire lives.

In bringing our focus to our breath we can:

- Bring ourselves back to this very moment - here and now - using the breath as an anchor and a haven, wherever we are.
- Receive a lot of information about the emotional tone of how things are for us
- Pause and bring focus to the breath to connect with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things

The Basics of Sitting

Finding a sitting position that is right for you is very important. Each of our bodies is different and also vary at different times of the day. In choosing a sitting posture to practice mindfulness we are finding a posture that offers us the greatest likelihood of being comfortable, given how things are in our bodies and minds in this moment.

Once we have found the most appropriate posture for us, it can help you to adopt a way to sit that is stable, connected, upright and at ease, allowing the head, neck, and back to be aligned with the spine supporting itself naturally. This allows our posture to reflect inner attitudes of non-striving, finding our balance, self-acceptance, patience, and alert attention that we are cultivating.

You can sit on a chair or on the floor. If you use a chair, choose one that has a straight back and that allows your feet to be flat on the floor. If at all possible, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting. It may be helpful to have a wedge cushion on the seat of the chair to allow the pelvis to tilt forwards.

If you choose to sit on the floor, you can use a firm thick cushion (or pillow folded over once or twice) or using a meditation stool which raises your buttocks off the floor three to six inches.

The positions shown in the pictures below give some options of how you might sit, on a chair or on the floor.



- The spine is self-supporting allowing its natural curve and tallness.
 - The feet are flat on the floor.
- The hands are resting, shoulders at ease.
 - The chin slightly tucked.



In contrast, this posture is slumped and relying on the chair. The feet aren't firmly "planted" onto the ground and the head and neck are lowered.



There are many different ways that we can sit, depending on our body's needs. All share the characteristics of a steady, balanced base, allowing the spine to rise with ease upwards and the shoulders, arms and hands to rest. In this way

we don't need to work too hard to sit, especially
periods.

over longer



We can support ourselves with a chair, cushions or
a meditation stool to allow us to sit alert and
relaxed



Mindfulness invites us to deal with experience in a different way. Opening to and gently turning towards what is *actually* here allow us to be much more creative and flexible in our view of our situation and the ways that we can respond to it. We can see the whole picture but also access greater resources to perceive fully and see the various possibilities open to us at any one time.

THE THREE STEP BREATHING SPACE

Step One

What's here, just now?

Turning towards and receiving experience as it is:

- Sensations in the body?
- Activity of the mind?
- Busy or calm?
- Certain thoughts or preoccupations?
- Emotion or mood tone?

Step Two

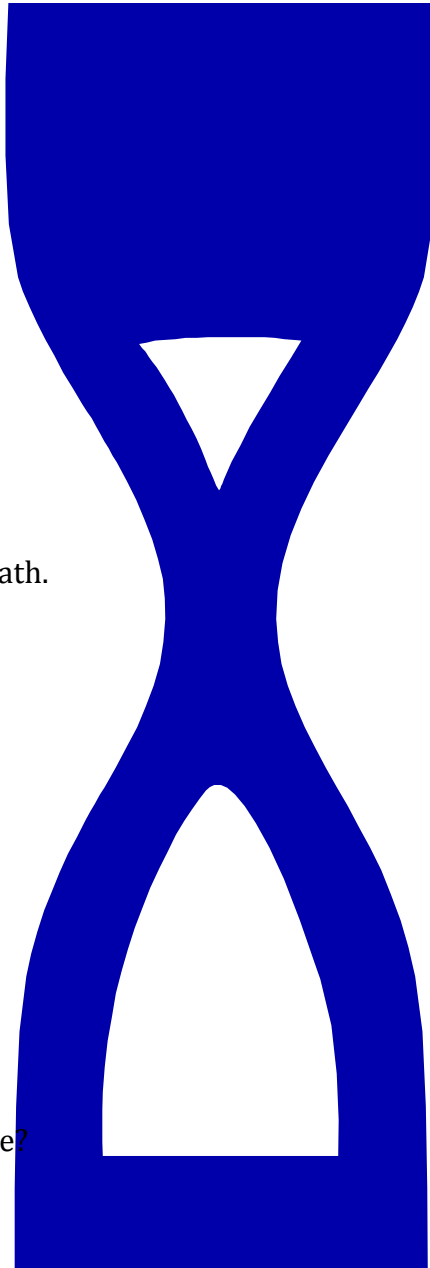
Focusing on the sensations of the breath flowing in and out of the body.

Directly experiencing the body breathing *this* breath.
The breath as an anchor.

Step Three

Expanding the focus of attention to experience the whole body here, in this place.

- Sensations of contact with the ground, the chair?
- The complete body from the top of your head to the tips of your toes ?
- Expression on your face?
- Sense of the space the body takes up?
- Sense of space around the body in this place?



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

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 3

1. Do the MINDFUL MOVEMENT track (8 mins) followed by the breath and body practice (track 1, 8 mins)

The point of movement is to provide a direct way to connect with the body. The body is a place where the emotions often get expressed, under the surface and without our awareness. Thoughts and emotions also affect our bodies. Working with our bodies directly gives us a place to experience more of ourselves, and to connect our experience of body, feelings and thoughts.

The movements activate the body and mind, provide a direct way to connect with awareness of the body, and can dispel tiredness.

If you have any back problems or other health issues that may cause difficulties, make your own decision as to which (if any) of these exercises to do, taking good care of your body. You can make a mindfulness practice out of any movements you do, by bringing full attention to them.

2. THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE Practice using the 3 step breathing space twice a day for around 3 minutes each time; do this at times you have decided in advance.

3. HABIT RELEASER – Choosing an everyday activity that you do routinely in a particular way and choosing a way to do this differently. This may be how you travel to work or what you watch on TV or where you sit, the radio channel you listen to. This is not about choosing a difficult habit in your life to resolve but about practising *doing ordinary things out of automatic pilot*, with awareness. We are practising waking up to our lives.

4. Choose another everyday activity to do mindfully.

HOME PRACTICE RECORD FORM

SESSION THREE DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

Exploring Further

Mindful Walking

One simple way of bringing awareness into your daily life is to practice walking meditation. This simply means bringing your attention to the actual experience of walking as you are doing it - walking and experiencing your body walking.

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

Begin by placing your attention and becoming fully aware as the weight shifts on to one foot,the other foot lifts and moves aheadand then comes down to make contact with the ground.

As with all the other practices we have been exploring, when the mind wanders away from the feet or the legs or the feeling of the body walking, simply bring attention back to the sensations of walking

To encourage deeper concentration, keep your gaze focused in front of you, and, although it may be tempting try not to look at your feet..... They know how to walk quite well on their own.

It is an internal observation that is being cultivated, just the feel sensations of walking, nothing more.

When we practice walking meditation, we are not trying to get anywhere. It is sufficient just to be with each step, realising that you are just where you are. The intention is to be there completely.

You can practice mindful walking at any pace. We sometimes do it very slowly, so that one step might take a minute. This allows you to really be with each movement from moment to moment. Walking very slowly can, however, really challenge our balance so we may choose a more natural pace. You can practice being aware even when moving quickly - you will find that you won't be able to be with each step so easily, but you can shift your awareness instead to a sense of your body as a whole moving through space. So even rushing or running for a bus, you can choose to be mindful.

Always We Hope

Always we hope
someone else has the answer,
some other place will be better,
some other time it will all turn out.

This is it.
No one else has the answer.
No other place will be better,
and it has already turned out.

At the centre of your being
you have the answer;
you know who you are
and you know what you want.

There is no need
to run outside
for better seeing.

Nor peer from a window.

Rather abide at the centre of your being;
for the more you leave it, the less you learn.
Search your heart
and see
the way to do
is to be.
-Lao Tzu

Enough

Enough. These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.

This opening to the life
We have refused
again and again
until now.

Until now
-David Whyte, Where Many Rivers Meet.

Lost

Stand still. The trees ahead and the bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you,
If you leave it you may come back again, saying Here.

No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

An old Native American elder story rendered into English by David Wagoner, in David Whyte, The Heart Aroused – Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate American, Currency Doubleday, New York, 1996, p.259

SESSION 4

Stress Reactions – Thoughts are not facts

“Meditation ... is about stopping and being present, that is all.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, 'Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life', Piatkus: London,

Life will inevitably bring a range of experiences, some welcome and some problematic or stressful. How we perceive and subsequently handle our experiences makes significant difference to the impact they have on our lives. Becoming more aware of the thoughts, feelings and body sensations evoked by events gives us the possibility of freeing ourselves from habitual, automatic ways of reacting, so that we can instead mindfully respond in more skilful ways.

This week we are focusing especially on the experience of our thoughts, seeing this aspect of our experience more clearly and finding new ways to respond to thoughts that arise, often habitually.

As you read the next four lines pause and notice the story that the mind tells.

John was on his way to school

He was worried about the Maths lesson

He wasn't sure that he could control the class again today

After all it isn't the caretaker's job.

What did you notice? Many people find that the mind “guesses”, based on the information given, who John is. As more information is added then the mind has to adjust this assumption. Maybe you found that John began as a young, carefree boy, aging to an older worried child and then an adult who changed again because of our understanding of his job?

This exercise really points out that our mind receives information and then immediately interprets this swiftly and out of our awareness generally.

We receive and make sense of the huge volume of our experiences constantly. As we do so we don't take in all the information equally but rather select information based on our past experiences and the way that we tend to see the world. We pick up on some things and miss others. It's like we are wearing lenses that filter our experiences. The beliefs we hold will mean that we are more alert to some pieces of information than others. We generally look for details to confirm our beliefs, reassured to find evidence to prove that our beliefs are *true*.

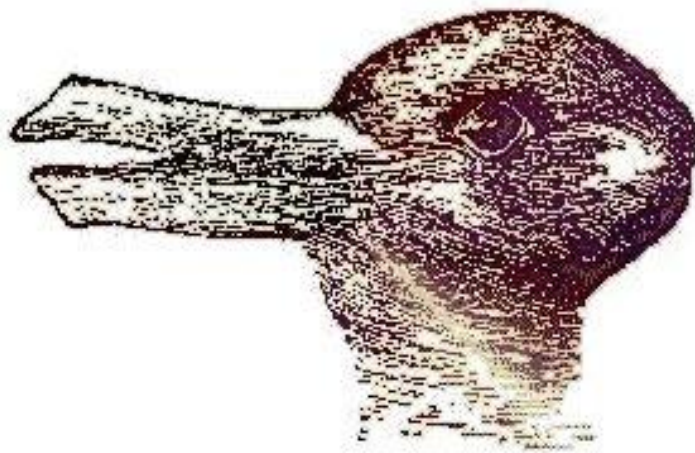
Reports given by witnesses to crimes vary hugely and even fundamental details may have been perceived radically differently by different people that saw the same event.

When we look at ourselves in a mirror we often focus in on the feature we least like in ourselves, not noticing the qualities we like!

So, we receive information about our experiences through this perceptive lens, but then this information is also **interpreted** so that we can make sense of it. And as we saw in the exercise above, our mind will add details as our mind actively seeks meaning.

As you look at the following images you may like to particularly pay attention to the mind's activity as meaning is created.

What do you see? As you look again what else do you see?



This is a normal human process that affects us all.

As the mind fills in the gaps it draws on our past experience and our core beliefs about ourselves and life. Because the information that we're drawing on is so familiar it is likely that the story that our mind creates will be very believable to us, it will make sense and seem to fit the information we have. This makes it much less likely that we will question our assumptions. We can find ourselves acting on these assumptions as if they are proven, indisputable facts.

Adding Fuel to the Fire?

Whilst our mind is trying to help by making sense of our experience it may be inaccurate and out of date in the assumptions it makes, misleading us. When we believe our thoughts and they have some emotional power we can find ourselves acting on these before we have questioned their reliability.

The colleague who continues walking away down a corridor without returning our greeting may lead us to self-doubt "what have I done?" "are they angry/upset with me?" and retreat from them or maybe anger and hostility "how dare they!" "how rude of them!" "I'm not going to let them treat me like that" and subsequently leading to an argument or perhaps concern, "oh dear. I wonder what's wrong? I must speak to them and see if there is something I can do to help" and resulting in us approaching depending on our interpretation.

This interconnection with thought, mood and impulse or action can even, in the right circumstances, create a downward spiral in our mood and all the bodily sensations associated with that. If we are unwell or upset by something this too can influence our interpretation and the subsequent spiral of thoughts, emotions, body sensations and behaviours.

Our interpretations may of course be accurate but frequently we find them to be partly, if not wholly, inaccurate. Without awareness these misperceptions or habitual biases still impact us. In this scenario she just wasn't wearing her contact lenses so couldn't actually see you.

So we see that our thoughts, despite their intention to help us, can unwittingly add to the distress we feel by trying to think a situation through and make sense of it. In a process that most of us are familiar with as we lie awake in the middle of the night, we frequently replay thoughts about experiences, concerns or worries over and over looking for a solution. This process is called **rumination**. We may even feel a strong sense of purpose associated with rumination as our minds use problem solving skills that may be appropriate for practical tasks like fixing a flat tyre but unhelpful with emotional concerns.

These mental processes of making sense and reviewing concerning situations are generally automatic, habitual reactions happening **out of our awareness**. **Mindfulness** can give us the skills to see the workings of our mind more clearly, becoming really familiar with our habitual patterns. It can help us to find a steady place from which we can *pause and turn towards* our unfolding experience *to see it as it actually is in this moment* and as clearly as is possible for us in that moment. We begin to have the possibility of seeing that these believable thoughts that sometimes come interwoven with very strong emotions may be habitual reactions that occur in our minds and **maybe** don't tell us the truth. **We have the possibility of seeing that our thoughts are just mental experiences, not facts. We can pause and decide whether to believe themor not.**

We are not our thoughts. We can acknowledge the thoughts we're having and then choose to attend to something else instead, rather than feeding the process. We can, for example, take our attention to our breath for a time and use the breath to anchor our awareness in our body. This can bring us back to present moment, here-and-now reality.

As we become more familiar with our thinking process we can come to see that we have "favourite" subjects and ways that we see things. Some common thinking patterns are listed below:

- **Mind-reading: "I know he thinks I'm stupid / boring / unattractive."**
- **Crystal-ball gazing: "I'm not going to enjoy this."**
- **Over-estimating the negative: "This is going to be a total disaster."**
- **Eternalising: "I'll always feel like this" "this will go on for ever".**
- **Expecting perfection: "I / people shouldn't ever make mistakes."**
- **Over-generalising: "I can't get anything right."**
- **Judgementalism: "I did that really badly", "I'm so stupid."**
- **Taking the blame: "What did I do to make them so angry?"**

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 4

Practice Breath and Body track 4 followed by Sounds and thoughts track 5
Once each day

3 step breathing space twice each day

Choose a new Mindful activity

.b your buddy

Habit releaser

Exploring further

Relating to Thoughts

Peter, who'd had a heart attack and wanted to prevent another one, came to a dramatic realisation of this one night when he found himself washing his car at 10 o'clock at night with the floodlights on in the driveway. It struck him that he didn't have to be doing this. It was just the inevitable result of a whole day spent trying to fit everything in that he thought needed doing today. As he saw what he was doing to himself he also saw that he had been unable to question the truth of his original conviction that everything had to get done today, because he was already so completely caught up in believing it.

If you find yourself behaving in similar ways, it is likely that you will also feel driven, tense and anxious without even knowing why, just as Peter did. So if the thought of how much you have to get done today comes up while you are meditating, you will have to be very attentive to it as a thought or you may be up and doing things before you know it without any awareness that you decided to stop sitting simply because a thought came into your mind.

On the other hand, when such a thought comes up, if you are able to step back from it and see it clearly, then you will be able to prioritise things and make sensible decisions about what really does need doing. You will know when to call it quits during the day. So the simple act of recognising your thoughts as thoughts can free you from the distorted reality they often create and allow for clearer sightedness and a greater sense of manageability in your life.

The liberation from the tyranny of the thinking mind comes directly out of the meditation practice itself. When we spend some time each day in a state of non doing, observing the flow of the breath and the activity of our mind and body, without getting caught up in that activity, we are cultivating calmness and mindfulness hand in hand. As the mind develops stability and is less caught up in the content of thinking, we strengthen the mind's ability to concentrate and to be calm. And if each time we recognise a thought as a thought when it arises and register its content and discern the strength of its hold on us and the accuracy of its content, then we let go of it and come back to our breathing and a sense of our body, we are strengthening mindfulness. We come to know ourselves better and become more accepting of ourselves not as we would like to be but as we actually are.

Extract from Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living

Take a few moments right now to look directly at the thoughts arising in your mind. As an exercise, imagine yourself sitting in a cinema watching an empty screen. Simply wait for thoughts to arise. Because you are not doing anything except waiting for thoughts to appear, you may become aware of them very quickly. What exactly are they? What

happens to them? Thoughts are like magic displays that seem real when we are lost in them but vanish upon inspection.

But what about the strong thoughts that affect us? We are watching, watching, watching and then all of a sudden whoosh! we are gone, lost in a thought. What is it about? What are the mind states or the particular kinds of thoughts that catch us again and again, so that we forget that they are just empty phenomena passing on?

It is amazing to observe how much power we give unknowingly to uninvited thoughts: 'Do this, say that, remember, plan, obsess, judge.' They have the potential to drive us crazy, and they often do!

The kinds of thoughts we have and their impact on our lives, depends on our understanding of things. If we are in the clear, powerful space of just seeing thoughts arise and pass, then it does not really matter what kind of thinking appears in the mind; we can see our thoughts as the passing show they are.

From thoughts come actions. From actions come all sorts of consequences. In which thoughts will we invest? Our great task is to come to see them clearly, so that we can choose which ones to act on and which to simply let be.

Joseph Goldstein

As we practice we are not trying to stop our thoughts or even to change them for other thoughts. As we have noticed through mindfulness practice our mind will think, just as our hearts beat. Trying to change our thoughts can just create more thoughts that compete with each other. Mindfulness allows us to find steady ground to view these mental processes.

From this firm base we can let thought pass by like trains at a station. We can choose to get on the train or remain on the platform, allowing the thoughts to leave. We will certainly find ourselves caught by some thoughts, carried away by them some distance maybe.....



...but as we notice this we can then choose to get off that train of thoughts, reconnecting with our body and breath in the present moment.

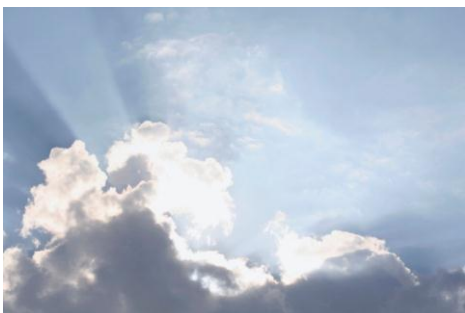
Thinking is also sometimes compared with:



Watching a film or play on the screen or stage – what are the stories and characters that our thoughts create? What is the mood or energy of the story, fast paced or slowly unfolding?



A river or stream flowing past – how fast or slowly is the river flowing?



Clouds passing through the open blue sky of the mind – are the thoughts here now like light fluffy clouds scudding through the mind's sky or dark thundery clouds that take up the whole sky?

These analogies allow us to *de-centre* from our thoughts and begin to explore them and see them more clearly as experiences that arise for us - just like sounds. They may be strong, pull for our attention, engage us in their content, limit our view of the whole picture but as we watch them and their impact on us we see they are *not us*.

With practice we can choose to engage with them, or not, to a large degree. We can even become friendly with our thought patterns and habits, “of course this thought is going to appear in these circumstances!” offering ourselves kindness and support if we are having thoughts that are painful or frightening.

HALFWAY REVIEW

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

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

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

Take some time to reflect on:

- **What am I learning through this process?**

- **What do I need to do over the next 4 weeks to get the most out of the rest of the course?**

SESSION 5

STRESS - Reaction or Response?

Managing Difficulty in Our Lives

As we have been exploring together so far, mindfulness offers us a way of seeing our experience clearly, as it is in this moment. This can really help us to connect to aspects of experience such as, perhaps, tasting delicious food, sharing a hug with our children or watching a beautiful sunset. We can actually feel, see and hear the park, the beach or the mountains as we walk, allowing us to appreciate and sense a connection with the world we live in. We are opening ourselves up to the experiences that already exist in our lives.

But how appropriate is this when the circumstances of our lives are not enjoyable, maybe actively challenging or how we want them to be?

It is human nature to react strongly or have quite intense reactions to experiences that are perceived as unpleasant. For example, when we feel discomfort or pain (both physically and emotionally), and we may well want things to be different from how they currently are. Of course, if it is easy to resolve the difficulties that occur in our lives, this is what we will do. It is natural to want to change, move away or escape from both the circumstances and the physical sensations or emotions that cause us to suffer. But with many challenging situations, it's not always that straightforward. Often there is no easy solution, and even when we have tried everything, the unwanted situation remains.

So how can mindfulness be relevant when we find ourselves "at the edge"? After all, it invites us to turn toward the challenging circumstances in our life and investigate them closely. Surely that would make things feel much worse? Surprisingly, we find that this is not the case.

It can be helpful here to make a comparison with the weather. The weather has many different "moods" and changes continually – in some parts of the world more than others! Some days the wind blows a gale, the rain lashes down and it's freezing cold, while other days are warm, sunny, still and calm. This is just how it is. Even though we may not like it sometimes, we do understand that this is how the weather behaves – we can't control it or even reliably predict it; we just have to adapt and respond to whatever conditions it brings.

You may find it interesting to ask yourself whether you see your life and your experience in this way. Are you as accepting of the fact that the circumstances of your life will vary? Is it equally OK that life will sometimes be stormy and challenging and at other times be calm and peaceful?

Have you understood that whatever your current circumstances are, they *will change* and that nothing lasts forever? Often we have a belief – or maybe just a hope – that our lives can and should be perpetually sunny and calm, without any experiences to challenge us. If we believe this, then it follows that we might be trying to achieve this steady, pleasant state and therefore feel very dissatisfied if things do not turn out that way.

It is normal to want to hold on to the lovely moments in life and to avoid, escape or fix the difficult ones. But although this is expected and understandable, all this effort it may not be able to get us what we would really like. Unless we choose to move to a part of the world where we can guarantee different weather, mostly we just need to find appropriate ways to adapt to the weather we find in our lives.

from Mindfulness Breakthrough, Sarah Silverton

Like = opening, softening, wanting more of

Don't like = tightening, closing, resisting, getting rid of or away from

Disinterested = tuning out from

Difficult things in our lives may have many guises and a wide variety of origins. They may be our own frightening thoughts about what may happen, ill health or pain in ourselves or those we love, financial worries, overload in our work, challenging people to give just a few possibilities.. All these things have in common a perception, through our mind and body, that this is experience is unwelcome and even threatening to us.

In primitive times most things we saw as threats needed fast physical reactions as the causes were present moment. With your life threatened by a wild animal for instance, your options were to attack, to run away or hide. In order to keep us safe our bodies react *automatically* and *immediately* to help us to do this. This happens with the help of what is called the sympathetic nervous system, which releases the hormones adrenalin and cortisol to prepare us for action.

Importantly, our body will react in the same ancient and programmed way whether the threat is:

- *External*, like a car swerving towards us.
- *Internal*, such as worrying thoughts about asking our neighbours to make less noise and possible consequences of this.
- *Here right now, an unpleasant memory or something that might happen in the future*

Physical Reactions to Stress

These are some of the ways you might experience the stress reaction in your body:

- Muscle tension or tightness in the throat, neck, jaw and upper back.
- Shoulders raised and legs braced so that you are ready to run or fight.
- Raised heart rate and blood pressure taking blood to your muscles.
- Getting sweaty so that you are slippery and therefore more difficult to catch!
- Churning or “butterflies” in the stomach as blood is taken away from your digestive system to power your muscles (because it is more important to run in that moment than to digest food).
- The urge to empty your bladder or bowels as this will make you lighter and therefore able to run faster.
- Your brain is on high alert, constantly scanning for further threats. Your mind is making rapid comparisons with similar previous experience to help you judge what is best to do.

In more primitive times, after we had responded to a threat by either attacking or running away, the adrenalin and cortisol would have been used up. This would have then triggered the parasympathetic nervous system, which releases different hormones – oxytocin and vasopressin – to calm our minds and bodies and bring us back into balance by:

- Relaxing the muscles.
- Slowing the heart rate and lowering blood pressure.
- Increasing blood flow to the stomach to enable the digestion of food again.
- Relaxing the brain, allowing it to think about things other than danger.

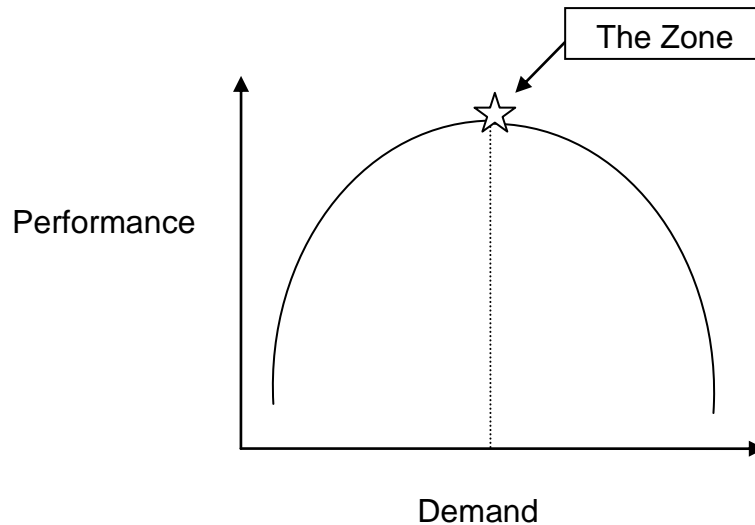
Animals on the savannah return to graze moments after escaping a wild cat. However, in our twenty-first-century world, stresses are often not physical threats. Whilst our adrenalin reaction is still entirely relevant when we are nearly run over or as we save ourselves from falling down the stairs, they are more likely to arise from troubling thoughts and feelings about ourselves, our relationships and our lives. These threats

may even be predictions or imagined, rather than actually here in the present moment.

The result of this is that we do not often get the chance to move into the natural physical actions of flight or fight. It is unlikely, and maybe inadvisable, when we have a disagreement at work that we shout at or fight with our boss or run out of the office! This means that we do not use up the stress hormones in our bodies. They continue to circulate, keeping us on high alert, and the calming parasympathetic nervous system is not activated. This leads to constant and sometimes chronic hyper-arousal of the sympathetic nervous system, which can in turn lead to problems for us such as:

- Fatigue or tiredness
- Sleep problems
- Headaches
- Backaches
- High blood pressure
- Anxiety or panic attacks

Of course, we need some challenge and stimulation in our lives, and there are many *positive stresses* (such as getting promotion or getting married). Boredom, too, can be very stressful for us. If our work is too *undemanding*, or we are at home recovering from a health problem, are unemployed or have retired from work, we can suffer from the stress of being under-stimulated, not having enough to do and with too much time on our hands.



Our mind's ability to think about our experiences, both past and future through perceiving, interpreting, analysing, making sense of things, means that we often give our thoughts more credence than our direct experience. Our mind finds it very difficult to 'not know' and will fill in the gaps very quickly. It is clear that in this way our thoughts can be a significant form of stress in our lives. We may have worrying about what *might* happen, convinced that our interpretation and frightening predictions are true. And these imagined threats feel just as real as a physical threat that is already here. In this way our thinking could potentially keep us feeling under threat and therefore almost permanently in fight or flight mode.

As you learn to be mindful you can begin to choose in each moment where to place your attention. This gives you the opportunity to step back and see clearly, in this moment, how certain physical sensations – feeling hot and tense perhaps – along with anxious emotions and frightening thoughts *interact and unfold*. You can choose to pause, step out of your reactivity and *respond* to this experience of stress instead. As you do this you are *approaching* rather than *avoiding*, as you gently bring curiosity to what's here (even if that is frightening). There are many stresses in our lives that we cannot change, but we can let go of stressing *about* them.

- Do you recognise the ways that you tend to deal with stress?
- Can you see fight, flight and freeze in your own reactions to stresses in your life?
- What do these reactions feel like?

- How effective are these reactions in the short- and long-term in dealing with your stress?
- Are there ways that you can recognise that you add to the stress in your life through your patterns of reacting?

Many of our coping strategies for managing stress although intending to relieve our levels of stress may at best only have short-term benefits although many will add to our stress in the long-term. Strategies such as use of food, alcohol or drugs to soothe us; avoiding experiences that may cause us stress; keeping ourselves busy and distracted so that we keep our worries at bay, may well create added stress.

Mindfulness allows us to learn to pause and respond wisely to both the causes of our stress and its impact on our body and mind, rather than reacting automatically and out of entrenched habits.

Adapted from the chapter by Vanessa Hope from The Mindfulness Breakthrough.

Physical Reactions to Stress

"Psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his/her resources and endangering his/her well-being."

-R. Lazarus, Stress Appraisal and Coping

The Body under threat

Hypothalamus - situated at the base of the brain becomes activated & as a result the adrenal glands produce adrenalin. This chain of events results

Light-headed/dizzy- due to reduced blood flow to the head as muscles in the arms and legs might ache.

Dry Mouth- Salivary glands stop secreting saliva

Breathing- speeds up to supply more oxygen to the muscles

Legs & Arms- blood flow increases to muscles, creating tension in the arms & legs to prepare the body to run away or fight

Digestion- slows down as eating is not a priority at these moments. This can result in sensations such as 'butterflies' or churning in the abdomen. Nausea & stomach pain are also common

Urination & Defecation- these impulses allow the body release unnecessary weight.

Skin -may become pale due to diversion of blood flow to muscles. It may also become sweaty which allows the body to cool and be harder to grasp.

Long-term effects on the Body-Mind

Poor concentration & Memory problems

Difficulty sleeping

Blood Pressure rises

Heart - increased risk of high cholesterol and heart disease.

Immune System - may be impaired with increased likelihood of being susceptible to disease and/or allergic reaction.

Liver- Increases the amount of sugars into the blood. Excess cholesterol may be produced.

Kidneys - work less effectively due to reduced blood supply.

Digestion - conditions such as irritable bowel and ulcers are thought to be related to long term stress.

Pancreas - increased likelihood of diabetes.

Chronic tension in muscles causing muscle and joint pain.

Emotional effects - irritability, anger, nervousness, sadness and increased likelihood of mental health problems such as anxiety disorders and depression.

Problem Solving our Emotional Distress

Another *hard-wired* strategy that humans have at their disposal is to problem solve. Again there are situations when this coping strategy is absolutely appropriate. If we have a flat tyre we will work through the necessary steps to resolve the problem. If we have lost our car keys we will think through where we last had them and search possible places until they are found.

There is a process our mind engages in called *discrepancy monitoring* where the mind perceives the gap between how things are and how we want them to be. These two situations are repeatedly compared to see if the gap is closing, our goal being achieved. This works well for us if we are travelling as we recognise that we are on the right road and, as yet, not at our destination. This allows us to keep our goal in mind and continue to act to achieve it. Without this we would never be able to dress ourselves or cook a meal.

With emotional difficulties, however, this strategy is less helpful. If our mind continually underlines for us that our current emotional state is not as we want, this just reinforces our distress. Our attempts to think through, fix or resolve our emotional difficulty can highlight rather than resolve. We all know this when we're awake in the middle of the night thinking over and over an emotional problem.

It feels like we are working so hard to address this situation but find that, despite our efforts, we never seem to be any nearer our goal of happiness and ease.

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 5

Breath & Body Meditation followed by...

Sounds and Thoughts meditation

Breathing Spaces at least twice a day, developed to include befriending the difficult

- Acknowledging what's present in body and mind [mood, thinking patterns] and naming this as present for instance "busy mind is here", "grumpy mood is here".
- Gathering attention in sensations of breathing in abdomen
- Expanding awareness to whole body and including mind state, difficult thoughts: "It's ok... This too..."

Continue to .b your "buddy" if you choose to

Choose a difference daily activity to do mindfully

SESSION FIVE DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/ informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/ informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this page to write your own notes, if you would like to.

Exploring Further

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE CHAPTERS

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

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

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

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

5) I walk down another street.

-Portia Nelson

*From 'There's A Hole In My Sidewalk: The Romance of Self Discovery', Beyond Words
Publishing Company, 1994*

Another Reason Why I don't Keep a Gun in the House

The neighbour's dog will not stop barking.
He is barking the same high rhythmic bark
that he barks every time they leave the house.
They must switch him on, on their way out.

The neighbour's dog will not stop barking.
I close all the windows in the house
and put on a Beethoven symphony full blast
but I can still hear him muffled under the music,
barking, barking, barking,

and now I can see him sitting in the orchestra,
his head raised confidently as if Beethoven
had included a part for barking dog.

When the record finally ends he is still barking,
sitting there in the oboe section barking,
his eyes fixed on the conductor who is
entreating him with his baton

While the other musicians listen in respectful
silence to the famous barking dog solo,
that endless coda that first established
Beethoven as an innovative genius.

Billy Collins

Peace

Do you think peace requires an end to war

Or tigers eating only vegetables?

Does peace require an absence from your boss, your spouse, yourself?

Do you think peace will come some other place than here?

Some other time than now?

In some other heart than yours?

Peace is this moment without judgement.

This moment in the heart-space where everything that is, is welcome.

Peace is this moment without thinking that it should be some other way

That you should feel some other thing

That your life should unfold according to your plans.

Peace is the moment without judgement.

This moment in the heart-space where everything that is, is welcome.

Dorothy Hunt

I Go Among Trees and Sit Still

I go among trees and sit still.

All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.

My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.

Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.

What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.

It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what I am afraid of comes.

I live for a while in its sight.

What I fear in it leaves it,

and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.
After days of labor,
mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

Wendell Berry from A Timbered Choir – Sabbath poems, 1987, North Point Press

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver, 'Dream Work', Atlantic Monthly Press, NY, 1989

Exploring Further

THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest-house
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture.

Still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

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

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

Coleman Barks with John Moyne:

The Essential Rumi

The Jigsaw Story

All through my childhood, my parents kept a giant jigsaw puzzle set up on a puzzle table in the living room. My father, who started all this, always hid the box top. The idea was to put the pieces together without knowing the picture ahead of time. Different members of the family and visiting friends would work on it, sometimes for only a few minutes at a time until after several weeks hundreds and hundreds of pieces would each find their place.

Over the years, we finished dozens of these puzzles. In the end I got quite good at it and took a certain satisfaction in being the first one to see where the piece went or how two groups of pieces fit together. I especially loved the time when the first hint of pattern would emerge and I could see what had been there, hidden, all along. The puzzle table was my father's birthday present to my mother. I can see him setting it up and gleefully pouring the pieces of that first puzzle from the box onto the tabletop. I was three or four and I did not understand my mother's delight. They hadn't explained this game to me, doubtless thinking I was too young to participate. But I wanted to participate, even then.

Alone in the living room early one morning, I climbed on a chair and spread out the hundreds of pieces lying on the table. The pieces were fairly small; some were brightly coloured and some dark and shadowy. The dark ones seemed like spiders or bugs, ugly and a little frightening. They made me feel uncomfortable. Gathering up a few of these, I climbed down and hid them under one of the sofa cushions. For several weeks, whenever I was alone in the living room, I would climb up on the chair, take a few dark pieces, and add them to the cache under the cushion.

So this first puzzle took the family a very long time to finish. Frustrated, my mother finally counted the pieces and realised that more than a hundred were missing. She asked me if I had seen them. I told her what I had done with the pieces I didn't like and she rescued them and completed the puzzle. I remember watching her do this. As piece after dark piece was put in place and the picture and the picture emerged, I was astounded. I had not known there would be a picture. It was quite beautiful, a peaceful scene of a deserted beach. Without the pieces the game had made no sense.

Extract from "Kitchen Table Wisdom" by Rachel Naomi Remen, Riverhead Books, New York, 1996

The Icy Road

If you imagine you are driving in the winter and you find yourself on a road that you realize is very icy, what would you do? Ignore the information that the road is icy and travel at the same speed as before, regardless? Stop the car and not go any further because of what might happen?

Speed up to get past this dangerous situation as fast as possible?

Alternatively, would you slow down and find out more to assess fully the situation that you find yourself in? Perhaps you would look at the road as far as is visible to see if there are many patches of ice - or just this one? Check the gradient of the road further on? Look at whether the road is wide or narrow, and if there are ditches or wide verges at the sides? Judge the capability of the vehicle you are driving to tackle these conditions on the road? Maybe you would acknowledge your own skills and experience of driving in these conditions?

With this detailed information you could see things clearly as they actually are and choose an appropriate course of action. Maybe it is safe to continue driving if this is just one isolated puddle that has iced over; or you may need to change gear and slow down; maybe fit ice chains to the tyres or perhaps you should turn around and continue by another route.

None of these options require the road to change.

-Adapted from The Mindfulness Breakthrough by Sarah Silverton

"True Mastery can be gained by letting things go their own way. It can't be gained by interfering."

-Tao Te Ching

STRESS : REACTING OR RESPONDING?

***“The overall tenor of mindfulness practice is gentle, appreciative and nurturing.
Another way to think of it would be heartfulness”***

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life

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

The second step is to notice, as best we can, how we are relating to whatever is arising in that place. Often we can notice and be with an arising thought, feeling or bodily sensation but in a judgmental, reactive way.

Actually the easiest way to relax is, as a first step, stop trying to make things different. Accepting experience means simply acknowledging things as they are and allowing space for whatever is going on, rather than trying to create some other state. Through acceptance we settle back into awareness of what is present. We “let it be” – we simply notice and observe with friendly curiosity whatever is already here.

For example, if you notice that your awareness keeps being pulled away from the breath (or other focus of attention) to particular sensations in the body, associated with physical discomfort, emotions or feelings, the first step is to gently bring mindful awareness to those physical sensations, to deliberately but kindly turn the attention towards the difficult experience, to the part of the body where those sensations are strongest.

As the sensations themselves are explored we often also experience our reactions to the difficult experience, perhaps in tightening in parts of our body or maybe in our thoughts – “No!”, “go away!” “ I don’t want to feel like this!”

As a supportive response to these experiences in this moment it may be helpful to say to yourself, “It’s okay. This is okay. It’s fine to feel this.”

The breath can also provide a useful vehicle to do this – just as you practiced in the Body Scan, you can take a gentle and friendly awareness to that part of the body by “breathing into” that part on the in-breath, and “breathing out” from it on the out-breath. Using each out-breath to let go of our reacting or struggle and soften and open to the sensations you become aware of. Holding them gently in this moment – because they are already here.

Acceptance is certainly not giving in, resignation or passivity – acceptance allows us, as a vital first step, to become fully aware of difficult experience, and then, as appropriate, respond in a skilful way, rather than to react, in knee-jerk fashion, by automatically running some of our old (often unhelpful) strategies for dealing with difficulties.

*The easiest way to relax is to stop trying to make things different.
One's struggle is from not accepting what is present.*

As we practice mindfulness we are learning to turn towards our experiences **even if** they are challenging or feel threatening so that we can gain clear, present moment information from which to choose a response. This allows us to pause and step out of automatic and habitual reactions in both our bodies and our thoughts.

Through mindfulness practice, we learn to adopt attitudes of patience and kindness towards ourselves when we are feeling reactive and off-balance. This attitudinal shift can allow us to be less frightened of the experiences of our reactive body (shaking, palpitations, light-headedness, pins and needles) which in themselves can be a source of stress for us. Bringing kindness and curiosity to these experiences can offer us a radically different place to explore our situation.

From this steady place we are able to assess our options with more clarity and wisdom. We may see that these perceived threats arise from our thoughts about what might happen or habitual interpretations of events that are rooted in the past. We can support ourselves at the times when events in the present moment are challenging either physically, socially or emotionally, taking care of ourselves because things are difficult presently.

TAKING A BREATHING SPACE

When you are troubled in thoughts or feelings, the invitation is, as a first step to use the 3 step breathing space:

Awareness of the difficulty

1. Acknowledging

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

Notice, acknowledge and identify what is happening for you.

Kindly opening to what is already here, observing your internal experiences, noticing what is happening in your thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations. It may be helpful to name them to yourself? You may notice specific details or a general tone or texture to the experience.

2. Redirecting attention

Gathering your attention and settling it on to your breathing. Experience fully each in-breath and each out-breath as they follow one after the other, feeling the sensations of breath in your body. If your mind is very busy you may find it helpful to note at the back of your mind: “Breathing in ... Breathing out ...” as you experience the breath, or to count the breaths, to encourage the mind to settle and focus. Allowing the breath to act as an anchor to bring you into the present moment. Just this breath.

3. Expanding awareness

Expand your awareness around the breathing to the whole body, and the space it takes up, as if the whole body is breathing. Maybe choosing to take the breath to any discomfort, tension or resistance you experience, ‘breathing into’ the sensations of these. Opening and softening and letting go of our reactivity with the out breath. You may also find it helpful and supportive to say to yourself: “it’s okay to feel whatever I’m feeling”. Sensing the space around you in the room, too. Hold everything in gently in awareness.

As best you can, bringing this expanded awareness into the next moments of your day. Holding any difficult experiences in wider awareness from a steadier place.

This use of the breathing space gives a way to step out of ‘automatic pilot’ mode when dealing with difficulties, and to reconnect with the present moment and our own inner wisdom. It is important to remember that we are not trying to resolve or fix our difficulties as we use the breathing space.

SESSION 6

Mindful Communication



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

-Gregory Kramer: 'Insight Dialogue: The interpersonal path to freedom'

Relationships – whether with family, friends or people we work with – can be among life's most consistently challenging experiences; yet the majority of us would say that relationships are the most important aspects of our lives.

Relating to other people mindfully can be the most challenging and the most rewarding of practices. If both people bring mindfulness to their communications it can result in extraordinary possibilities for clarity and connection. Even if only one person in the relationship is being mindful, this too will influence the situation.

Humans are biologically designed to form connections with their fellow beings. There are physical processes and structures within the brain and body, which exist in order to develop and maintain powerful links with others; and not just with people we are close to – even with those we don't know. We are designed to be with other people. The unspoken sense of connection is something all of us experience, and it is the basis of all our relationships. You may have already found that feeling connected with others was an important aspect of your pleasant experiences from Session Two?

Bringing Mindfulness to our Relationships

Relationships are a place where our habits or patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviours tend to show up clearly. As we go through life, many of our patterns of relating remain unexamined, are habitual and automatic.

As we have been discovering through the course, mindfulness is a way of bringing awareness to our automatic patterns. This sounds simple – and in many ways it is – but, as you may well have been finding through your mindfulness practice, simple is not necessarily easy. We may find ourselves very fixed in our automatic ways of behaving and seeing situations. In addition to this, the people around us – our partners, family and work colleagues – have become used to the way that we are. They may be strongly attached to us staying just the same so that we don't challenge *their* patterns of behaving and the way they see situations. Often it is difficult to step “outside the box” and see the whole pattern. Stepping out of familiar patterns can be very challenging.

Discovering our own Patterns

-Mindfulness allows us to see our own patterns clearly.

- Maybe you notice that you tend to avoid being close to others?

-Maybe you notice that when things get difficult you prefer to be in charge, to control the situation?

-Maybe you feel that you are repeatedly “knocked off your feet” when something goes wrong in your relationships?

-Or maybe you notice being fearful about being on your own or not having the support of other people?

Using the mindful awareness of body sensations, emotions, and thoughts that we have learnt, we can begin to notice our experience and see what is our particular pattern or lens.

As you complete the Stressful Communications Diary for the home practice this week, you may notice the experiences in your body, thoughts that arise and the emotional tone during and after the communication. You might begin to see that stressful communications can trigger chains of thoughts and emotions and these can go on long after the event itself is over, often fuelling the conflict or sense of injustice. Our thoughts may also bring to mind memories of all the other times that this person has been difficult to deal with – perhaps over many years. This person may also be just like

someone else who has caused us problems in the past. We are rarely just relating *in this moment*. Changing our **way of relating to those around us, therefore, takes time and patience and a** willingness to see clearly

Mindfulness allows us to see things more clearly. When our minds are not cluttered with old habits and assumptions about ourselves and the people we are with, we are able to be fully open to the relationship we have right now in this present moment, with all its rich mixture of ease and difficulty.

Our relationships, even when they are challenging, can be a wonderful opportunity to practice mindfulness within our lives.

Mindful Communication

So often when we are listening to others with the intention of being helpful, our mind is somewhere else – for example, - what we have to fit into the rest of our day; what we would do in their situation, and so on. It is surprisingly difficult to just listen, to be aware of the other person and what they are saying, in each moment. - *In this moment I am with this particular person and listening to them saying these words.*

As you listen to others you may notice thoughts arising. We can find ourselves judging, making assumptions, hearing what they are saying from our own perspective and experience rather than from theirs. We may even be feeling the desire to *solve* their problem, sure that we know absolutely what they should do. When this occurs we are no longer listening to them and trying to understand them.

Practising Mindfulness in Our Relationships

Skilful communication is about listening and taking the other person's viewpoint into consideration, but also about speaking. There will be times when it is important for us to speak about our own opinions, needs and wants.

When you need to bring mindful awareness to a difficult communication

Choosing to take a Three-Step Breathing Space as a first step

Choosing to pause and bring awareness to your own experience in this moment. What are the thoughts, emotions, sensations in your body in this moment.

Opening your awareness to include the other person too – the pattern you are both part of. As you do this, maintaining, as best you can, a kindly curiosity towards yourself, the other person and the situation.

When you are face to face with someone, broadening your focus to your own experiences – particularly the breath or feeling your feet in contact with the ground – as well as giving attention to the other person.

When speaking give yourself time to be clear about what you are thinking and feeling. From this awareness deciding what you want to say, taking time so that you can respond to the situation as it unfolds rather than reacting habitually. Speak about your own experience of the situation rather than what the other person has done. Remember that you can choose what you say and what you don't say.

Adapted from 'Mindfulness in Relationships' by Eluned Gold chapter in 'The Mindfulness Breakthrough' by Sarah Silverton

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 6

Work with different combinations of the three main practices that we have been learning – BODY SCAN, MINDFUL MOVEMENT AND SITTING MEDITATION. (Breath & Body, Sounds & Thoughts). You could experiment with different practices on different days; different times of the day; splitting the practice into two shorter sessions; bringing different practices into the same session and perhaps working at times in silence without a recording.

THREE MINUTE BREATHING: REGULAR – practice three times a day. Either practice it when you think of it or connect it to 3 regular activities you do or places you are everyday (e.g. on waking up and/or going to bed, before a program you regularly watch, before eating, after washing your hands, on first sitting down in your car or on the bus or at your desk).

THREE MINUTE BREATHING: COPING – practice whenever you notice yourself starting to feel stressed and explore options of responding with greater mindfulness and in a more friendly way to yourself and the situation.

Notice your communications through the week and complete the Stressful Communications diary . Do you notice any habits or patterns of communication?

STRESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS DIARY (page 1 of 2)

Be aware of a stressful communication at the time it is happening. Use these questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down as soon as possible afterwards.

Briefly describe the communication:	What emotions were present for you?	What thoughts, images, memories were around for you?	What was happening in your body?	What were your reactions and behaviours to the other person and yourself?	What is here for you as you write this?
MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					

Briefly describe the communication:	What emotions were present for you?	What thoughts, images, memories were around for you?	What was happening in your body?	What were your reactions and behaviours to the other person and yourself?	What is here for you as you write this?
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					
SUNDAY					

Adapted From the Stress Reduction Workbook, University of Massachusetts Medical School

SESSION SIX DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/ informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

Exploring Further

Serenity is not freedom from the storm but peace within the storm. What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our sense of who we are and how we relate to others develops as the people around us in our early years tune in (or “attune”) to us and help us to make sense of ourselves and our experiences. Attunement is a two-way process. As babies we do not passively receive attunement – we actively invite it and participate in maintaining it with the adults around us. From this early age and throughout our lives we play an active part in developing and maintaining the patterns of our own relationships. Early relationships create a “map” for us as we grow up, shaping the ways that we learn to relate to ourselves and others. The following story illustrates this :

On one occasion when travelling by train I had experienced a very frustrating journey, rushing for trains that were then delayed., long waits on draughty platforms etc. My last train finally arrives and as I stepped into the carriage, I noticed on the seat opposite me a family; father, mother and baby girl about 12 months old, sitting on her Father’s lap. As I sat down the baby caught my eye and smiled at me as babies of that age often do. I smiled back and sat down and started to look around the carriage; she held my gaze and gave me a great big grin. She was irresistible, I had to grin back and as I did so I felt my body relax and open and the tension I had been holding drained away. I recognised that in that moment I felt happy. I looked at the baby’s Mum and Dad and we all smiled at one another. Her work done with me the baby then moved her attention to somebody else in the carriage, and did the same routine with them; and that person looked at the Mum and Dad and also at me and we all smiled. This young baby went on to work her magic until everybody in that carriage was connected. No-one had spoken, yet a sense of connection was clearly there in us all. This unspoken sense of connection is something most of us will have experienced at some time. So how can it be that relationships also seem to present us with such difficulties and feelings of disconnection?

Adapted from Mindfulness in relationships Eluned Gold in The Mindfulness Breakthrough

THE MOUNTAIN MEDITATION



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

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

As we practice the mountain meditation we are exploring our own *mountainness*. Seeing how the image of this magnificent mountain is felt in your own body as you sit. Your head may become the lofty peak; your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain; your buttocks and legs the solid base rooted to your cushion on the floor or as you sit on your chair. You may feel your own sense of connection and being rooted as you sit in this place, steady and balanced. You may experience your tallness and dignity as your body rises upwards towards the sky from this steady base.

Maybe you can explore any emotions you are feeling, the tone of your mood or the flow of your thoughts, as if they are the weather around the mountain. Is your weather right now sunny and calm, or stormy with lashing rain, is it icy or warm? Exploring your own internal weather, noticing if it changes as you sit, maybe intensifying at times, and easing at others through the meditation practice.

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

Calmness abiding all change.

-Adapted from: Jon Kabat-Zinn, 'Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday life'

*You might also like to visit You Tube and watch "Bodhisattva in Metro"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKnY8tBLG3g>*

SESSION 7

How can I best look after myself? – Life Style Choices



*'You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf,'
Jon Kabat-Zinn*

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

You might like to try asking yourself these questions:

1. Of the things that I do and take in, what **nourishes** me? What energises me, makes me feel calm, centred and whole? What increases my sense of actually being alive and present, rather than merely existing? (**N** activities)
2. Of the things that I do and take in, what **depletes** me? What pulls me down, drains my energy, makes me feel tense and fragmented? What decreases my sense of actually being alive and present, what makes me feel I am merely existing, or worse? (**D'** activities)

As we explore this we often find that sometimes the things we do are themselves the cause of the sense of being nourished or depleted. Being with someone we love and loves us will for most people be a nourishing activity. Paying bills or completing tax returns might commonly be experienced as depleting. But we may also see that

sometimes it isn't the activities themselves but how we approach them or meet them in our lives that makes them nourishing or depleting. Listening to music we enjoy while we do household chores, for instance, can significantly influence how we feel about the task rather than resisting or resenting.

Accepting that there are some aspects of my life that I simply cannot change, we can consciously choose to increase the time and space to the things that we find nurture us, and find ways to decrease the number of things we do that deplete us or find ways to reduce their impact on us through our attitude or behaviour.

Maybe we could even practise being fully present with depleting activities, even if they are boring or unpleasant – to bring the same curiosity and attention to them that you did to the raisin, instead of judging them or wishing that they were not there?

By being present in more of our moments this can inform the decisions about what we need at each of those moments, and we can make wise choices about our activities, and what we take in, tailoring them to our present moment experience, be more alert and responsive within our lives.

This is applicable to all of the activities in our daily lives but also, importantly, to times of difficulty. Through mindful awareness we can discover and cultivate activities that nourish us, including them deliberately and skilfully to support ourselves and cope with periods of challenge. We can also notice and let go of unnecessary depleting activities at these times. If we practise doing this, these skills may well be more readily available to us in the face of difficulty.

There is reliable evidence that one way to take care of our physical and mental well-being is regular physical exercise. This might be walking, mindful movement, yoga, qigong, swimming, jogging, dancing, or whatever of the many forms of exercise is wise for your body. Choosing activities that can be woven into your life on a regular basis may make them more readily available as a way of responding to both external and internal difficulties as they arise.

We may discover many, many ways that we can include activities in our lives that nourish us and these will be specific to each of us as individuals. For some taking photographs of wild landscapes may feel extremely rewarding and for others having a warm bubble bath or spending time with a close friend. It may involve action or a change in our attitude to the activities we engage in. Listening to music we enjoy as we carry out routine, boring tasks or letting go of a driven, goal orientation as we exercise and feeling the experience itself instead may transform our experience of these activities.

With mindful awareness we can also consciously choose to let go of our habitual behaviours that deplete us. We can feel the pull of these habits, notice our experience as

we do these depleting activities and have a clearer sense of the impact of them on our minds and bodies in the short and longer-term.

Even small changes in our behaviour can make big differences to how we feel. The jet plane that changes course by one or two degrees will arrive in a very different destination.



With mindful awareness we can balance the activities that **“weigh us down”** with those that **“lift us”**

Work - Life Balance?



How can we care for ourselves in all aspects of our lives? How can we take even the smallest opportunities to nourish ourselves and let go of draining activities and habits of mind and action where this is possible?

USING THE BREATHING SPACE: THE ACTION STEP

The Breathing Space provides a way to remind us to use activity to respond to difficult experiences as they arise.

A Breathing Space can allow us to see our experience clearly and - from this awareness - choose to take **ACTION to respond mindfully**.

For instance you might choose to do something **pleasurable** or something that will give you a sense of **satisfaction** or achievement. Or you might do whatever you are doing with mindful awareness

As you take the breathing space asking yourself:

What do I need for myself right now?
How can I best take care of myself in this moment?

You could try some of the suggestions on the following pages:

Something Pleasurable

Be Kind to Your Body

Have a nice hot bath; have a nap; treat yourself to some of your favourite food without feeling guilty; have your favourite hot drink.

Engage in Enjoyable Activities

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

Noticing any barriers to pleasure

Be aware of any 'killjoy thoughts' that tell you won't enjoy a pleasure you have planned, that you don't deserve it, or should be doing something else, that you should be enjoying it more, or that it is pointless. You may be aware of thoughts that distract you and prevent you from fully experiencing your pleasurable activity.

Something That Gives You a Sense of Satisfaction, Achievement or Control

Clean the house; clear out a cupboard or drawer; catch up with letter writing; pay a bill; do something that you have been putting off doing; take some exercise.

Be aware of over-high standards and "it should be different" thinking

They may make it hard for you to feel you have achieved anything. Notice thoughts like "I should be doing this better/faster/more easily", recognise them for what they are, and let them be.

When we are faced with difficult times it may well be helpful to *break tasks down into smaller steps and only tackle one step at a time*. Treating yourself kindly and with respect, and congratulating yourself whenever you complete a task or a part of a task.

Acting Mindfully

When we are faced with difficulties or are feeling stressed our minds tend to be preoccupied with worries. The end result is that our attention is not really on what we are doing – we are lost in our thoughts, rather than here with what is happening right now. We may do the nourishing activity but completely miss the experience of it. This means that activities that might otherwise nourish us can become depleting.

Noticing if your mind has been hijacked by thoughts or feelings that tend to take you away from being present can be very liberating and allow you to focus your attention on your experience right now. Choosing to be in the moment you are in (e.g. "Now I am walking down the stairs...now I can feel the banister beneath my hand...now I'm

walking into the kitchen...now I'm turning on the light..."),ware of your breathing as you do other things such as the sensations of contact of your foot with the floor as you walk. Encouraging yourself to be really curious. The more powerful your thoughts and feelings, the more difficult this may be. But, with practice, you will find that your capacity to be more fully present in each moment will grow.

Remember

Be open-minded

Whatever you choose to do treat it as an experiment. Don't pre-judge how you will feel afterwards. Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way. Approach your activity with playfulness and curiosity.... as an experiment.

Aim for a broad range

Consider a range of ways of taking care of yourself and don't limit yourself to a favourite few. Sometimes trying new behaviours can be interesting and nurturing in itself.

Don't expect miracles

Putting extra pressure on yourself by expecting a single activity to alter things dramatically may be unrealistic.

When things feel difficult

The mindfulness skills we have been developing day by day are especially relevant to these times.

As Jon Kabat Zinn said...

Don't start weaving your parachute when you are just about to jump out of the airplane.....

When we are under pressure we are more likely to revert to old habits. The more 'tuned in' you are to yourself and the world about you the wiser your decisions, choices and actions will be. This is particularly helpful when you are facing challenges. At these times...try asking yourself:

'What do I need right now to help me get through this time?'

Adapted from Segal, Williams and Teasdale, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression : A New Approach to Preventing Relapse, (2002)

Maybe it would be helpful to write down some answers to these questions?

- What are you noticing are your warning signs are that you are getting stressed?
- Cramming in too much activity or work? Headaches? Irritability? Poor sleep patterns? Appetite changes?
- What helpful strategies do you already use?
- How do these meet you when you are feeling stressed? How do they help?
- What are the unhelpful of reacting or behaving that you have discovered that you tend to do when you are feeling stressed?
- How do these impact your levels of stress?

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 7

1. From all the different forms of formal mindfulness practice that you have experienced in the course, settle on the practice(s) that you intend to use on a regular, daily basis for the next few weeks (up to and after the end of the course). Try your practice with and without recordings. Also practice informally by being as aware and awake as possible throughout the day. Look for ways to make the practice your own.
2. Record your reactions if you wish.
3. THREE STEP BREATHING SPACE – REGULAR – practice three times a day at times that you have decided in advance.
4. THREE STEP BREATHING SPACE – COPING plus ACTION – practice whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings
5. Spend some time finding out what are your warning signs that you are feeling stressed and that things are difficult.

Develop a list of the range of unhelpful actions and strategies that you find yourself slipping into at difficult times – having an awareness of these will help you to spot them when they are present. If you want to, include those people you share your life with, in a collaborative effort to notice and respond rather than to react to these signs.

Continue with developing a list of the range of helpful actions and strategies that you already know are skilful responses to difficult times for you, or that might be possibilities to experiment with in the future. For example you might put on a mindfulness practice recording; remind yourself of what you learnt in the course that was helpful; take frequent breathing spaces leading into a review or considered action; go for a walk; read something that will ‘reconnect’ you with your ‘wiser’ mind.

It may be helpful to remind yourself that what you need at times of stress and difficulty is no different from what you have practiced many times throughout the course.

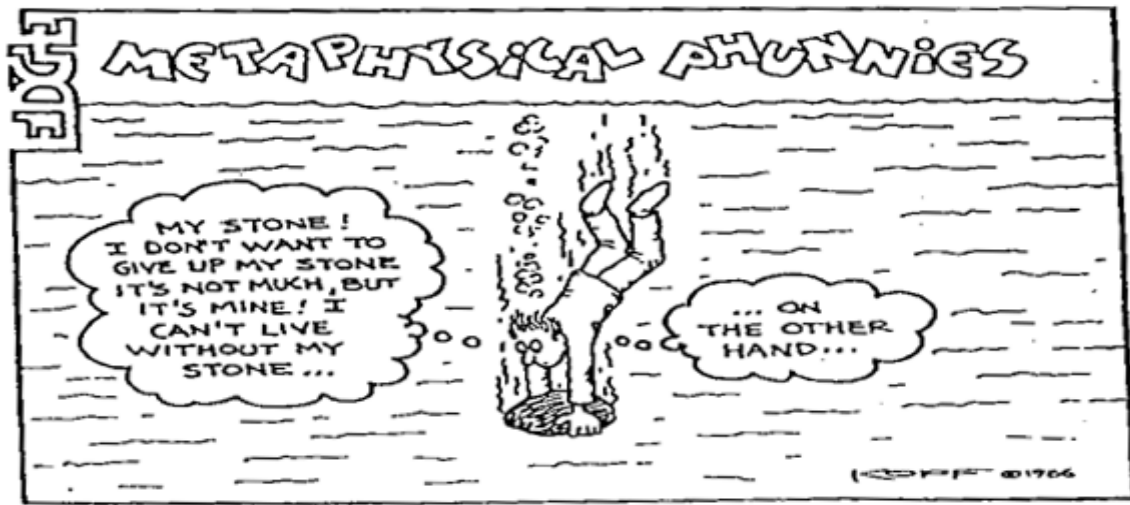
SESSION SEVEN DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/ informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

Further Exploration:



“...and there was a new voice,
which you slowly
recognised as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do –
determined to save
the only life you could save.”

-Mary Oliver, The Journey.

Love After Love

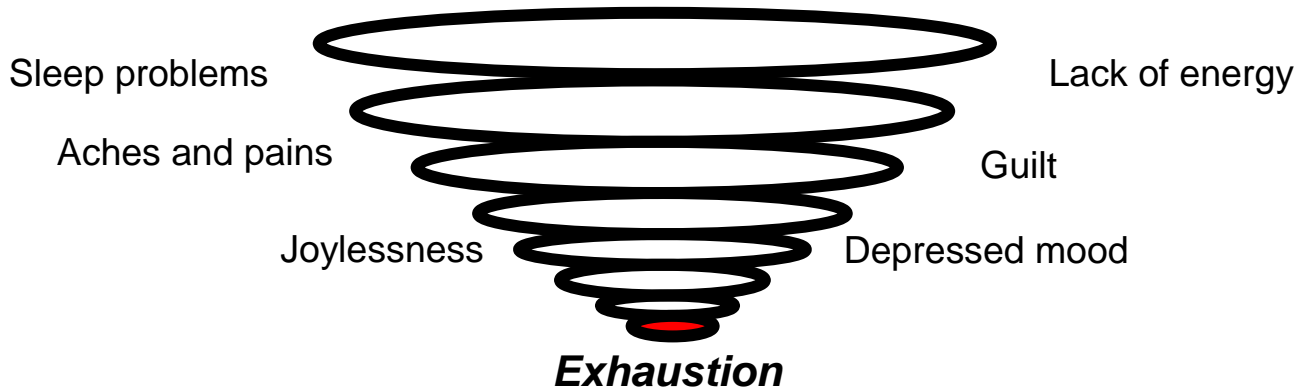
The time will come when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your n mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you have ignored for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down notes, the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit feast on your life.

-Derek Walcott, A Collected Works in The Heart Arouse

The Exhaustion Funnel



-Developed by Marie Asberg

The Exhaustion Funnel helps us see how when we are stressed we frequently let go of the very things that will nourish us. We may prioritise work or others' demands on our time and stop including supportive activities, seeming less important. We perhaps say to ourselves "not now" or "later, once this task is finished". As the diagram shows our exhaustion builds the longer we continue on this path.

This is a useful short animation about stress
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6402QJp52M>



SESSION 8

Keeping your mindfulness alive!

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

-Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life

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

Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skilful action directed at achieving change in the inner or outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that by carrying on trying to solve an insoluble problem or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in; one may end up "banging one's head against a brick wall", exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one's sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations-

You can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful, decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it.

Choosing not to act is much less likely to increase a sense of helplessness and stress, than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.

The so-called "Serenity Prayer" asks for:

Grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which must be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.

-Reinhold Niebuhr

Exploring Further

USE YOUR UMBRELLA

A young woman, studying in India, undertook to develop love, kindness, and goodwill through her meditation practice. Sitting in her small room, she would fill her heart with loving-kindness for all beings. Yet each day, as she went to the bazaar to gather her food, she would find her loving-kindness sorely tested by one shopkeeper who would daily subject her to unwelcome caresses. One day she could stand no more and began to chase the shopkeeper down the road with her upraised umbrella. To her mortification she passed her teacher standing on the side of the road observing this spectacle. Shame-faced she went to stand before him, expecting to be rebuked for her anger.

‘What you should do,’ her teacher kindly advised her, ‘is to fill your heart with loving-kindness, and with as much mindfulness as you can muster, hit this unruly fellow over the head with your umbrella.’

Sometimes that is what we need to do. It would be easy enough to hit the man over the head with the umbrella. The difficult part is to do it with all the loving-kindness in our heart. That is our real practice.

*-Adapted from Christina Feldman & Jack Kornfield:
Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart, Harper, San Francisco 2001*

Daily Mindfulness

When you first wake up in the morning before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.

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

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

Throughout the day - take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.

Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something which nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat,

consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.

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

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

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

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

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

Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.

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

Kindness

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

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,

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

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

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

-Naomi Shihab Nye- Words under the Words: selected poems

A REMINDER

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

- Body scan
- Sitting practice with awareness of
 - *Breathing*
 - *strong sensations in the body*
 - *the breath in the whole of the body*
 - *hearing*
 - *thinking and feeling*
 - *all of it – in choiceless awareness*
- Yoga and mindful stretching
- Walking practice
- Breathing spaces
- 3 minute breathing space at a time decided in advance
- Coping breathing space, when something difficult comes up
- Coping breathing space with action

INFORMAL PRACTICES

- Routine activities (having a shower, starting the car, gardening, washing up, or anything)
- Eating
- Walking and moving
- Looking out of the window
- You can turn any activity into an informal mindfulness practice

HOME PRACTICE FOR SESSION 8

- and the future.....

1. From all the different forms of formal mindfulness practice that you have experienced in the course, settle on a form of practice that you intend to use on a regular, daily basis for the next 5 weeks.
Record your reactions to this.
2. THREE MINUTE BREATHING SPACE – REGULAR: practise three times a day at times that you have decided in advance.
3. THREE MINUTE BREATHING SPACE – COPING plus ACTION: practise whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings

Remember Jon Kabat-Zinn's advice to weave your parachute every day, rather than leave it until you have to jump out of the plane!

Decide on a date when you will review what practices you are doing – and on that date reflect on how you are doing in the light of your experience.

Review date:

Review notes:

SESSION EIGHT DIARY

If you wish you can use this to make a note of what comes up in your practices and reading and to help you remember and record what you want to bring to your phone contact session.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS

Use this sheet to make your own notes, if you would like to:

FINAL REVIEW

To be discussed at the end of SESSION 8

At this point it might be interesting and useful to reflect back on your original reasons for coming on the course. You may want to look up the first questionnaire which you discussed with your teacher, before you officially started this distance learning course – and compare that with what you now feel has been the learning for you on this mindfulness course.

What did you get out of doing the course? What have you learnt?

What were the costs to you? What sacrifices did you make?

What are your biggest blocks/obstacles to continuing to live mindfully?

How will you work with these obstacles? What strategies might help you stay present and not get stuck in automatic pilot in the future?

How does your experience of mindfulness connect to your hopes for the course as you started the course?

What are your short term and longer term goals in relation to mindfulness?

The future

It may be helpful to remind yourself that each time you give the time and energy to maintain your practice you are actively contributing to your own health and well-being and this is also likely to have beneficial effects for the people around you.

Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be over the next weeks, and stick to it as best you can. Generally we would advise you to find a manageable amount of practice for you to weave in to each day with longer practices at least once a week.

Practising with the CDs and by being mindful as you do the activities in your daily life to keep your practice alive. Remember the 3 step breathing space is a helpful bridge between the formal CD practices and the informal living life with mindful awareness

Regular breathing spaces provide a way of "checking in with yourself" a few times a day – let it also be your first response in times of difficulty, stress, or unhappiness – whatever happens....

KEEP BREATHING!

Support Available from CMRP Beyond This Distance Learning Course

The Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice has a range of courses available to people who have completed the 8-week course to support you in continuing your practice. Information about these and other events and workshops are available on the website. Please go to "Find a Course" and then "Information for 8 week course graduates" where you will find information about follow-up classes, All Day practices and additional courses that will be appropriate for you. You will also find courses suitable for graduates of the 8 week course in the retreats page and in the Calendar of Courses and Events

You will also receive information about some of these through emails. If you do not wish to have this information, please inform mindfulness@bangor.ac.uk.

You can also keep in touch with all the mindfulness events and training at Bangor University by checking our website:

www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness

Further Reading

There is a vast range of books which will support your ongoing explorations in the use of mindfulness within your life. Please see the recommended reading page on our website (www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness) for a comprehensive listing. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can contact us at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (see our contact details on the cover) and ask for a list through the post.

DAY / DATE	Which CD/formal practice did you do?	Your daily activity/informal practice?	Did you find yourself noticing things without choosing to?	READING	COMMENTS



CONGRATULATIONS ON
COMPLETING THE COURSE!

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