



Mindfulness Course For Health & Well Being

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

PRACTICE RECORD & WORKBOOK

SESSION TWO: Living in Our Heads

Five steps for practicing mindfulness.

- 1. When possible, do just one thing at a time.*
- 2. Pay full attention to what you are doing.*
- 3. When the mind wanders from what you are doing, bring it back.*
- 4. Repeat step number three several billion times.*
- 5. Investigate your distractions.*

From Larry Rosenberg, Breath by Breath, 1998.

These hand-outs have been developed by Mindfulness Practitioners and Mindfulness Service User Volunteers, using a range of resources that include Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1991), Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale (2013), The Mindful Way through Depression by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2007) and The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress by John Teasdale, Mark Williams and Zindel Segal (2014).

SESSION 2 MAIN PRACTICES AND DISCUSSIONS

- The five steps for practicing mindfulness
- The Body Scan
- Seeing practice
- Thoughts and feelings exercise, "walking down the street."
- Mindful walking
- Mindful sitting

What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

GUIDANCE ON HOME PRACTICE

Home practice is the way to help make yourself more aware of how you live your life. Practicing daily between sessions will help improve your confidence and skills in using mindfulness. Also make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice so that we might talk about it at the next meeting.

SESSION TWO: Living in Our Heads

GUIDED PRACTICE:

- Do the **body scan for six days** and record your reactions in your handout. This week you are invited to practice recognising when you become lost in thought and then reconnecting with body sensations.
- Complete the **Pleasant Experiences Blob** (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings and body sensations around one pleasant experience each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, **in detail**. (For example, write down the actual words or images you noticed in your mind and the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.)

EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS:

- Choose a **new routine activity** in your daily life and make a **deliberate effort** to bring **moment to moment awareness** to that activity each time you do it.

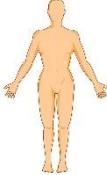
Use the space below to make a note of an activity that you may wish carry out mindfully.

<p>An activity I will carry out mindfully is:</p> <hr/>
<p>During this activity I may pay particular attention to</p> <hr/> <hr/>

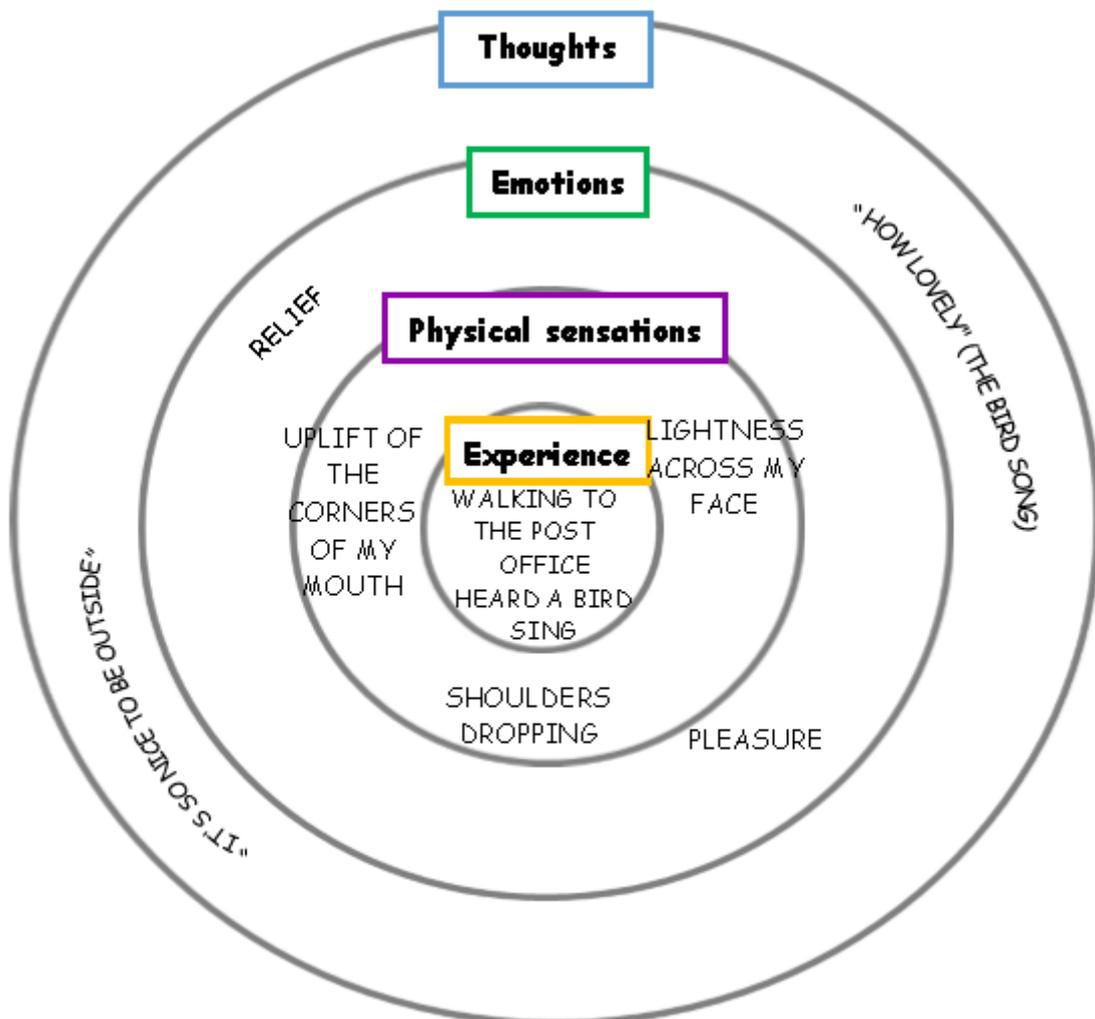
Note: Write down any difficulties or questions that come up at home and bring them with you to the next session.

THE BLOB - GUIDANCE

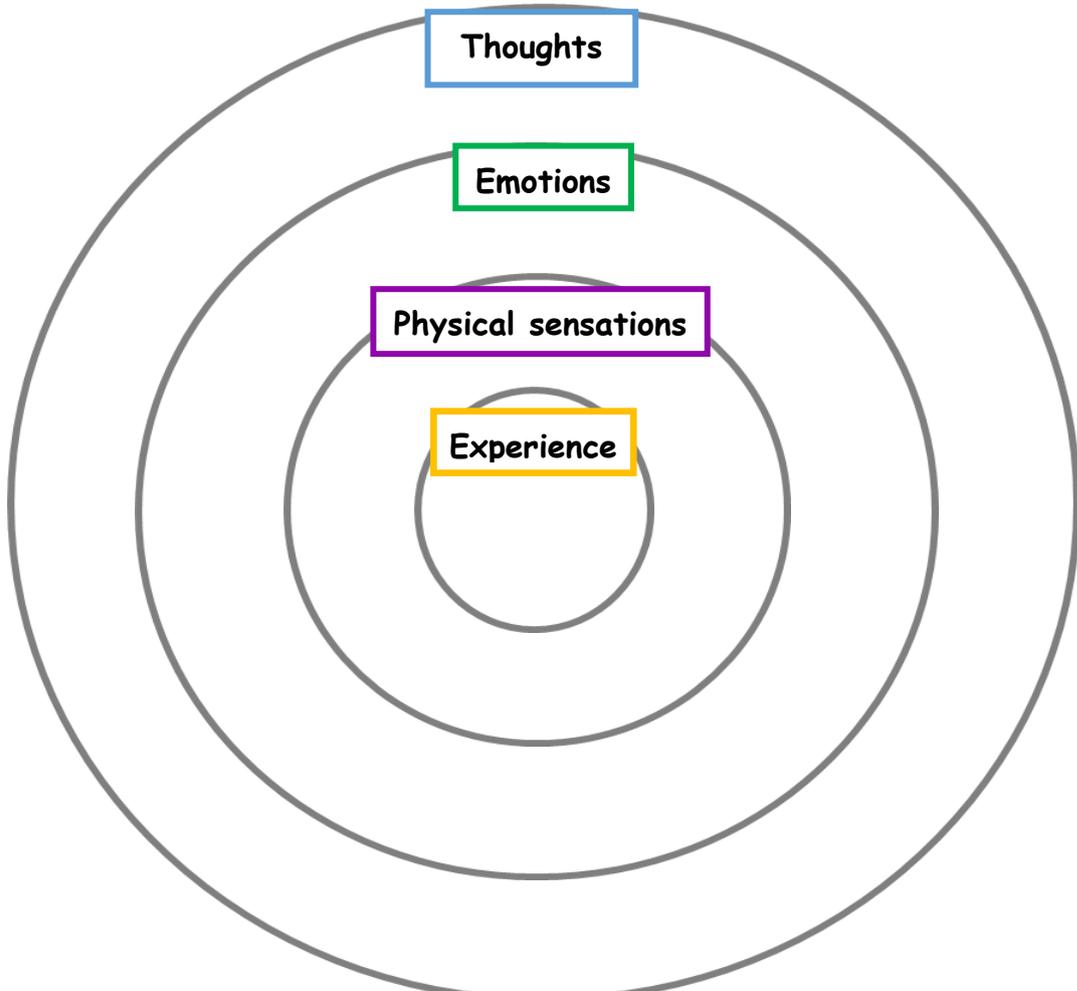
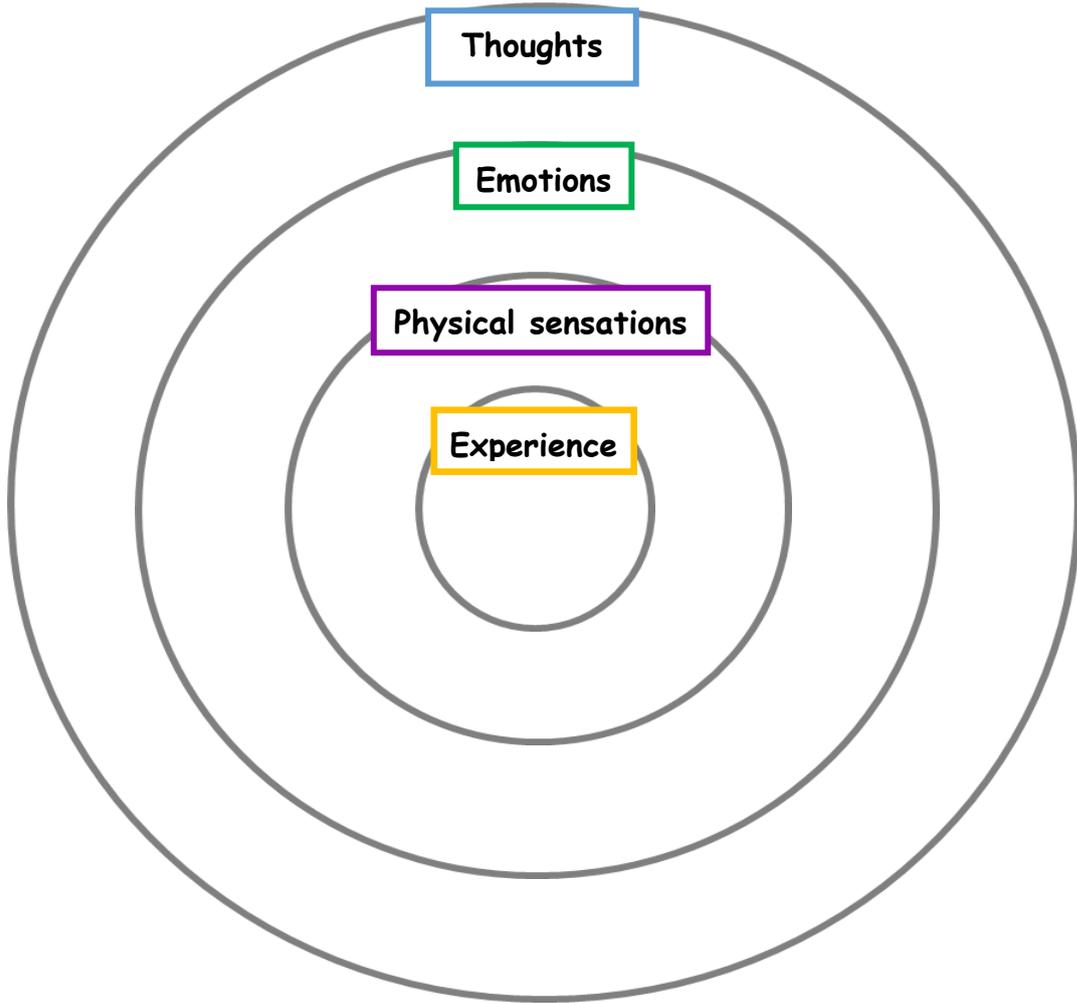
1. Become aware of a pleasant experience at the time it is happening.
2. Use the questions to focus on what is happening during the experience.
3. Record your answers on the Blob.

<p>Experience</p> <p>What was the experience?</p> 	<p>Physical sensations</p> <p>What did you notice in your body?</p> 	<p>Emotions</p> <p>What feelings were you aware of?</p> 	<p>Thoughts and thinking</p> <p>What thoughts came up?</p> 
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Example



THE BLOB (PLEASANT EXPERIENCE)



WEEK 2 Daily Practice Diary

The Body Scan

Didn't I do this last week?
Why am I doing it again?

The Body Scan

- Gives us a way of training our attentional muscle: moving through the "engage-remain-disengage" cycle many times.
- Helps us get back in touch with our bodies and out of our heads.

The Practice is the same, but the experience will be different every day.as much as possible, approach each body scan with a fresh, open mind, acknowledging that you've never done THIS body scan before, so who knows what each new moment may have to offer?

We continue this practice because the doing mode is such an old and well established habit that it takes a lot of patience and persistence both to train the mind to be where you want it to be and to cultivate the direct knowing of being mode

Each day this week find a place where you can lie down comfortably and follow the body scan.

Immediately after each practice, **jot down a few notes**, on your experience in the spaces provided.

What thinking patterns did you experience as the doing mode took over your mind? Planning and rehearsing? Blame and judgement? Wanting to hurry up? Reminders and unfinished business? Going back over things from the past?

What was your response? were you able to ease back into being mode, or did you stay stuck in doing? what else did you notice?

Day 1:

What forms of doing did you notice (e.g., planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)

Response:

I also noticed:

I kept thinking this is boring nothing's happening

You might like to see if it's possible to be aware of this simply as a thinking pattern-judging- rather than getting drawn in and lost inside it. You can then gently shift from thinking about your experience to directly sensing it by bringing an interested awareness to the sensations in your body

Each time we notice we have been lost in thinking offers a precious opportunity to practice the move from doing to being- that is the way to freedom.

Day 2:

Doing (e.g.,planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)

Response:

I also noticed:

I stayed awake for the whole session for the first time!

Great! Our experience is always changing- if you look carefully, you will see that your experience of this practice (and all other practices) is never the same from one day to the next. The body scan has powerful effects, but they build slowly over time. Keep going.

Day 3:

Doing (e.g.,planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)

Response:

I also noticed:

I'm getting more relaxed about the whole thing. If I notice I'm lost in thought, I don't give myself such a hard time- somehow, that seems to weaken the pull of the thoughts.

That's a nice observation. When we don't take out thoughts so seriously, they have less "charge" and don't demand our attention so greedily. We may even find we can just let them be there, gently,, in the background, while we focus back to the sensations in the body.

It can be really helpful to remember that kindness is the foundation for all skilful practice.

Day 4:

Doing (e.g.,planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)

Response:

I also noticed:

Sometimes I wonder whether all this effort is worthwhile- whether this course is what I need, whether I can do it. not much seems to have happened yet.

This is doubting mind - a very common pattern of thinking at this stage in the program- this kind of thinking reflects a state of mind, not a true view of how things really are. At the end of the course when we ask participants who have had doubts like this what advice we should give to others with similar doubts, they always say "just tell them to keep going regardless- they will not regret it."

Day 5:

Doing (e.g.,planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)
Response:
I also noticed:

I find I'm beginning to look forward to my body scan sessions. It feels like a time for me, when I can take a break from my mind and rest in my body for a while

Absolutely! The driven-doing mind can drive us so hard-" do this" " do that" "don't forget to" "be sure to do this properly". Mindfulness of our bodies offers a refuge and haven that is always there for us with a simple shift of attention.

Day 6:

Doing (e.g.,planning, hurrying up, judging, unfinished business, going over the past.)
Response:
I also noticed:

I'm feeling bad because I'm not doing the practice every day. Somehow I never get around to it, and by the time I think of it I have no time

Once the judging self-critical mind gets on the case, it's easy to get trapped in a vicious cycle:

Self-blame negative associations with practice
→ avoid practice → more self blame → less practice

The good news is that, in any moment, we can always wipe the slate clean, let go of what has happened, and begin again.

Whatever happened in the past, we can always begin again, right now, by actually *doing* the practice, rather than *dwelling* on our previous failures to practice.

At the end of Week 2, you might like to take a few moments to reflect on your experience of the body scan as a whole over the last two weeks.

The body scan will not be included in daily practice for the next few weeks, so this is an opportunity to close the book on this practice now.

Reflecting on your experience, what is ONE thing you have learned from the body scan practice?

SESSION 2 THEME - LIVING IN OUR HEADS

Our aim in this program is to be more aware, more often. A powerful influence taking us away from being "fully present" in each moment is our automatic tendency to judge our experience as being not quite right in some way - that it is not what should be happening, not good enough, or not what we expected or wanted. These judgments can lead to sequences of thoughts about blame, what needs to be changed, or how things could or should be different. Often these thoughts will take us, quite automatically down some fairly well worn paths in our minds. In this way, we may lose awareness of the moment and also the freedom to choose what, if any, action needs to be taken.

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

Adapted from: Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale (2013).

TIPS FOR THE BODY SCAN

Regardless of what happens, 'just do it!' (e.g. if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things, keep noticing the wrong part of the body, or not feeling anything). These are your experiences in this moment. See if it is possible to be aware of them all, just as they are.

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

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

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

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

Adapted from Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression (2013).

CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE HELPFUL TO OUR PRACTICE 'SEVEN PILLARS OF MINDFULNESS'

1. NON-JUDGING

To nourish mindfulness, we become impartial witnesses to our own experience. To do this, we can choose to become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experiences that we all get caught up in. We judge some people, things or events as 'good' if we like how they cause us to feel. Others we quickly condemn as 'bad' because of how they make us feel. Much of what happens is judged 'neutral' and we usually tune that out of consciousness, or regard it as boring if we can't tune it out.

This habit of categorising and judging experience is one strongly established way we operate on automatic pilot, reacting in ways we are unaware of, that often have no objective basis. These judgments contribute powerfully to the uneasy restlessness that makes it hard for our minds to be at peace. The mind can be like a yo-yo, up and down on a string of judging thoughts and the feelings they arouse, all day long. If you doubt this, just observe closely each judgment, however small, that occurs during 10 minutes as you go about your normal activities. These judgements contribute significantly to the stress we experience in our lives. By becoming aware of them, we learn how we create conflicts and problems for ourselves, on top of those that come from other sources. Then, we can begin to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of automatic judgments.

Practicing mindfulness, we observe these judgments as impartially as possible, without trying to stop judging. All that is needed is to watch it happening. Change will happen more effectively if we trust this process and don't try to be different from what we are!

So when attending to the breath, you may find yourself thinking 'this is boring'; 'I can't do this'; or even 'I'm very good at this'. These are judgements. It is important to spot them and remind yourself that the practice involves watching whatever arises, without being pushed by judgemental thinking into changing what you set out to do. Then carry on watching the breath.

2. PATIENCE

Patience is a kind of wisdom, which accepts that things must happen in their own time. Impatience yanks at a knot in a shoelace and ends up making the knot tighter than before. Patience unravels the knot carefully, one loop at a time. Patient care of our minds and bodies helps us practice mindfulness. We remind ourselves that we do not have to lose patience with ourselves when we find our practice difficult to sustain, or that our minds are still judging much of the time. These experiences are our reality, so we don't fight what is real, but let ourselves relax with these experiences. We don't have to pretend to be different, for change to happen. Why rush away from what is real - this moment - to try to reach some notion of a 'better' moment? In your practice like everyone else, you will observe your mind wandering and maybe see that where it wanders is often to follow some attractive ideas and avoid painful or worrying ones. This way the mind's restless response to judgments overcomes our contact with reality.

Patience may need to be consciously sought when the mind is agitated. It can help us accept the wandering tendency of the mind, while reminding us that by practicing mindfulness we are dealing with it constructively.

3. BEGINNER'S MIND

"In the beginner's mind are many possibilities, but in the expert's very few."

The richness of this moment is the richness of life. When we think we know, too often, this stops us seeing things fresh, as they really are. We take ordinary things for granted and fail to grasp the extraordinariness of the ordinary.

The attitude of deliberately adopting a 'beginner's mind' is specially important during the various mindfulness practices. Each time we practice, if we let go of ideas about what we may experience, we take off the blinkers of expectations and become open to what is real - then, no two moments are the same.

As an experiment, you may like to try cultivating 'beginner's mind' each time you meet someone you think you know well. Try seeing them with fresh eyes, putting aside what you think you know about them, so far as you can.

4. TRUST

Trusting your own experience and feelings, you may make some mistakes, but whatever you learn will mean much more to you than if you always look for guidance from outside yourself. This does not mean ignoring what is available, but rather tuning in to your own experience of it, then accepting what is meaningful and useful. For example, practicing mindful stretching, if you tune in to your body, you are less likely to overstrain than if you just unthinkingly do whatever the teacher - or tape - suggests. Listening to the teacher helps guide you, but listening to yourself is vital. In the same way, in sitting practice, or the body scan and as you bring increased mindfulness to daily life, teachers, friends and advisers may be helpful, but it is essential that you listen to and trust your own inner voice above all. You may trust the sincerity and intelligence of a teacher or friend, but they can never know how you are from moment-to-moment as well as you can when you really trust and tune in to your own self.

5. NON-STRIVING

Our whole society is set up to reward achievement. Most of the time we are doing whatever we do for a purpose, to get somewhere. This is appropriate for some situations, but when we decide to step out of 'doing' and into 'being', as in mindfulness practice, we may find it is not so easy to stop striving. Trying to achieve anything by mindfulness practice gets in the way of meaningful change, because as soon as our attitude is focused on what we want, we have already abandoned the present moment for the desired future and forsaken acceptance of what is, in favour of craving something that is not yet. This might be seen when you sit down and think "I am going to get relaxed - or control my pain - or find inner peace - by doing this." If we can just be with whatever is, be it calmness or chaotic thinking, relaxation or tension, comfort or pain, then things may change and our attitude to them has already changed.

This may seem paradoxical - of course we are practicing for a reason and of course we hope for some change. The central point here is that if you let go of trying to make things happen, then with patience and sustained regular practice, movement in the right direction for you will happen. If striving was effective, wouldn't you have succeeded already? Mindfulness practice is a chance to try a profoundly different approach.

6. ACCEPTANCE

This is about seeing things as they actually are. If you have a headache, then just accept that you have a headache. Sometimes we are so concerned to get rid of unwelcome pain, feelings or thoughts that we don't even accept that they are our present reality. This makes change more difficult, because then we are trying to move but not acknowledging where we are starting from - which makes it unlikely we will go in the right direction.

Acceptance may not be easy. If we suffer bereavement, or are diagnosed with cancer, we may go through periods of denial and anger before reaching acceptance. In daily life though, we often waste energy resisting the facts in more ordinary matters. If I am overweight, I do not have to keep on waiting till I reach some target weight before I start to like myself. This doesn't mean I can't lose weight, but accepting myself now will actually take away some of the self-dislike, which is one reason I keep over-eating and can't find the motivation to take exercise. The same applies to many other changes in our lives. We can break the vicious circle of frustration, which maintains misery, with reality. As soon as we do, things are already better and we have energy for further change.

In mindfulness practice, we cultivate acceptance by taking each moment and each aspect of our experience just as they come, focusing on the present and being receptive to the flow of all that comes to us and passes on.

7. LETTING GO

Hunters in India catch monkeys by cutting a hole in a coconut, just big enough for a monkey's hand. They drill the other end and insert a wire attaching the coconut to the base of a tree, then put a banana inside. When the monkey grasps the banana it makes a fist - but the hole is just big enough for an open hand, so the fist holding the banana is trapped. All the monkey need do to get free is let go of the banana, yet many monkeys don't let go and are caught.

We often do something like this with our minds. This is why cultivating the attitude of letting go is fundamental to mindfulness practice. As you attend to your inner experiences, you may see that there are some thoughts, situations, memories, hopes and feelings that your mind wants to hold on to. We try to cling onto pleasant experiences. Similarly, there are unpleasant experiences that we try to get rid of - pain, fear, anger, despair and others - or even protect ourselves from experiencing at all. None of this really works to prevent pleasant feelings from changing, or unpleasant ones from occurring. Indeed, the failure to do so just adds another class of unpleasant experience and prevents us from accepting and fully experiencing the richness of each moment. We already know this, but may need to keep reminding ourselves. For example, we know that if we are tense and try really, really hard to relax, we may end up more tense. Also we know that if we try to force ourselves to sleep, we stay awake longer. For this reason, in mindfulness practice we just keep on acknowledging whatever arises, then letting it pass when it will, making space for the next moment and the next experience.

Adapted from Chapter 1 of *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1991).

THE BLOB - NOTICING OUR PLEASANT EXPERIENCES

Making a commitment to be aware of pleasant feelings in any moment requires that we become more sensitive to what is actually going on for us inwardly. Intentionally becoming more aware of what is pleasant in a particular experience. How it feels in our body, how it affects our mood and feelings, what thoughts accompany the pleasant event. By becoming aware of these aspects on particular pleasant events can help us become more aware of what is actually going on in our experience. It can begin to highlight some of our automatic reactions and habitual responses during our experiences.

The BLOB illustrates how our daily pleasant experiences are made up of different layers of feelings, sensations and thoughts, often unnoticed and quickly forgotten.

During Session 3 of our Mindfulness course, Emma (age 23) commented upon how little attention she paid in her life to the many pleasant experiences open to her to notice. Cameron (age 53) was shocked by how many pleasant experiences he habitually ignored or forgot about during a normal busy day. Without making any changes to the actual pattern of his day, Cameron discovered many small sources of happiness were already in his life, waiting to be found. In noticing and recording his Pleasant events he reported feeling more able to "step back" and "slow things down" enough to begin to notice the many of pleasant events occurring around him and within him each day.

By Lisa Graham

Summary of Intention for the Pleasant Experiences Blob

- Bringing mindful awareness to the earliest reaction to our moment-by-moment experience as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, can be a pivotal point in noticing our triggers, rumination or avoidance.
- It helps us to notice the pleasant experiences that often occur in our daily lives.
- It allows us to become more aware of the body sensations, feelings and thoughts that accompany our pleasant experiences.
- Our pleasant experiences help us to tune into our "felt" dimension of experience in a non-threatening way.
- In tuning into our daily pleasant experiences, we might be able to deconstruct our fleeting or powerful emotional experiences into the constituent elements of our thoughts, feelings and body sensations.

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Dreaming the Real

I'm lying down looking up the colour
Of sky falling through trees, dreaming
The real, tasting what it feels like to love it.
Why did it take me so long to let go, simply
Exhale, so the day could breathe itself in
And open without me standing in the way?
How could I forget the grace of my own body
Strong as this blue, tender as the white
Of the wild blossom, warm as midday light?
Let me practice a patience bold enough
To hold every weather, trusting the elements,
The beauty of rain, all its shades of grey.
I want whatever's real to be enough. At least
It's a place to begin. And to master the art
Of loving it; feel it love me back under my skin.

Linda France

Not to Look but to See

To help organise the world

Through blinkered eyes we look.
Not shapes or textures or tones,
Just a wall, a pavement, a brook.

More than a house,
Looking closer still. A door, a window, a window sill.
More detail, for sure. Yet still just names and labels.
Four legs we notice, those chairs and tables.

What will it take for me to open my eyes?
See what is in front of me,
Allow a surprise.
Can I let go of making everything sit
In categories, organized knowledge, a pre-arranged fit.
I'm actually wondering, I'm curious, me.
What is it like, not to look but to see?

By Peter Morgan

www.freemindfulness.org