

# **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy**

## **Participant Handbook**



# **Mindfulness**

**The awareness that rises from...**

**Paying attention...**

**On purpose...**

**In the present moment...**

**Without judging...**

**To things as they are.**

Before starting the course and to think about at the end...

Why this course?

What do you expect?

What do you want from the course?

# HOME PRACTICE

## IMPORTANT

- We will be working to change our minds.
- Free ourselves from unhelpful habits.
- We will put time and effort into learning new skills.
- This depends **entirely** on you doing **home practice**.

Practice at home will take:

- 1 hour a day
- 6 days a week
- 8 week course

You will listen to recordings and perform short exercises.

You will need to find time for something new in your life.

If you can't make this **commitment**, it would be best **not** to start the classes.

## FACING DIFFICULTY

We teach you how to be more aware and present with each moment of life.

This makes life more interesting and enjoyable.

This means facing whatever comes up, which may also be **unpleasant** and **difficult**.

Turning to face difficulty is the **best** way to be happier.

You will learn gentle ways to face things and be supported by the instructor and other class members.

## PATIENCE AND KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

You will put in a lot of time and effort.

Any benefit may become apparent only later.

Like gardening—we prepare the ground, plant the seeds, water and feed them - then we wait patiently for the results.

Commit to putting **time and effort** into what we will ask you to do, and **accept** with **patience**, that the fruits of your effort may not show straight away.



## HOW WILL THE COURSE BE HELPFUL TO YOU?

People said:

- I learnt how my mind works.
- I learned to notice habits.
- I learned to be steady, and how to stand back a bit.
- I recognise I have choices other than following old habits.
- I learned to be kind and gentle toward myself.
- I learned my warning signs and what helpful action to take.
- I learned to put less effort into trying to “fix” things.
- I learned to focus on the here and the now.

There are lots of different ways to be mindful.

Try **all** the **mindfulness practices**, and discover the ones that are **best** for **you**.

The weekly class is your opportunity to practice being **kinder** and **gentler** to yourself.

## HOME PRACTICE

Consider:

- Where in your day will you find the time needed for practice?
- Let your family or friends know what's involved.
- How will you “**play**” the spoken practices?
- Treat yourself with kindness, especially if you run into some rough spots.



## CHALLENGES OF THE COURSE

Your instructor will be able to talk to you about any problems you have.

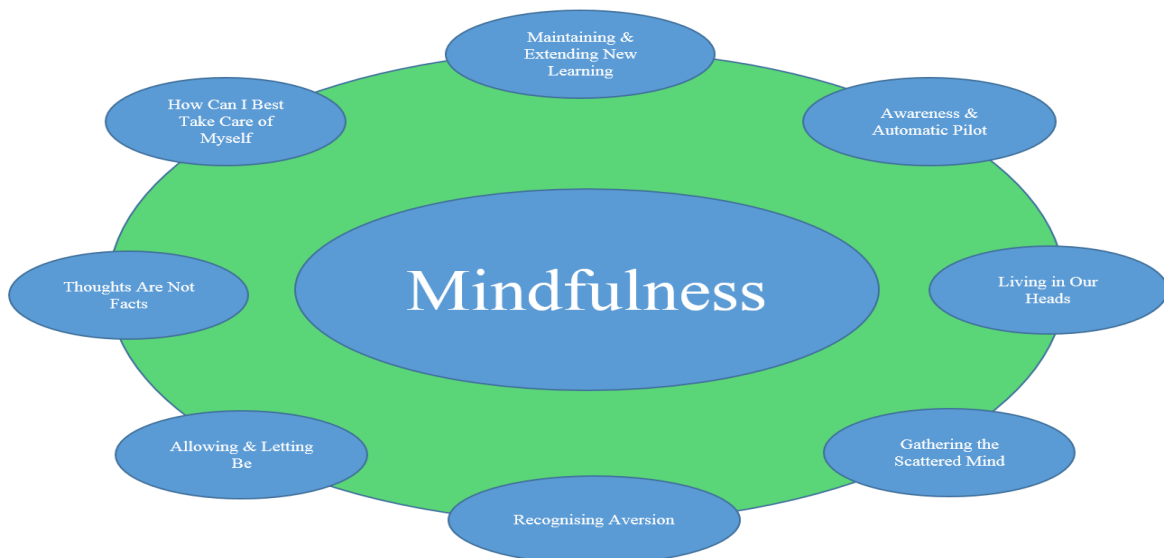
It's worth hanging in there, even if it is a struggle.

What you learn, will help with some of the suffering you may have experienced.

## THE GROUND RULES

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFETY

- Confidentiality will be followed by both participants and instructors.
- If there is serious concern for your safety or well-being, including immediate risk to yourself or another, the instructor will contact your general practitioner (GP) or other professional person, but only after consulting you.



## PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- The group starts promptly at \_\_\_\_\_ and finishes at \_\_\_\_\_
- It is a good idea to wear comfortable clothes, and you might like to bring a blanket, yoga mat, cushion or stool.
- Please attend each session and let the instructor know if you can't.
- There may be times when you do not feel like coming. If this happens we would like you to telephone on \_\_\_\_\_ and let us know how you are, so we can discuss any problem with you.



**You are always welcome.**

**It can feel difficult to come back if you miss a session,  
but it is worth it.**

## **MBCT Session 1 – Awareness and Automatic Pilot**

We do a lot of things automatically.

We call this being on automatic pilot, (auto-pilot) or in '**doing**' mode.

Doing activities through habit and not fully aware of our experience of the present moment.

When washing dishes our minds often wander off to thinking, planning, or remembering other things.



Mindfulness brings us back to the present moment - our '**being**' mode of mind.

Washing dishes in our '**being**' mode of mind, we would notice:

- The warmth of the water.
- The sight of the bubbles.
- The smell of the washing up liquid.
- We might notice how we are standing as we wash the dishes.

In session 1 we practice stepping out of auto-pilot by paying attention deliberately and mindfully to:

- Eating.
- Sensations of the body.
- Routine activities.



## Home Practice for Session 1



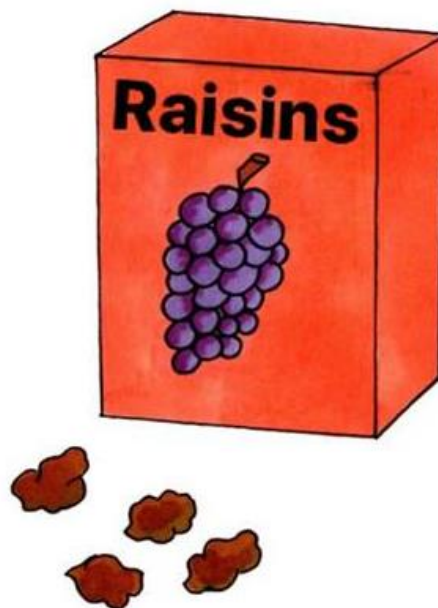
- Practice the body scan for 6 out of 7 days. Don't expect to feel anything in particular from doing the practice. Just let your experience be your experience. Don't judge it, just keep doing it!
- Choose 1 routine activity in your daily life and make a deliberate effort to be mindful, just as we did with the raisin exercise. Simply focus on *knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it*. This might be when you are:
  1. waking up in the morning,
  2. brushing your teeth,
  3. showering,
  4. drying your body,
  5. getting dressed, eating,
  6. driving,
  7. taking out the rubbish,
  8. shopping,

- Awareness of daily activities makes it easier to notice when we are in 'doing' mode or 'automatic pilot'. We can immediately switch mode of mind from 'doing' to 'being.' In being mode it is harder for low mood or troubling emotions to take hold.
- Eat at least 1 meal 'mindfully' in the way you ate the raisin. Also notice when you find yourself able, what you eat in the same way as you noticed the raisin.

Habit releaser week one:

### Changing chairs

This week, see if you can notice which chairs you normally sit on at home and make a deliberate choice to try another chair or move the position of the chair you use. Notice how your perspective can change just by changing chairs!



## Homework Record – Session 1

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Tuesday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Wednesday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Thursday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Friday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Saturday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	
Sunday	-Body Scan -Routine activity -Noticing	

## **MBCT Session 2 – Living in Our Heads**

To extend our noticing of what's happening now, we repeat the **body scan** practice and learn a short 10 minute '**mindfulness of breathing**' practice.

We learn what we **"make"** of events, plays a large role in **affecting** our mood.

We begin to notice connections between **body sensation, feeling and thought**.

By noticing how the **mind** can be **lost** in the **future or past**, we create the chance to come **"fully"** into our lives in the **present moment** or the **now**.

Our aim is to be more **aware** more often.

We judge our experience as **"not quite right"** that it is **"not what should be happening"**, not **"good enough"**, or not what we expected or wanted.



Judgments lead to thoughts about blame and what needs to be changed, or how things could or should be different.

Thoughts can take us down some fairly well-worn paths in our mind. We lose awareness of the present moment. We also lose the freedom to **choose** what, if any, action needs to be taken.

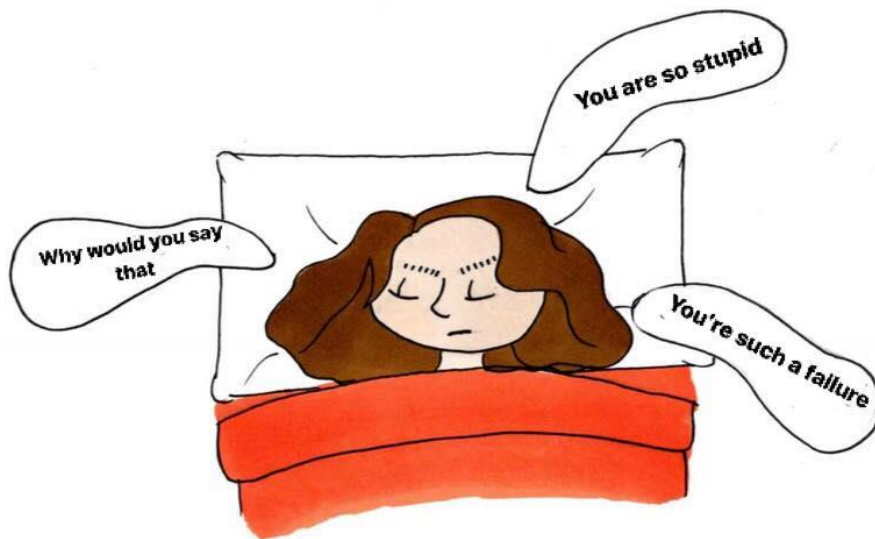
We **can** regain freedom. As a first step:

- Acknowledge our situation and not get hooked into wanting to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are.
- The body scan 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 them.
- There is **no goal** to be achieved, just bring awareness as the instructions suggest – achieving some special state of relaxation is **not** a goal of the exercise.

## Tips for the Body Scan

**Keep doing it!** (Even if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things or focusing on the wrong bit of the body, or not feeling anything).

These are **your** experiences in the **moment**. As best you can, be aware of them all, just as they are.

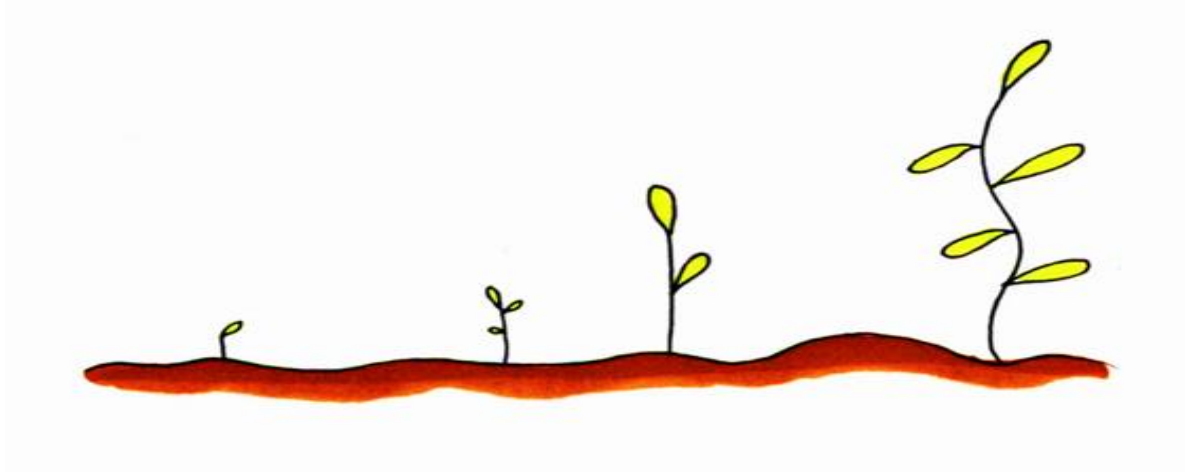


If your mind is wandering a lot, simply notice the thoughts in passing, then bring the mind's attention gently back to the body scan.

- It's not about '**success**', '**failure**', '**doing it really well**' or '**trying to purify the body**'.
- This is **not** a competition.
- It is **not** a skill to struggle for.

You only need to do regular and frequent practice. **Just do it**, with an attitude of **openness** and **curiosity**, and allow the rest to take care of itself.

Let go of wanting the body scan to do anything for you.



Imagine it as a seed you have planted. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to grow.

Give the Body Scan 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.

Take the attitude: **“OK, that’s just the way things are right now”**. If you try to fight unpleasant thoughts, feelings or body sensations, these feelings will only distract you from doing anything else.

**Be aware, be non-striving, be in the moment, accepting things as they are now.**

## Mindfulness of the Breath



### 1. Sit comfortably.

- Use a straight-backed chair or a soft surface on the floor, with your bottom supported by cushions or a low stool.
- If possible make sure your spine is self-supporting.
- If you sit on the floor, have your knees actually touch the floor. Play with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel comfortable and well supported.
- Whatever you sit on, have your knees lower than your hips.

### 2. Allow your back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture.

- When sitting on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor with your legs uncrossed and gently close your eyes.

### 3. Bring awareness to physical sensations, focusing attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body, where it makes contact with the floor or chair.

- Spend a minute or two and explore these sensations.

## Mindfulness of the Breath (continued)

4. Be aware of the changing patterns of physical sensations in the lower stomach, as the breath moves in and out.

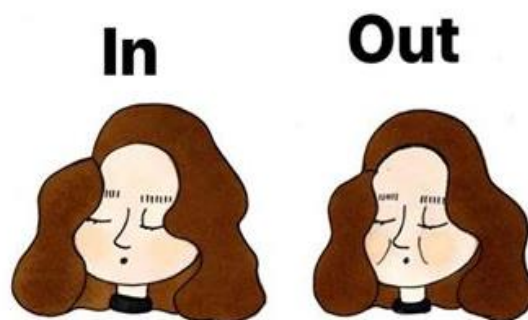
- It may be helpful to place your hand on your lower stomach and become aware of the pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact.
- Having “tuned in” to this, you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations here.

5. Focus your awareness on the sensations of stretching as the belly rises with the in breath, and gentle deflation as it falls with the outbreath.

- Follow with awareness the changing physical sensations in the stomach area all the way through as the breath enters your body on the in breath, and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the outbreath.
- Even noticing the slight pauses between one in breath and the following outbreath, and between one out breath and the following in breath.

6. There is no need to control the breathing—let it breathe itself.

- As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience.
- There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved.
- Allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.





## Mindfulness of the Breath (continued)

7. Your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath, to thoughts, planning and daydreams. This is perfectly OK—it's simply what minds do.

- It is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience!
- You may want to notice where the mind has been (***"Ah, there's thinking"***).
- Then, gently shepherd awareness back to a focus on the changing pattern of physical sensations in the stomach area.
- Renew your intention to pay attention to the ongoing in breath or outbreath, whichever you find.

8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered, which is quite likely over and over and over again. Congratulate yourself each time on reconnecting with your experience in the moment.

- Gently escort the attention back to the breath, and simply resume following in awareness the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in breath and outbreath.

9. As best you can, bring a kindness to your awareness, seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as a chance to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.

- Continue with the practice for 10–15 minutes or longer if you wish. Remind yourself from time to time that **the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment**, as best you can, **using the breath as an anchor**, to gently reconnect with the here and now, each time you notice that your mind has wandered and is no longer down at the stomach, following the breath.

## Home Practice for Session 2

- Do the body scan for 6 of the next 7 days.
- At different times, practice 10 minutes of mindfulness of breathing for 6 out of 7 days. This will provide an opportunity to become aware of what it feels like to be connected and present in the moment without having to *do* anything.
- Complete the Pleasant Experiences Calendar (1 entry per day). Become really aware of the thoughts, feelings and body sensations around one pleasant event each day. Notice and write them down, as soon as you can, and in as much detail as you can. (See example at back of booklet).
- Choose a new routine activity to be especially mindful of (e.g. brushing your teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out the rubbish, shopping, eating).

Habit releaser week two:

### Going for a walk

Walking is a brilliant stress reliever and mood booster. This week, go for one 15-30 minute walk, paying attention to how your body feels, to sights, sounds and smells. What do you notice?

## PLEASANT EVENTS DIARY – week 2

Be aware of a pleasant event 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.

What was the experience? E.g. walking home, hearing a bird sing	How did your body feel during this experience? E.g. aware of shoulders dropping, smile	What thoughts and images came? E.g. "That's good" "How lovely"	What feelings came? E.g. relief, pleasure	What thoughts are in your mind right now? E.g. such a small thing but I'm glad I noticed it.
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

## Homework Record – Session 2

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Tuesday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Wednesday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Thursday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Friday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Saturday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	
Sunday	-Body Scan -Mindfulness of breath -Pleasant experiences calendar -Routine activity	

## **MBCT SESSION 3 – Gathering the Scattered Mind**

This week we bring awareness to the breath and the body in a mindful movement practice.

- The mind is often scattered and lost in thought.
- This is because it is working away in the back-ground completing unfinished tasks from the **past** and striving for goals for the **future**.
- We need to find a useful way to “**come back**” to the **here** and **now**.
- The breath and body are ever present as a focus, on which we can reconnect with the present moment mindfully, gather and settle the mind, and ease ourselves from “**doing**” into “**being**”.

Focusing on the breath:

- Brings you back to this very moment – the **here and now**.
- It's always there as an **anchor** and a **haven**, no matter where you are.
- Can change your experience by **connecting** you with a **wider space** and **broadier view** of things.

Mindful movement allows us to:

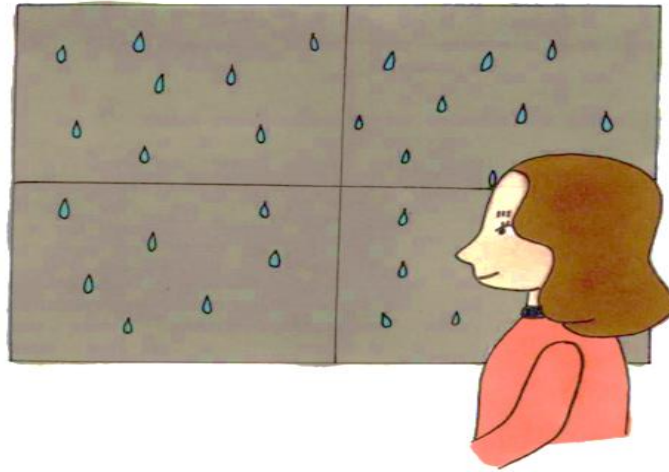
- Build on the body scan to bring awareness to and “**inhabit**” body experience/sensation.
- See old habitual patterns of the mind.
- Work with physical boundaries and intensity and learn acceptance of limits.
- Learn new ways of taking care of ourselves.

The movements provide a way to connect with awareness of the body.

The body is a place where emotions are often expressed, under the surface and without our awareness.

**Becoming more aware of the body gives us an additional place to stand and look at our thoughts.**

## Watching thoughts like raindrops...



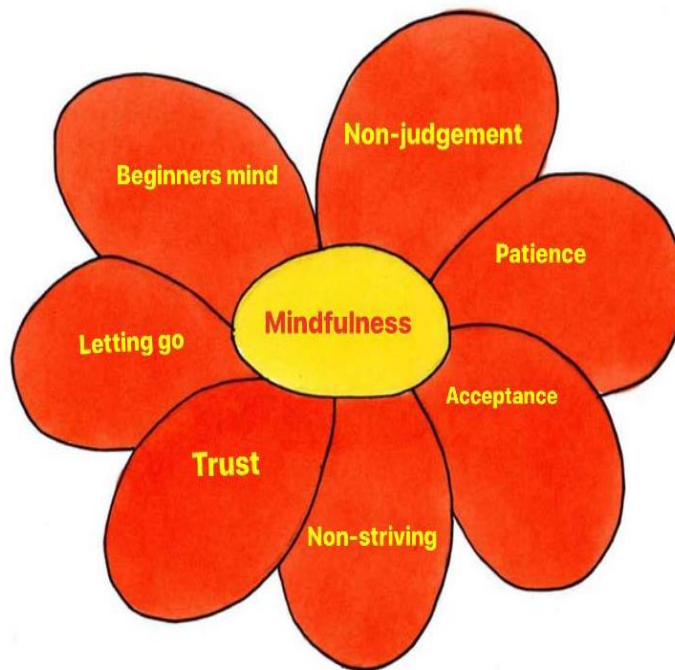
### Sitting Meditation: Basics

- Sit in an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically.
- We are looking to grow the physical counterpart of the inner attitudes of self-reliance; self-acceptance; patience and alert attention.
- Practice on a chair or on the floor. If using a chair, choose one that has a straight back and place your feet flat on the floor.
- If possible, sit away from the back of the chair, so your spine is self-supporting.
- If you choose to sit on the floor, do so on a firm, thick cushion or pillow folded over once or twice, which raises your buttocks off the floor 3–6 inches.
- Whatever you are sitting on, see if it possible to sit so that your hips are slightly higher than your knees.

## Mindful Movement: Basics

- Stand comfortably with your feet about hip width apart.
- The intention of this practice is to become aware, as best you can, of physical sensations and feelings in your body as you gently stretch.
- Breathe in and slowly raise your arms out to the sides until your hands are above your head. In movement, feel the tension in the muscles as they work, lifting the arms, stretch upwards.
- Breathing freely, continue to stretch upward, fingers toward the sky, feet on floor. Feel the stretch through back, shoulders, arms, hands and fingers.
- What sensations do you notice in your body?
- Lower the arms slowly, wrists bent so the fingers point upward and the palms push outward, until your arms come back to rest along your sides.
- Close the eyes gently and focus attention on the breath and notice the release in returning to neutral.
- Continue by stretching each arm up in turn, as if you were picking fruit from a tree that is slightly out of reach. What happens when you lift the opposite heel off the floor while stretching up?
- Then, raise both arms up and bend your body to the left as you breathe out. On the in breath, come back to centre and on the outbreath bend over to the right. Inhale back to centre and return to neutral.

- Next roll your shoulders up to your ears, roll them down the back, round and squeeze shoulders together in front of your body. Move first in one direction and then in the other.
- Once back in neutral, roll your head forward, moving chin to chest, then head over to the left so left ear comes down to left shoulder. Then move head over to the other side where the right ear comes toward the right shoulder. Then move the other way.
- Finally, stay still for a while in a standing posture, like a mountain, and tune in to the sensations in your body. Take a few long, slow, deep breaths.



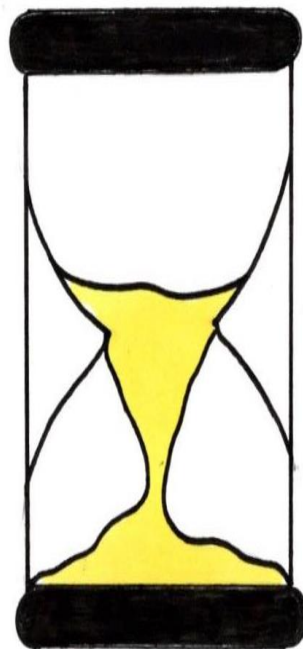


## Mindful Movement: The Benefits

- Build on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and **“inhabit”** body experience/sensation.
- See old habitual patterns of the mind—especially those that emphasize **striving**.
- Work with physical boundaries and intensity and learn acceptance of our limits.
- Learn new ways of taking care of ourselves.

The movements are a direct way of connecting with awareness of the body.

The body is the place where emotions are often expressed, under the surface and without our awareness. So becoming more aware of the body gives us an additional place from which to stand and look at our thoughts.



# The Three Step (or Three Minute) Breathing Space

## Basic Instructions

### 1. Awareness

Bring yourself to the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask:

***“What is my experience right now? ..... In bodily sensations? ..... In feelings? ..... And in thoughts?”***

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

### 2. Gathering

Then gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each in-breath and each out-breath as they follow one after another.

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and to help you tune into a state of stillness and awareness.

### 3. Expanding

Expand the whole field of your awareness around your breathing so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture and facial expression.

***The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment. The key skill in using Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is to maintain awareness in the present moment. Nothing else!***

## Home Practice for Session 3

- Mindfulness of breath (days 1, 3 and 5) Mindful movement (days 2, 4 and 6). If you have any back, or other, health difficulties that may cause problems, please make your own decisions as to which, (if any), of these exercises you do.
- Practice the 3-step breathing space 3 times a day, at set times you have decided in advance.
- Complete the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar (one entry per day). Use this opportunity to become really aware of thoughts, feelings and body sensations around one unpleasant event each day. Notice and write them down as soon as you can and in as much detail as you can. What unpleasant events ‘pull you off course’ or ‘bring you down’?
- Choose a new routine activity to be mindful of daily (e.g. washing dishes, taking a shower, shopping, eating). The aim is to tune your awareness to tiny, everyday experiences you might normally pass by or take for granted.

Habit releaser week three:

### Valuing the television

One day this week, choose a programme you really want to watch. Turn the TV off when it has finished (turn it on later if there’s something else you want to see). Jot down in your notebook what you noticed, thoughts, feelings, impulses. Remember the intention is to help dissolve old habits that have often grown up over years, so don’t expect miracles; just breathe in some fresh air.

## UNPLEASANT EVENTS DIARY – week 3

Be aware of an unpleasant event 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.

What was the experience? E.g. waiting in a queue and someone pushes in front of me	How did your body feel during this experience? E.g. jaw clenches, tight stomach	What thoughts and images came? E.g. “Idiot” “If I wasn’t so shy people wouldn’t push in”	What feelings came? E.g. angry, then guilty for not standing up for myself	What thoughts are in your mind right now? E.g. I always blame myself.
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

## Homework Record – Session 3

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Tuesday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Wednesday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Thursday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Friday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Saturday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	
Sunday	-Mindfulness of breath -Mindful movement -Unpleasant experiences calendar -3-step breathing space	

## **MBCT SESSION 4 – Recognising Aversion**

The skill of “**coming back**” helps us see more clearly what it is that takes the mind away from the present moment or now.

The mind wanders instantly into chewing over things and worry, without us even knowing how it gets there.

The mind has an automatic reaction to unpleasant feelings and sensations and this is known as **aversion**. Aversion is a strong feeling of dislike or opposition.

**Aversion** is driven by the *need not* to have these experiences. Wanting things to be different from how they really are. This is often at the **root** of **emotional** suffering.

Staying present gives another way to view things. It helps us take a wider view and relate differently to these experiences.

Difficult things are a part and parcel of life. It is how we handle these things, that makes the difference between whether they control our lives or we relate more lightly to them.

We can become more aware of the ways we react to events through our thoughts, feelings and body sensations.

We can create the possibility of freeing ourselves from habit and automatic ways of reacting. We can instead respond mindfully – in more skilful ways.

In general, we react to experience in one of three ways:

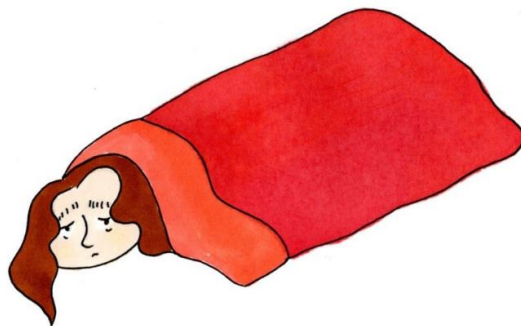
1. With spacing out (boredom), we switch away from the present moment and go off elsewhere ***'in our heads'***.



2. By not allowing ourselves to let go of experiences we **are** having right now, or wishing we were having experiences that we are **not** having right now.



3. With wanting it to go away, being angry with it – wanting to get rid of experiences we are having right now, or avoiding experiences that we **do not want** to be having.



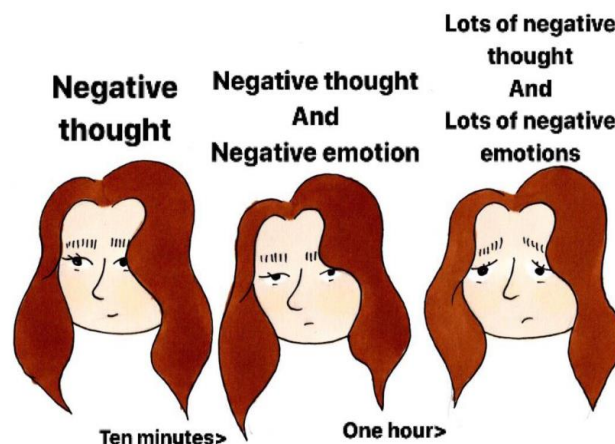
Each of these ways of reacting may cause problems, particularly reacting to unpleasant feelings with aversion. The main aim is to **become more aware of our experience**, so that we can **respond** mindfully rather than **react** automatically.



Regular practice gives us many opportunities to notice when we have drifted away from awareness of the moment.

We can take a friendly awareness to whatever it was that took our attention and gently and firmly bring attention back to our focus, reconnecting with moment-by-moment awareness.

During the day, try deliberately using the breathing space whenever you notice unpleasant feelings, or a sense of **'tightening'** or **'holding'** in the body. This provides an opportunity to **respond** rather than **react**.





## SESSION 4 - Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire

Here are some thoughts that pop into people's heads.

Please **read the list**, and **notice what happens** as you do so.

Do you recognize any of them?

Which thoughts feel most familiar to you?

When you feel very low, how often do thoughts like these occur?

And how far do you believe them?

How convincing do they seem?

And what about when you are feeling well?

How often do the thoughts occur then?

And how far do you believe them?

How convincing do they feel?

When we feel low, thoughts like these often feel like ***“the truth”*** about us.

But in fact they are symptoms of depression or anxiety— just as a high temperature is a symptom of flu.

Becoming aware, through mindfulness, that they are just ***“the ‘problem’ voice speaking”*** allows us to step back from them and begin to choose whether to take them seriously or not.

**Perhaps, in fact, we can learn simply to notice them, acknowledge their presence, and let them go.**

Automatic Thoughts			Automatic Thoughts		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel like I'm up against the world.</li> <li>• I'm no good.</li> <li>• Why can't I ever succeed?</li> <li>• No one understands me.</li> <li>• I've let people down.</li> <li>• I don't think I can go on.</li> <li>• I wish I were a better person.</li> <li>• I'm so weak.</li> <li>• My life's not going the way I want it to.</li> <li>• I'm so disappointed in myself.</li> <li>• Nothing feels good anymore.</li> <li>• I can't stand this anymore.</li> <li>• I can't get started.</li> <li>• What's wrong with me?</li> <li>• I wish I were somewhere else.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can't get things together.</li> <li>• I hate myself.</li> <li>• I'm worthless.</li> <li>• I wish I could just disappear.</li> <li>• What's the matter with me?</li> <li>• I'm a loser.</li> <li>• My life is a mess.</li> <li>• I'm a failure.</li> <li>• I'll never make it.</li> <li>• I feel so helpless.</li> <li>• Something has to change.</li> <li>• There must be something wrong with me.</li> <li>• My future is bleak.</li> <li>• It's just not worth it.</li> <li>• I can't finish anything.</li> </ul>		

## 15 Things Mindful People Do Differently

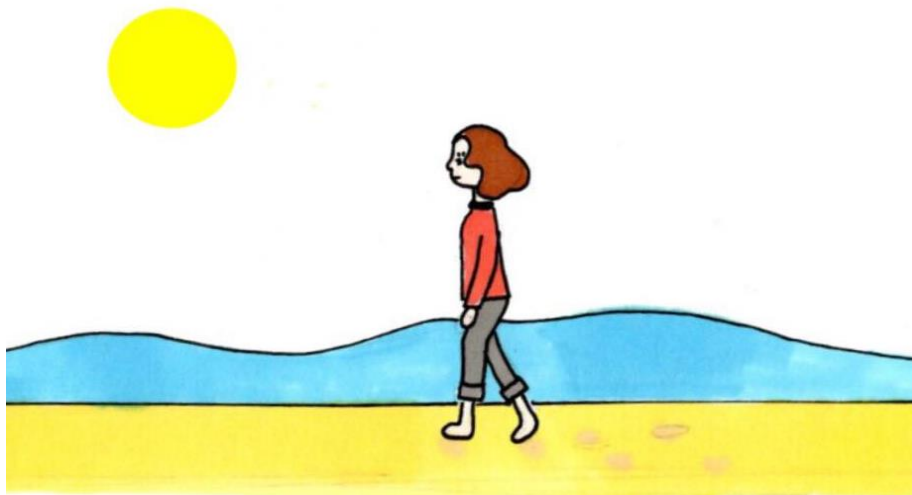
1

They don't believe their thoughts  
- and they don't take them all that seriously

- |  |   |    |  |
|--|---|----|--|
| They don't try to avoid or deny emotions           | 2 | 9  | They slow down when reading and truly take the information in            |
| They understand that all things come and go        | 3 | 10 | They are fully present when listening without trying to control or judge |
| They do one thing at a time                        | 4 | 11 | They take mini-breaks every hour or so when working or studying.         |
| They turn everyday tasks into mindful moments      | 5 | 12 | They laugh at themselves   |
| They practice being curious                        | 6 | 13 | They focus on what they're doing   |
| They get outdoors and embrace the beauty of nature | 7 | 14 | They challenge existing beliefs  |
| They enjoy every bite when they eat                | 8 | 15 | They nourish their bodies  |

## SESSION 4 – Mindful Walking

1. Find a place where you can walk up and down. It can be inside or outside—and the length of your **“walk”** may be up to 10 paces.
2. Stand at one end of your walk,
  - With your feet parallel to each other, about 4 to 6 inches apart, and your knees **“unlocked,”** so that they can gently flex.
  - Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides, or hold your hands loosely together in front of your body. Direct your gaze, softly, straight ahead.
3. Bring the focus of awareness to the bottom of your feet, getting a direct feel for the physical sensations. The contact of your feet and the weight of your body down through your legs and feet to the ground.
  - You may find it helpful to flex your knees slightly a few times to get a clearer sense of the sensations in the feet and legs.



## SESSION 4 – Mindful Walking (continued)

4. When you are ready, transfer the weight of the body into the right leg,
  - Notice the changing pattern of physical sensations in the legs and feet as the left leg “**empties**” and the right leg takes over the support of the rest of the body.
5. With the left leg “**empty**,” allow the left heel to rise slowly from the floor,
  - Notice the sensations in the calf muscles as you do so, and continue, allowing the whole of the left foot to lift gently until only the toes are in contact with the floor.
  - Aware of the physical sensations in the feet and legs, slowly lift the left foot. Carefully move it forward, feeling the foot and leg as they move through the air, and place the heel on the floor.
  - Allow the rest of the bottom of the left foot to make contact with the floor, as you move the weight of the body into the left leg and foot.
  - Be aware of the increasing physical sensations in the left leg and foot, and of the “emptying” of the right leg and right heel leaving the floor.
6. With the weight fully transferred to the left leg, allow the rest of the right foot to lift and move it slowly forward.
  - Be aware of changing pattern of physical sensation as you do so.
  - Focus your attention on the right heel as it makes contact with the ground.
  - Transfer the weight of the body into the right foot as it is placed gently on the ground, being aware of the shifting pattern of physical sensations in the two legs and feet

## SESSION 4 – Mindful Walking (continued)

7. In this way, slowly move from one end of your walk to the other.

- Be aware of sensations in the bottom of your feet and heels as they make contact with the floor.
- Notice the sensations in the muscles of the legs as they swing forward.

8. At the end of your walk, stop for a few moments, then turn slowly around.

- Be aware of and appreciate the pattern of movements, through which the body changes direction, and continue walking.

9. Walk up and down in this way.

- Be aware, as best you can, of physical sensations in the feet and legs, and of the contact of the feet with the floor. Keep your gaze directed softly ahead.

10. When you notice that the mind has wandered away from awareness of the sensations of walking, gently escort the focus of attention back to the sensations in the feet and legs.

- Use the sensations as the feet contact the floor as an “**anchor**” to reconnect with the present moment. This is just as you used the breath in the sitting meditation.
- If you find your mind has wandered, you might find it helpful to stand still for a few moments. Gather the focus of attention before resuming your walking.

11. Continue to walk for 10 to 15 minutes, or longer, if you wish.

## SESSION 4 – Mindful Walking (continued)

12. To begin with, walk at a pace that is slower than usual. Give yourself a better chance to be fully aware of these sensations. Once you feel comfortable walking slowly with awareness, you can experiment by walking at faster speeds.

- Do this up to and beyond normal walking speed.
- If feeling particularly agitated, it may help to begin walking fast, with awareness, and to slow down naturally as you settle.

13. As often as you can, bring this awareness that you grow in walking meditation to your everyday experience of walking.



## SESSION 4 – Staying Present

Remember-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.

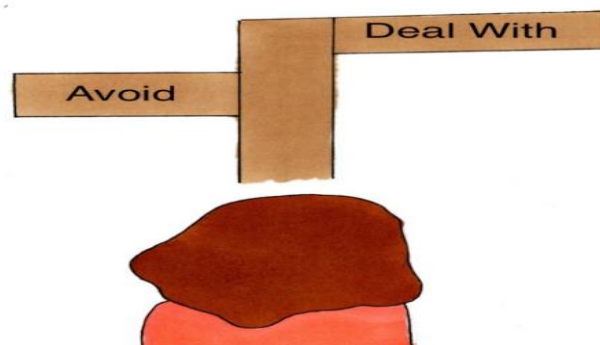
Just patiently practice feeling what is there—and the body is always there—until it becomes second nature to know even the small movements you make.

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. Practice again and again, bringing your attention back to your body.

This basic effort, is a relaxing back into the moment and 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.



## Home Practice for Session 4

- Practice the guided sitting meditation for 6 days out of 7.
- Practice the 3-step breathing space (regular) 3 times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance.
- 3-step breathing space – responsive. Practice this whenever you notice unpleasant feelings.

Habit releaser week four:

Do a kind deed for someone else.

Carry out a random act of kindness e.g. help a neighbour carry their shopping, do something for your partner you know they hate doing, buy some flowers for a friend. Make a mental note of how you feel.



## Homework Record – Session 4

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice (Y=Yes, N=No)	Comments
Monday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Tuesday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Wednesday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Thursday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Friday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Saturday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Sunday	-Sitting meditation -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	

## **MBCT SESSION 5 – Allowing/Letting Be**

In this session we begin deliberately to turn toward and approach painful experiences with kindness. The basic guideline in this practice is to become mindfully aware of whatever is uppermost in our moment by moment experience.

**Step 1:** If the mind is repeatedly drawn to a particular place, to particular thoughts, feelings, or body sensations.

We deliberately take an attitude of gentle and friendly awareness to whatever is pulling for our attention. Noticing the sense of being pulled again and again to the same place.

**Step 2:** To notice as best we can, how we are relating to whatever is arising in the body or mind. The way we react to our thoughts and feelings determines whether they are passing events or whether they continue to persist.

**Each of the following reactions is the opposite of allowing or letting be:** If we like the thought, feeling or body sensation we may become attached to it, and try to hold onto it.

If on the other hand, we dislike it because it is painful, unpleasant, or uncomfortable in some way, then we may experience fear or irritation, tense up and contract, or try to push it away.



## The Guest House by Rumi

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 honourably.  
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.



## A New Practice

In session 5, we explored a new way of approaching difficulty.

When we notice that our attention keeps being pulled away from the breath (or another focus) to painful thoughts, emotions or feelings, the first step is to become mindfully aware of any physical sensation in the body that occur alongside the thought or emotion.

We then deliberately move the focus of awareness to the part of the body where sensation is strongest.

We explore how the breath can provide a useful vehicle to do this.

Just as we practiced in the body scan, we can take a gentle and friendly awareness to that part of the body by **‘breathing into’** it on the in breath and **‘breathing out’** from it on the outbreath.

Once our attention has moved to the body sensations and are in the field of our awareness, the guidance is to say to ourselves.

***“It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK to feel this; it’s OK to allow myself to be open to this”.***

Then we just stay with the awareness of body sensations and our relationship to them, breathing with them, accepting them and letting them be.

We can repeat these phrases, using each outbreath to soften and open to the sensations.

**‘Allowing’** does **not** mean **‘giving in’**

We are allowing ourselves to become fully aware of difficulties and to respond to them skilfully.

## SESSION 5 – Using the Breathing Space: Extra Guidance

You have been practicing the breathing space regularly, 3 times a day, and whenever you need it.

Now, we suggest that whenever you feel troubled in body or mind, the first step is always to take a breathing space.

Here is some extra guidance that may help at these times.



### 1. AWARENESS

We have already practiced bringing the focus of awareness to your inner experience and noticing what is happening in your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations.

Now, you may find it helpful to describe and identify what is arising—to put experiences into words by saying in your mind, ***“A feeling of anger is arising”*** or ***“Self-critical thoughts are here”***.

## 2. REDIRECTING ATTENTION

We have already practiced gently redirecting our full attention to the breath; following the breath all the way in and all the way out.

In addition, try noting at the back of your mind: ***“Breathing in . . . breathing out”*** or ***counting breaths from 1 to 5***, then starting over again: ***“Inhaling, 1 . . . exhaling, 1; inhaling, 2”*** . . . and so on.

## 3. EXPANDING ATTENTION

We have already practiced allowing the attention to expand to the whole body. So now we become aware of our posture and facial expression. We hold in awareness all the sensations in our bodies right now, just as they are.

Now extend this step, if you choose, especially if there is any sense of discomfort, tension, or resistance. If these sensations are present, bring your awareness to them by ***“breathing into them”*** on the in breath. Then, breathe out from the sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath.

Say to yourself on the outbreath, ***“It’s OK . . . whatever it is, it’s already here. Let me feel it.”*** And as best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.

Breathe 

## Home practice for Session 5

- Practice the 'Working with difficulty' meditation on days 1, 3 and 5 and alternate with a sitting meditation or a body scan (days 2, 4 and 6).
- Practice the 3-step breathing space (regular) 3 times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance.
- 3-step breathing space – responsive. Practice this whenever you notice unpleasant feelings.

Habit releaser week five:

Sowing the seeds.

Nurturing a plant or sowing some seeds are among those very simple things in life that can have a surprisingly big benefit. So this week, sow some seeds or buy or borrow a plant from a friend. Notice the light glinting off the droplets as you water them.

## Homework Record – Session 5

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Tuesday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Wednesday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Thursday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Friday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Saturday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	
Sunday	-‘Difficulty’ meditation -3-step breathing space regular -3-step breathing space responsive	



## **MBCT SESSION 6 – Thoughts Are Not Facts**

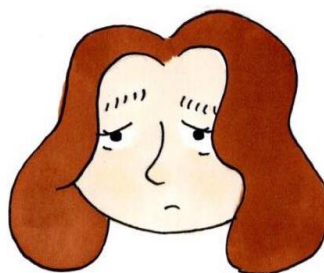
Our thoughts can have very powerful effects on **how we feel** and **what we do**.

Often those thoughts are triggered and run off automatically.

By becoming aware, over and over again, of thoughts and images passing through the mind, and letting go of them as we return our attention to the breath and the moment, it is possible to get some distance and a different point of view on them.

This can allow us to see that there may be other ways to think about situations. Freeing us from old thought patterns that automatically ***“pop into mind.”***

Most importantly, we may eventually come to realise ***“deep in our bones”*** that **all thoughts are only mental events** (*including the thoughts that say they are not!*), that **thoughts are not facts**, and that **we are not our thoughts**.



**I'm sure worrying will  
help**

Thoughts and images are often an indication of what is going on deeper in the mind.

We can **“get hold of them,”** so that we can look them over from a number of different viewpoints.

By becoming very familiar with our own **“top 10” habitual, automatic, unhelpful thinking patterns**, we can more easily become aware of and change the processes that may lead us into difficult mood changes.

It is particularly important to become aware of thoughts that may block or undermine practice, such as **“There’s no point in doing this”** or **“It’s not going to work, so why bother?”** and **“It’s out of control, I can’t stop it”**

Such sad, pessimistic or hopeless thought patterns, are one of the most characteristic features of depressed or anxious mood states.

One of the main things that stop us from taking actions that would help us get out of those states.

It follows that it is particularly important to recognise such thoughts as **“negative thinking”** and not automatically give up on efforts to apply skilful means to change the way we feel.



## Early Warning System - Relapse Prevention

What are the early warning signs that signal to you that depression; anxiety or other problems, might be trying to take hold again?

(e.g. becoming irritable; not wanting to see people; changes in sleeping habits; changes in eating habits; getting easily exhausted; giving up on exercise; not wanting to deal with opening mail or paying bills; postponing deadlines).

Set up an **Early Warning System** – write down on the worksheet below, the changes you should look out for.

(If it feels comfortable, include those with whom you share your life, with a view to working together, to notice and respond, rather than to react to these signs).

### **Working Wisely with Unhappiness; Depression; Anxiety or other problems**

This worksheet offers an opportunity to increase your awareness of what happens for you when these appear.

The aim is, carefully and with curiosity, to investigate the thoughts, feelings, body sensations and patterns of behaviour that tell you that your difficulties are starting to appear.

#### **What triggers this for you?**

- Triggers can be external (things that happen to you) or internal (e.g. thoughts, feelings, memories, concerns).
- Look out for small triggers as well as large ones – sometimes something that appears quite trivial can spark a downward mood spiral.

**What sort of thoughts run through your mind when you first feel your mood dropping?**

**What emotions arise?**

**What happens in your body?**

**What do you do, or feel like doing?**

**Are there any old habits of thinking or behaviour that might unwittingly keep you stuck in depression (e.g. ruminating, trying to suppress or turn away from painful thoughts or feelings, struggling with it instead of accepting and exploring it)?**



## Ways to See Your Thoughts Differently

Here are some of the things you can do with your thoughts:

- Just watch them come and go, without feeling that you have to follow them.
- Notice the feelings that gives rise to the thought – your thoughts as just one link in a chain of events.
- View each thought as a mental event rather than a fact. It may be true that this event often occurs with other feelings. It is tempting to think of it as being true, but it is up to you to decide whether it is true and how you want to deal with it.
- Write your thoughts down on paper. This lets you see them in a way that is less emotional and overwhelming. Also, the pause between having the thought and writing it down can give you a moment to respond to it differently.
- For particular thoughts, it may be helpful to take another look at them intentionally, in a balanced, open state of mind, as part of your mindfulness sitting practice.
- Let your ‘wise mind’ give its perspective, perhaps labelling the feeling out of which it arises, and holding a sense of curiosity, as best you can: **‘Ah, here is sadness’**; **‘here is the voice of depression/anxiety’**; **‘here is the familiar harsh and critical voice’**. The attitude to take to your thoughts is one of gentle interest and curiosity.

Complete the **‘Working Wisely with anxiousness, unhappiness and depression’** worksheet that you started in class. Please include family and friends, if you like. They may also notice early warning signs if your mood changes.



## SESSION 6 – Stepping Back from Thought

It is very freeing to be able to see that your **thoughts are just thoughts** and **not “you” or “reality.”**

You may have the thought that ***“I must get these 10 things done today”***.

If you don't recognise this as just a thought but act as if it's ***“the truth,”*** then in that moment, reality is created, you really believe that these things must all be done.

A patient, 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.

He realised that he didn't have to be doing this. It was the result of a day spent trying to fit everything in that he thought needed doing today.

He saw what he was doing to himself, and that he had been unable to question the truth of his thinking, that everything had to get done, as 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, and not know why.

So if the thought of how much you have to get done comes up while you are meditating, you will have to be very attentive to it, as a thought.

You could be up and doing things before you know it, without any awareness that you decided to stop sitting, simply because a thought came through your mind.

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.

This allows for clear-sight and a greater sense of managing your life.

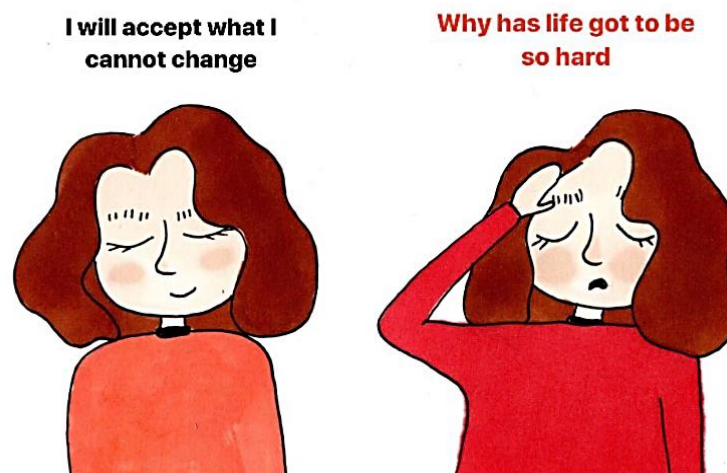
This freedom to **choose**, comes directly out of meditation practice.

When we spend time each day in a state of non-doing, observing the breath and the activity of our mind and body, without getting caught up in activity, we cultivate calmness and mindfulness hand in hand.

The mind develops stability and being less caught up in the content of thinking, we strengthen the mind's ability to concentrate and be calm.

If each time we recognise **a thought as a thought** when it arises and register its content, discern the strength of its hold on us and the contents accuracy, and each time 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.



## **The Train of Association**

We all spend much or most of our lives with our thinking mind.

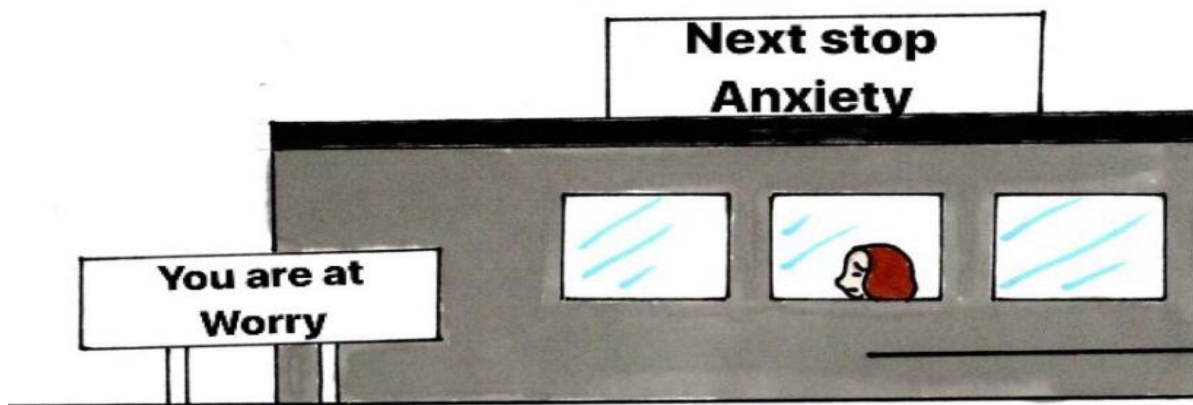
Meditation is a different process that does not involve the thinking mind.

Meditation is not thought.

By silent observation, new kinds of understanding emerge.

We do not need to fight with thoughts, struggle against them, or judge them.

We can simply choose not to follow the thoughts once we are aware that they are there.



Thought sweeps through the mind, carries it away, and, in a very short time, we can be carried very far indeed.

We hop on a train of linked thoughts, images and ideas, not knowing that we have done so, and certainly not knowing where we will land up.

Somewhere down the line, we may wake up and realise that we have been thinking. That we have been taken for a ride.

When we step down from the train, it may be in a very different emotional environment from where we jumped on or were dragged aboard.



## Mindfulness Exercise

Close your eyes and imagine sitting in a cinema watching an empty screen.

Simply wait for thoughts to come.

When 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 then vanish upon inspection.

And 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 that about?

What are the mind states or the particular kinds of thoughts that hook us again and again, so that we forget that they are just empty phenomena passing through?

It is amazing to observe how much power we unknowingly give to uninvited thoughts:

***“Do this, say that, remember, plan, obsess, judge.”***

They have the potential to drive us quite crazy, and they often do!

The kind of thoughts we have, and their impact on our lives, depend 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.

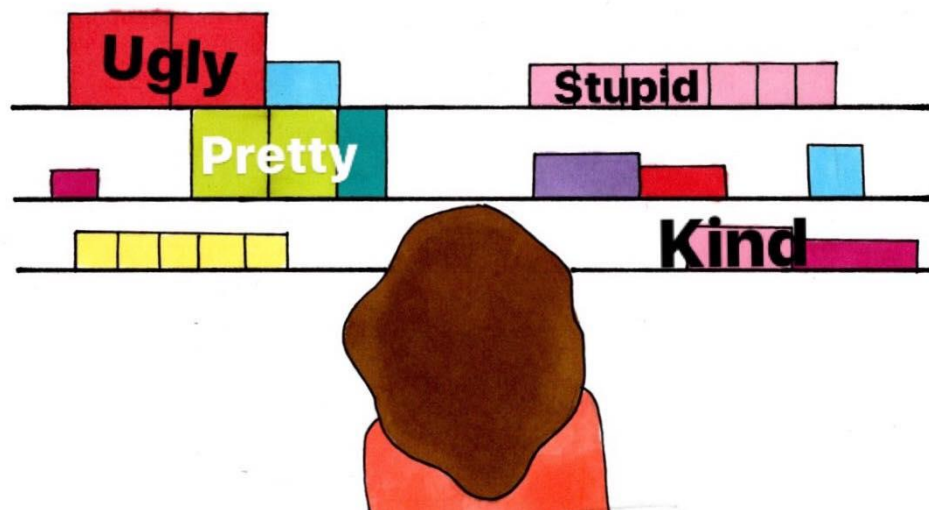
We can see our thoughts as the passing show that they are.

From thoughts come actions and from actions come all sorts of consequences.

Which thoughts will we buy?

Our great task is to see them clearly, so that we can choose which ones to act on and which simply to let be.

## What to buy



## Home practice for Session 6

- Choose your own selection of formal meditation practices (body scan, sitting meditation, mindful movement) for a minimum of 40 minutes a day (e.g. 20 + 20).
- Practice the 3-step breathing space (regular) 3 times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance.
- 3-step breathing space – responsive. Practice this whenever you notice unpleasant feelings. If negative thoughts are still around after the breathing space, you might like to use some of the ideas below to help get a different perspective on these thoughts.

Habit releaser week six:

Reclaiming your life.

Think about something you used to enjoy doing but have stopped. Don't wait until you feel like doing it; do it anyway and see what happens. It's time to reclaim your life.



## Homework Record – Session 6

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Tuesday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Wednesday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Thursday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Friday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Saturday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	
Sunday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space ‘regular’ -3-step breathing space ‘responsive’	

## **MBCT SESSION 7 – How Can I Best Take Care of Myself?**

What we actually do with our time from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from one year to the next, can be a very powerful influence.

This affects our general well-being and our ability to deal skilfully with difficulties.

You might like to ask yourself these questions:

- Of the things that I do, what nourishes me? What increases my sense of actually being alive and present, rather than merely existing?
- Of the things that 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?
- Accepting that there are some aspects of my life that I simply cannot change, am I consciously choosing to increase the time and effort I give to nourishing activities, and decrease the time and effort I give to depleting activities?

By being present in more of our moments and making decisions about what we really need in each of those moments, we can use activity to become more aware and alert, and to regulate our mood.

We can use our day-by-day experience to discover and develop activities to use as tools to cope with periods of worsening mood.

For example, one of the simplest ways to take care of your physical and mental well-being is to take daily physical exercise – as a minimum, aim for at least one, brisk, 10-minute walk each day.

Also, if at all possible, do other types of exercise, such as mindful stretching, yoga, swimming, etc. Once exercise is in your daily routine, it is a readily available response to difficult mood.

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

## **The Action Step**

After reconnecting with an expanded awareness in the breathing space, it may feel appropriate to take some considered action. In dealing with depressed feelings, the following activities may be particularly helpful:

- 1. Do something pleasurable**
- 2. Do something that will give a sense of satisfaction or mastery**
- 3. Act mindfully**

Ask yourself: What do I need for myself right now? How can I best take care of myself right now?

Write down below your ideas about actions you could try linked to 1, 2 and 3 above.

**1. Something pleasurable**

**2. Something that will give a sense of satisfaction or mastery**

**3. Acting mindfully**

## **Your Actions**

Remember to try to perform your action as an experiment.

Try not to prejudge how you will feel after it is complete.

Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way.

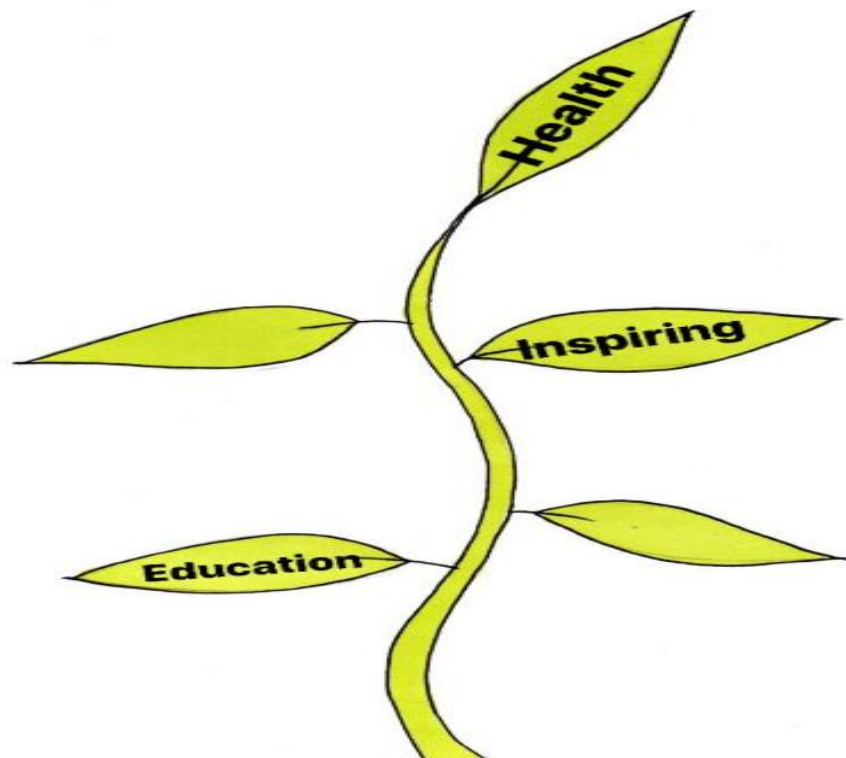
Consider a range of activities and don't limit yourself to a favourite few.

Sometimes, trying new behaviours can be interesting in itself.

Exploring and inquiring often works against withdrawal and retreat.

Don't expect miracles. 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.

Activities are helpful in building your overall sense of control in the face of shifts in your mood.



## **Responding wisely and caring for yourself**

In the past, what have you noticed that helped when you were becoming depressed?

What might be a skilful response to a lowering of mood? What have you learned in the classes that might help you respond to the turmoil of thoughts and feelings, rather than add to them?

How can you best take care of yourself at difficult and painful times? What are the things that soothe you, the activities that might nourish, the people you might contact, the small things you could do to respond wisely to distress?



## MY ACTION PLAN

Now write down suggestions to yourself for an Action Plan. You can use this to cope. And remember - address the frame of mind that you might be in at the time. For example:-

***“I know you probably will not be keen on this idea but I know that it is very important that you . . .”***

For example, you might put on a **mindful movement, body scan, or sitting meditation** recording.

Remind yourself of what you learned during the class that was helpful then; take **frequent breathing spaces** leading into thought review or considered action.

Read something that will **“reconnect”** you with your **“wiser”** mind and so on.

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

## SESSION 7 – When Difficulty Is Overwhelming

Sometimes difficulty comes out of the blue.

You may wake up feeling very tired and listless, with hopeless thoughts going through your mind.

If this happens, it may be useful for you to tell yourself, ***“Just because I am experiencing this now, does not mean that I have to stay this way.”***

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

If you have been depressed or anxious in the past, it will tend to trigger old habits of thought that may be particularly damaging.

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 undermines your taking any action.

Having these symptoms does not mean that the depression or anxiety needs to go on for a long time or that you are already in a full-blown episode.

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

Take a **breathing space** to help gather yourself. This may help you see your situation from a wider point of view.

This will allow you to become aware of the pull of old habits of thinking and what **skilful action** you might take.

## SESSION 7 – The Exhaustion Funnel

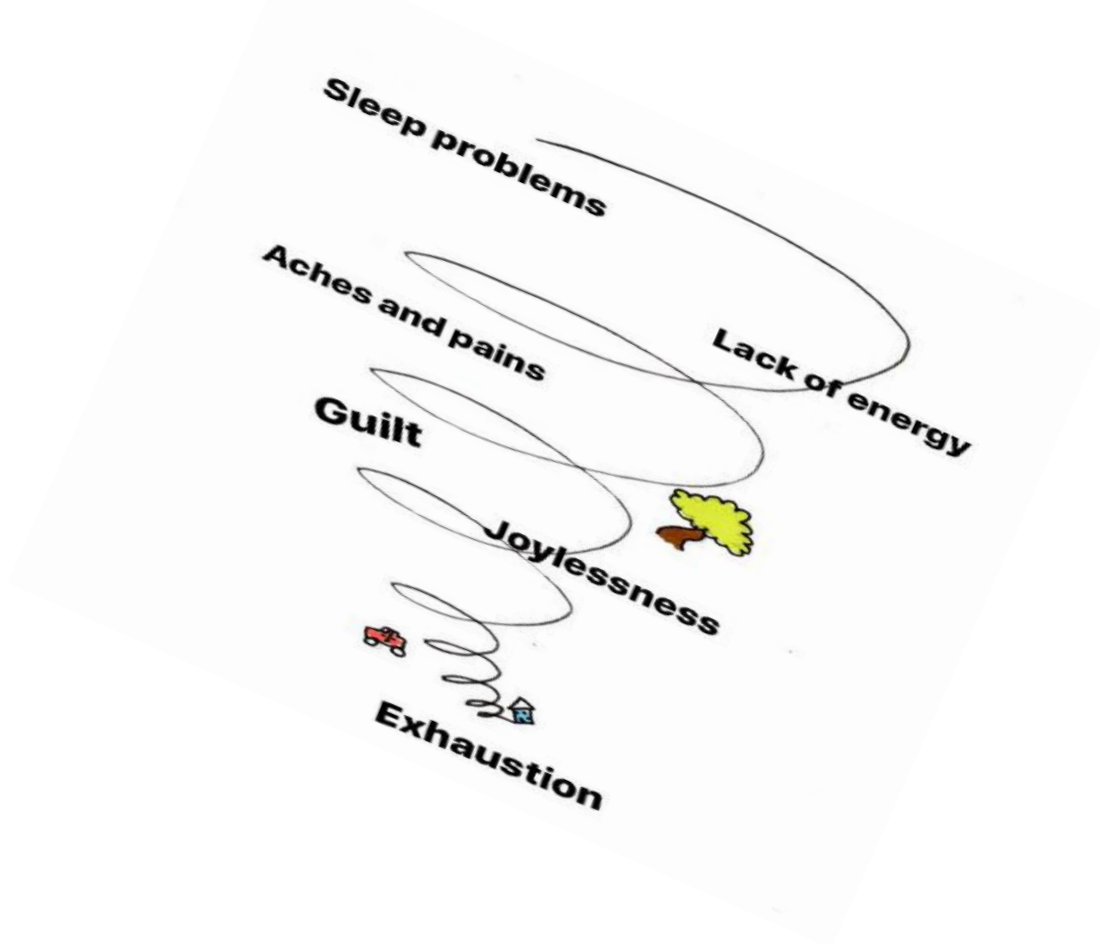
The bottom circles, are the narrowing of our lives as we give up things that we enjoy.

We stop doing activities that nourish us, leaving only work or other stressors that deplete our resources.

Professor Marie Asberg suggests that those of us who continue downward are likely to be those who are the most conscientious.

Those whose level of self-confidence is closely dependent on performance, for instance (i.e., those who are often seen as the busiest, not the laziest).

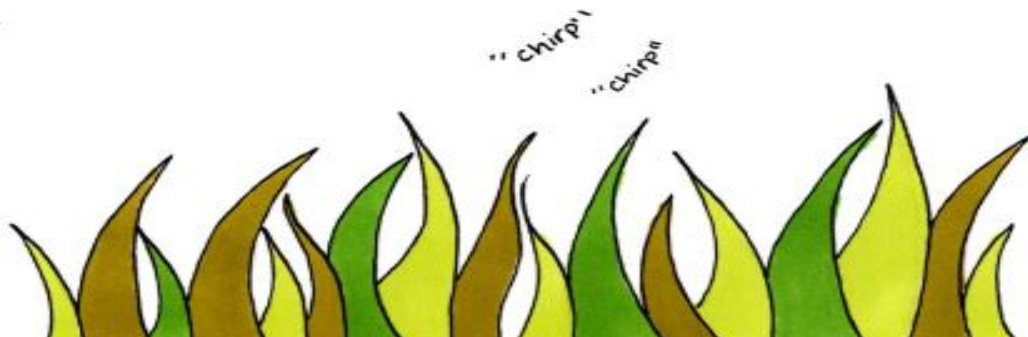
This shows the accumulating “symptoms” experienced by people as the funnel narrows to more and more exhaustion.



## 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 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 should 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?

Mary Oliver

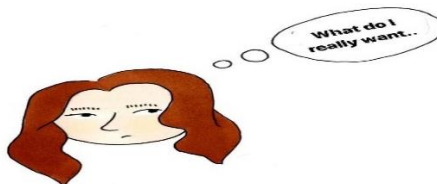


## Home practice for Session 7

- Settle on a practice that you intend to use on a daily basis, then use it this week, and record your reactions on the homework record form.
- Prepare an action plan for times when difficult mood threatens to overwhelm you. Feel free to include others – family or friends – in this planning.
- Practice the 3-step breathing space (regular) 3 times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance.
- Responsive 3-step breathing space + action. Practice this whenever you notice unpleasant feelings. Then consider taking an action step that feels right for your needs – choosing something that soothes or nourishes you. Contacting someone; taking some exercise; doing something that gives you a sense of mastery or achievement and acting mindfully (see your ideas above).

### Habit releaser week seven: Eating

Try having part of a meal in silence. Focus on the food, colours and sensations. See how easily you taste the first mouthful and not others. What does the fourth mouthful taste like?



## Homework Record – Session 7

Record on the homework record each time you practice. Also, note anything that comes up in the homework so we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Tuesday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Wednesday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Thursday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Friday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Saturday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	
Sunday	-Formal practice -3-step breathing space 'regular' -3-step breathing space 'responsive'	

## SESSION 8 – Maintaining and Extending New Learning

The advantage of **awareness**, **acceptance**, and **mindfully responding** to situations has been a theme throughout this course.

Rather than reacting in preprogramed “***automatic autopilot.***”

Acceptance can launch skilful action, changing our inner and outer world.

There are situations and feelings that it may be very difficult or impossible to change.

Carrying on trying to solve a problem that can't be solved. Refusing to accept the reality of the situation we are in, may mean “***banging our head on a brick wall.***” Exhausting ourselves and actually increasing our sense of helplessness; sadness; anxiousness or depression.

**In these situations, we can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful decision:**

- **Not to try and exert control.**
- **Accept it as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it.**
- **Choosing not to act is less likely to increase the problem.**

Being **forced** to give up attempts at control after repeated failures is more likely to increase depression.

In the so-called “***Serenity Prayer,***” “*we ask for the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.*”

At some level, we **already** have all of these qualities—our task is to realise them (make them real) and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

## THE FUTURE

*Decide, right now, what your time table of practice will be over the next few weeks until we meet again, and stick to it as best you can throughout this period.*

*Note any difficulties you have, so that we can discuss them next time.*

*Also, remember that the regular breathing space practice provides 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*

***KEEP BREATHING!***





## **MBCT SESSION 8 –Using What Has Been Learned**

### **Reflections**

**What was your hope in coming to the class? (see p.2)**

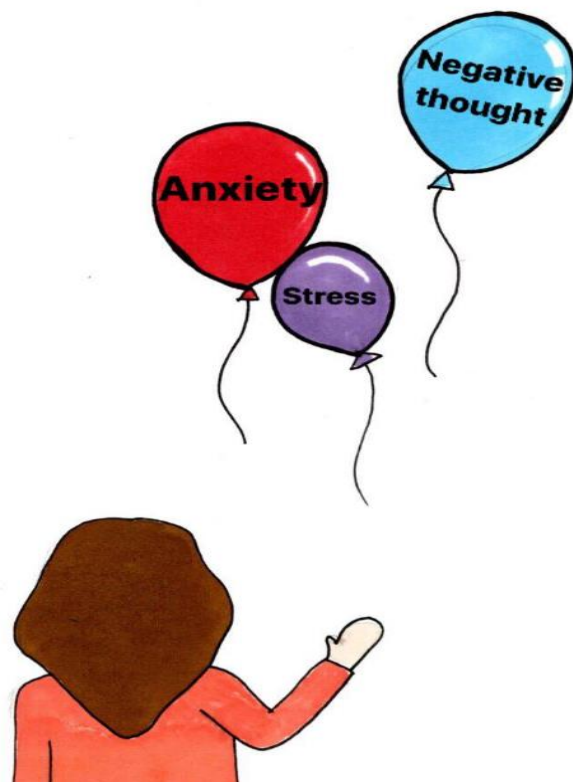
**What have you learned?**

**What might get in the way of you continuing to practice?**

## SESSION 8 – Daily Mindfulness

- When you first wake up, before getting out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Take 5 mindful breaths.
- Notice change 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 move from one position to another.
- When you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a car pass by, laughter, the wind, the sound of a door closing—use any sound as the bell of mindfulness. Really listen and be present and awake.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring attention to your breathing. Take 5 mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food. This food was connected to something that nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the tractor in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously eating 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 you walk or stand. 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, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing; liking or disliking or planning what to 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 queue, use the time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rise and fall of your belly. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of tension. For example, your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back? If possible, stretch or do yoga once a day.
- Focus attention on daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing up, brushing your hair, putting on your shoes, or doing your job. Bring mindfulness to each activity.
- Before sleep, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing and observe 5 mindful breaths.



## Resources and Sources

### Books

Finding Peace in a Frantic World by Mark Williams and Danny Penman (Piatkus, 2011)

The Mindful Way Through Depression by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn (Guilford, 2007)

The Mindful Way Workbook by John Teasdale, Mark Williams and Zindel Segal (Guilford, 2014)

Mindfulness in Eight Weeks by Michael Chaskalson (Harper Thorsons, 2014)

Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Piatkus, 2013)

Adapted from Madeline Klyne, Executive Director, Cambridge Insight Meditation Center. Copyright Madeline Klyne. Reprinted in Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (Guilford Press, 2013).

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Adapted from Dell Publishing, a division of Random House, Inc., from Kabat-Zinn.<sup>67</sup> Copyright 1990 by Random House, Inc. From Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (Guilford Press, 2013).

From Barks and Moyne.<sup>94</sup> Copyright 1995 by Coleman Barks.

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## **Audio tracks**

<https://soundcloud.com/user-886495326/sets/mindfulness/s-Fsb9W>

[www.freemindfulness.org](http://www.freemindfulness.org)

[www.guilford.com/MBCTaudio](http://www.guilford.com/MBCTaudio)

[www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en)

## **Websites**

<http://oxfordmindfulness.org/for-you/resources/>

**Then access free app here: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oxford-mbct/id1138671591?mt=8>**

[www.franticworld.com](http://www.franticworld.com)

[www.freemindfulness.org/download](http://www.freemindfulness.org/download)

After the workbooklet produced by The Centre for Mindfulness Research  
and Practice – Bangor University