



## Mindfulness Course For Health & Well Being

### Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

## PRACTICE Record & Workbook SESSION SEVEN: "How can I best take care of myself?"

### Love After Love

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

*and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was 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 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, *Collected Poems 1948-1984*, New York, Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1986.

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 7 MAIN PRACTICES AND DISCUSSIONS

- Sitting with choiceless awareness.
- Links between activity & mood - What am I doing in life that nourishes/drains me?
- Stretching practice.
- Three minute breathing space and discussion re skilful action.
- Action Plan

### 'MIND' THAT BIG TOE!

You may be curious as to the connection between mindfulness and the big toe, well let me explain... I discovered to my cost (and also my benefit) that a painful experience could and should have been avoided.

Hurrying in and out of the shower this week with my mind elsewhere I stubbed my big toe and found myself cursing and hopping about the bathroom in agony.

"For goodness sake, **mind** what you are doing!" I said to myself.

Pausing, I thought that that was exactly what I should have been doing -  
**being mindful.**

- I would have had a more pleasurable experience in the shower, keeping me in the moment and....
- I wouldn't have been hurtling like a mad woman around the bathroom.

Coincidentally this week's homework invites us to be mindful during everyday activities, so no surprise I will be applying awareness to showering.

Such a pity I didn't adopt an 'awareness mode' earlier -

I still have a very sore

**BIG TOE!**

Written by Anne Mort, March 2010 (Group Participant)



## GUIDANCE ON HOME PRACTICE

### SESSION SEVEN: "How can I best take care of myself?"

#### EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS

Since being mindful in everyday life is what this whole course is aimed at, keep reminding yourself to take opportunities to become aware, whatever you are doing. You also might like to re-visit whatever you chose as your first informal practice on week 1 of the course.

**An activity I will carry out mindfully is:**

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**During this activity I may pay particular attention to:**

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#### GUIDED PRACTICE

- From all of the meditations we have tried, settle on a form of practice that you will use regularly for the next week. Use this practice on a daily basis and record your reactions on the Record Form.
- Three minute Breathing Space - practice at regular planned times in the day as well as whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings. Record each time you do it and note any comments, observations or difficulties that may arise.
- Responsive three minute breathing space - whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts and feelings. Try the 'door of skilful action'. Record each time you do it and note any comments, observations or difficulties that may arise.

**It may help to remind yourself that what you need  
at times of difficulty  
is no different from what you have already practiced  
many times during this course.**

## HOME PRACTICE - SESSION SEVEN

**Every Day this week**, in addition to the planned Regular Breathing Space, take a breathing space *whenever you notice any unpleasant feelings* and *at least once a day*, explore using the Action Door.

Each Day, keep a track of your experience with this new door (**What was the situation? What did you do? What Happened?**) by jotting down a few notes:

Day 1:

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*It was mid-afternoon at work, I was getting tired, and I could feel a heaviness growing. I wondered what I could do about it, but the thoughts I had- "go shopping", "see a friend"- were unrealistic. So I took a breathing space- not the full 3 minutes, Maybe a minute altogether- and asked myself, "How can I best take care of myself right now?" And up popped an answer. "Mindful coffee." I "gifted myself", as an act of kindness, five minutes in which I really focussed on the experience of drinking a cup of coffee- a bit like eating the raisin. And I returned to work a little more at ease, more spacious in my mind, refreshed.*

*Wonderful! A slight shift in feeling is often enough to let us "start again" from a different place. Then we may not go down the same old grooves, but we can allow life to unfold in new and different ways.*

Day 2:

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*I felt burdened and exhausted by all the things I had to do, so the idea of doing something to feel mastery or pleasure seemed like yet another thing on my "to do" list. But I took a breathing space anyway and asked myself, "What do I need for myself right now?" I got this very clear sense of needing a break, peace, some time for myself. But I knew that just lying on the couch would lead to rumination, so I chose to "rest" in simple movements of the body. I ended up just mindfully walking up and down, very slowly, very gently - it was quite peaceful and restful. It felt good to give myself some care for a change.*

*That's a lovely example of using the breathing space with an open mind - to end up doing something you hadn't expected but that turned out to be just what you needed. Great!*

Day 3:

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*I'd taken a breathing space and opened the Action Door, and decided "Mastery activity: mow the lawn," something I've been putting off. To keep the job manageable, I was aiming to just do the smaller of my two lawns. It didn't take long, and I felt pleased that I'd done it. And then the nagging voice in my head got on the case: "That's not much. Shouldn't you do the big one as well?" I sighed a little, shrugged my shoulders, and was just about to start again when I remembered, this is meant to be about taking care of myself. So I was kind! I put the mower away and went and put my feet up. It felt like a small triumph.*

*That's such an important thing you did! Every time you are kind to yourself in the face of the "should," "oughts," and "musts," you sow the seeds of a new way of being.*

**Remember to tell yourself "well done",** whenever you complete a task or part of a task.

It can really help to ***break an activity down into smaller, more manageable steps.***

***You could break it up either by time*** (doing something for only a few minutes, then giving yourself permission to stop)

***or by activity*** (by doing only one aspect of a larger activity, such as clearing one part of a desk rather than the whole desk),

***and, after each step, pause to appreciate what you've done.***

Day 4:

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*I'm still not sure why I need to do the breathing space first. Wouldn't it be simpler to just get on with an M or P activity right away?*

*This is something you can check out for yourself by experimenting with taking action with and without a breathing space. We recommend always starting with a breathing space because, that way, your action is born from being mode rather than doing mode. This means actions are more likely to spring from kindness than from aversion, to be more creative, reflecting a bigger picture of the situation, and you'll be more likely to see blocking thoughts as thoughts. And, of course after a breathing space you may find it's more appropriate to open a different door altogether and leave the action door for another time.*

The breathing space is helpful because  
It links us to the wider aspects of the program-  
It "brings all its friends to the party"  
(in the shape of reminders of everything you've learned)

**Day 5:**

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*I've been feeling down for a while and gotten into the habit of not seeing my friends - it just felt like too much effort, and I thought I wouldn't enjoy it and they would find me boring. Then a few of them invited me out for a meal. The usual thoughts went through my mind, and I was at the point of finding some excuse when I saw a supermarket delivery truck with the logo "Do something different today!" in bright orange letters. So I took a breathing space, opened the Thought Door, remembered "Thoughts aren't facts," and went on to open the Action Door. I ended up joining my friends - it wasn't easy, but they were so glad to see me I was really glad I'd made the effort.*

*There are times that taking action is the most important thing: simply having the courage to do something that you don't feel like doing may be what your body and mind need most.*

Day 6:

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>Action:</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>

*It was the weekend, I was alone, it was cold and raining out, and I was feeling miserable. I wondered about doing something useful, but it all seemed too much effort, so I took a rest on the sofa, which didn't help at all. Finally I got around to a breathing space and chose the Action Door. I sensed the need to move my body, but the idea of a walk in the rain did not appeal. But from somewhere came a reminder "In depression motivation works backwards - just do it!" So I did, and, you know, I actually enjoyed it - the wind in my hair, the rain on my skin woke me up, and the walking itself seemed to clear my mind. I walked for 30 minutes, then called a friend to meet up.*

*It's helpful to remember that low mood affects the body as well as thoughts and feelings - physical exercise can have surprisingly powerful effects in lifting mood.*

**Getting the body active can reverse the fatigue and inertia of depressed mood.**

**Practice Record Form:** Settle on a practice this week and record your reactions and observations below

**DAY 1:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 2:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 3:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 4:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 5:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 6:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>

**DAY 7:**

<b>Planned Practice:</b>
<b>Actual Practice:</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Reflection:</b>



## THEME OF SESSION 7: USING SKILLFUL ACTION TO TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES

In times of trouble we can lift our mood by intentional skillful action. We can respond more promptly and effectively to lowering mood increased anxiety by learning to recognise our personal pattern of warning signs. After taking a breathing space, we kindly take care of ourselves through acts that give us pleasure or a sense of satisfaction, or provide a clear focus of mindfulness.

You might like to try asking yourself these questions:

1. Of the things that I do, what nourishes me, what increases my sense of actually being alive and present rather than merely existing?
2. Of the things I do, what drains me, what decreases my sense of actually being alive and present, what makes me feel I am merely existing, or worse?
3. Accepting that there are some aspects of my life that I cannot change, am I consciously choosing to increase the time and effort I give to **nourishing** activities and to decrease the time and effort I give to **depleating** activities?

By being actually present in more of our moments and making mindful decisions about what we really need at each of those moments, we can use activity to become more aware, alert and to manage our feelings.

This is true both for the regular pattern of our daily lives and for dealing with periods of difficulty - we can use our day-by-day experience to discover and cultivate activities we can then use as tools to cope - having these tools already available means that we will be more likely to persist with them in the face of negative thoughts, such as "why bother with anything?" that simply reflect our mode of mind in that moment.

For example, one way to take care of our physical and mental well-being is daily physical exercise. Aim for one brisk 10 minute walk each day and if at all possible, other exercise such as mindful stretching, yoga, swimming, and so on. Once exercise is in your daily routine, it is a readily available way of responding to our moods or thoughts as they arise. For people who struggle to take regular exercise, don't worry, use this time to practice mindfulness in whatever way suits you.

**The breathing space** provides a way to remind us to use activity to deal with unpleasant feelings as they arise.

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

## Three Minute Breathing Space

### Stepping out of automatic pilot

#### Step 1 - Awareness

Stepping out of automatic pilot  
Noticing my experience in the moment

#### Step 2 - Gathering

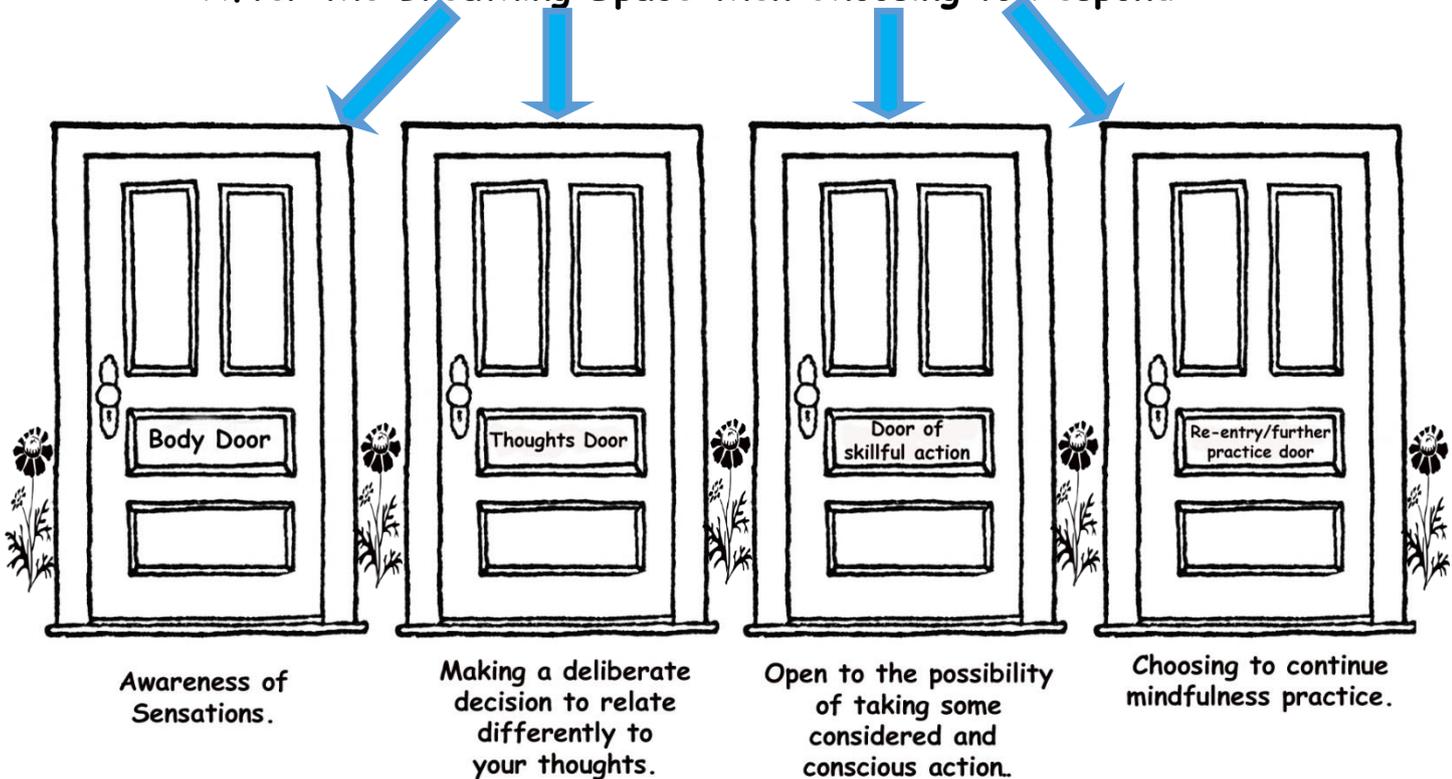
Redirecting attention  
Taking my awareness to the breath



#### Step 3 - Expanding

Attending to my body, the breath as my anchor, being open to the range of my experience

### After the Breathing Space then Choosing to Respond





## REMEMBER

- Try to perform your action as an experiment.
- Try not to pre-judge how you will feel after it is completed.
- Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way.
- Consider a range of activities and don't limit yourself to a favourite few.
- Sometimes trying new behaviours can be interesting in its self. 'Exploring' and 'inquiring' often work against 'withdrawal' and 'retreat'.
- Don't expect miracles.
- Try to carry out what you have planned as best you can.
- Putting extra pressure on yourself by expecting this to alter things dramatically may be unrealistic. Rather, activities are helpful in building your overall sense of control in the face of shifts in your mood.

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

## WHEN DISTRESS SEEMS OVERWHELMING

Sometimes you may find that your feelings of distress come out of the blue. For example, you may wake up feeling very tired and listless, with hopeless thoughts going through your mind.

When this happens, it may be useful to tell yourself, "just because I feel distressed now does not mean I have to stay distressed."

When things come out of the blue like this, they set off negative ways of thinking in everyone.

If you've been depressed in the past, it will tend to trigger old habits of thought that may be particularly damaging: full of overgeneralisations, predictions that this will go on forever and "back to square one" thinking. All of these ways of making sense of what is happening to you tend to undermine you taking any action.

Having these symptoms does not mean that the distress does not need to go on for a long time or that you are in a full blown episode of depression.

Ask yourself, "What can I do to look after myself to get me through this low period?"

Take a breathing space to help gather your-self, this may help you see your situation from a wider perspective. This wider perspective allows you to become aware of both the pull of the old habits of thinking and what skilful action you might take.

## CHOICELESS AWARENESS

As we make progress becoming more familiar with mindfulness, gradually developing the skills needed to cultivate it, we can begin to merge aspects of formal practice into everyday life.

Choiceless awareness is the practice of freeing awareness to settle on *whatever* is present as each moment unfolds. This may include all of our senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting) but also our sense of awareness of thoughts as they pass through the mind along and emotions as we feel them in our body. To practice choiceless awareness it is important hold each 'object' of awareness (a sound, sensation, thought etc.) lightly, and with a willingness to 'let go' as soon as the moment brings another 'object' to hold.

*Choiceless awareness is a practice of doing nothing. Any effort to change things, go somewhere else, or in some other way manipulate or control experience is dropped. When it does arise, as it will, in the recognition of it, it is self-liberated of it's own accord. The practice then is to trust experience, and to that which is also beyond and yet includes experience. Trust and all shall be revealed.*

*Vincent Thorn*

<http://www.vincenthorn.com/2008/01/15/choiceless-awareness/>

At first, choiceless awareness can be harder to sustain than some of the earlier practices (e.g. body scan, stretching). This is likely to be because there is no particular 'anchor' to focus our attention on such as the breath or sounds. So, when practicing choiceless awareness, remembering that we can bring our attention back to an 'anchor' like the breath, to steady our mind before freeing awareness once more.

- *Let go of control. Let the mind wander where it wants, or let it sit still... it is all the same.*
- *Pay attention. Do not fall asleep or let the mind wander off by itself.*
- *Do not judge. Whatever the mind is doing is real. Accept it dispassionately, neither take credit for good thoughts nor blame for bad thoughts. Watch the mind carefully, as if from a distance, like a child watching clouds.*

*Charles MacInerney*

<http://yogateacher.com/text/meditation/on-line/observation.html>

By Kieran Fleck

## THE GARDEN

Once upon a time, a man decided to start a flower garden. He prepared the soil and planted the seeds of many beautiful flowers. But when they came up, his garden was filled not just with his chosen flowers but also overrun by dandelions. He sought out advice from gardeners all over and tried every known method to get rid of them, but to no avail. Finally, he walked all the way to speak to the royal gardener at the King's palace. The wise old man had counselled many gardeners before and suggested a variety of remedies to expel the dandelions but the man had tried them all. They sat together in silence for some time and finally the gardener looked at the man and said "Well, then, I suggest you learn to love them."

From C. Feldman & J. Kornfield: *Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart*.



### **How Can I Best Take Care of Myself?**

After we've experienced  
heavy rains and floods  
We may dread the first drop  
Of rain.  
And with the first splash upon the ground  
We know it is the return of disaster and pain.  
When the dark cloud passes an hour later,  
We thank our lucky stars  
But we take this as a sign;  
We know this is a warning  
We know it is the return of disaster and pain.  
And so with our mood.  
After we've experienced  
The darkest depths of depression  
We dread the first drop  
In mood.  
And with the first tear of despair  
We know it is the return of disaster and pain.  
Yet unlike the rain,  
Which is blind to our worries,  
My mood listens in and responds.  
And my mood drops down to meet my thoughts  
In the depths of my depression.  
Me, my thoughts, my mood.  
I do not let the dark clouds pass.  
If I am not careful  
The dread of disaster,  
The belief in the storm,  
Together we conspire.  
Together we are one,  
Bound together  
Lost.  
Hopeless.  
So how can I best take care of myself,  
When I feel the first drop in mood?  
I remind myself,  
That like clouds, my mood can pass.  
I accept the darkness  
Knowing it does not have to last.  
I allow myself a smile  
Hello old friend - it has been a while.  
I notice all those troublesome thoughts  
I let them float by too;  
For I know that they only come to me  
In the shadow of my darkened mood.  
Then,  
I do something for me.  
Perhaps a walk  
Perhaps a nap  
Perhaps a cup of tea.  
Perhaps I call someone  
Perhaps I have a snack.  
Perhaps I sit  
And I let it all just be.  
So now when the dark cloud passes,  
Whether it takes an hour, a day, a week or more.  
I smile and welcome the next thing  
Making space for whatever's in store.

*By Peter Morgan*

*"What am I doing in life that nourishes me?"*



*"How can I do more?"*



*"What am I doing in life that depletes me?"*



*"How can I do less?"*



## "My Action Plan..."



### My tools for coping:

1. Doing something pleasurable:



2. Doing something that gives me a sense of satisfaction, something rewarding:



3. Act mindfully

Focus all your attention on what you are doing right now, keeping your mind in each moment.