

Mindful Space

Mindfulness Course Handbook

Section 3 – Connecting to life

8-WEEK COURSE IN MINDFULNESS (MBSR/MBCT)

8 Tuesday evening sessions via zoom: 2 February- 23 March 2021

HALF-DAY ONLINE RETREAT

Saturday 13 March (10.00am-1.00pm)

MEMBERS' WORKSHOPS

Friday 9 April and Tuesday 20 April, 7-9pm are workshops for 8-week course graduates. You're very welcome to attend one of these.

Vicki Worsley

07706830313



Mindful Space

Learning to live in the moment

Session Seven – Kindness and compassion

- An image of the breath
- Compassion and self-compassion definitions
- Self-Compassion is not self-pity, Neff
- Loving-kindness meditation, Germer
- Six months' time
- Home practice

A human being is part of a whole, called by us the 'Universe' — a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts, and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Albert Einstein

The Practices - A Recap

Breathing spaces

- 5 things
- Conscious breathing
- 3-stage breathing space
- Breathing with an image

Meditations

- Mindfulness of breathing
- Body scan
- Compassionate acceptance
- Metta – Lovingkindness
- Standing meditation
- Walking meditation

An image of the breath

An image of the breath

Let the breath co-ordinate with an image:

- Surf rising up and down a beach
- A leaf floating up and down in the breeze
- The swell of water against a wharf
- Each cell in the body glowing and expanding with the in-breath and dimming and contracting with the out-breath
- A light bulb or the sun in the belly that glows and dims
- You're being breathed or the universe is breathing you
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An image of the body

Imagine the body as:

- a lake
- mountain (breath like the wind, mind like the sky)
- butter melting in the sun
- a pebble sinking in a lake
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Compassion and Self-Compassion Definitions

When we suffer, caring for ourselves as we would care for someone we truly love. Self-compassion includes self-kindness, a sense of common humanity and mindfulness.

Kristin Neff

Mindfulness is about deliberately using one's attention to create brain states in which patterns in our brains can be stimulated and networks of brain cells can be developed that are conducive to calming the mind and developing soothing compassion.

*P223, The Compassionate Mind,
Paul Gilbert*

Compassion can be defined in many ways, but its essence is a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and of other living things, coupled with the wish to and effort to relieve it.

*pxiii, The Compassionate Mind
Paul Gilbert*

Compassion is “our ability to feel the pain that we share with others. Without realising it we continually shield ourselves from this pain because it scares us. We put up protective walls made of opinions, prejudices, and strategies, barriers that are built on a deep fear of being hurt. These walls are further fortified by emotions of all kinds: anger, craving, indifference, jealousy and envy, arrogance and pride. But fortunately for us, the soft spot – our innate ability to love and to care about things – is like a crack in these walls we erect. It's a natural opening in the barriers we create when we're afraid. With practice we can learn to find this opening. We can learn to seize that vulnerable moment – love gratitude, loneliness, embarrassment, inadequacy – to awaken (bodhicitta).”

The Places that Scare you, p6, Pema Chodron

Self-Compassion is not self-pity, Neff

When individuals feel self-pity, they become immersed in their own problems and forget that others have similar problems. They ignore their interconnections with others, and instead feel that they are the only ones in the world who are suffering. Self-pity tends to emphasize egocentric feelings of separation from others and exaggerate the extent of personal suffering. Self-compassion, on the other hand, allows one to see the related experiences of self and other without these feelings of isolation and disconnection. Also, self-pitying individuals often become carried away with and wrapped up in their own emotional drama. They cannot step back from their situation and adopt a more balanced or objective perspective. In contrast, by taking the perspective of a compassionate other towards oneself, “mental space” is provided to recognize the broader human context of one’s experience and to put things in greater perspective. (“Yes it is very difficult what I’m going through right now, but there are many other people who are experiencing much greater suffering. Perhaps this isn’t worth getting quite so upset about...”)

Self-compassion vs Self-indulgence

Self-compassion is also very different from self-indulgence. Many people say they are reluctant to be self-compassionate because they’re afraid they would let themselves get away with anything. “I’m stressed out today so to be kind to myself I’ll just watch TV all day and eat a quart of icecream.” This, however, is self-indulgence rather than self-compassion. Remember that being compassionate to oneself means that you want to be happy and healthy in the long term. In many cases, just giving oneself pleasure may harm well-being (such as taking drugs, over-eating, being a couch potato), while giving yourself health and lasting happiness often involves a certain amount of displeasure (such as quitting smoking, dieting, exercising). People are often very hard on themselves when they notice something they want to change because they think they can shame themselves into action – the self-flagellation approach. However, this approach often backfires if you can’t face difficult truths about yourself because you are so afraid of hating yourself if you do. Thus, weaknesses may remain unacknowledged in an unconscious attempt to avoid self-censure. In contrast, the care intrinsic to compassion provides a powerful motivating force for growth and change, while also providing the safety needed to see the self clearly without fear of self-condemnation.

Loving-kindness meditation, Germer

- Allow yourself to settle into a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. If you like, putting a hand over your heart or another location that is soothing as a reminder to bring not only awareness, but loving awareness, or our experience and to ourselves.
- Now bringing to mind a person or other living being who naturally makes you smile. This could be a child, your grandmother, your cat or dog-whoever naturally brings happiness to your heart. Perhaps it's a bird outside your window. Letting yourself feel what it's like to be in that being's presence. Allowing yourself to enjoy the good company.
- Now, recognizing how this being wishes to be happy and free from suffering, just like you and every other living being. Repeating softly and gently, feeling the importance of your words:

*May you be happy.
May you be peaceful.
May you be healthy.
May you live with ease.*

- When you notice that your mind has wandered, returning to the words and the image of the loved one you have in mind. Savoring any warm feelings that may arise. Taking your time.
- Now, adding *yourself* to your circle of good will. Putting your hand over your heart and feeling the warmth and gentle pressure of your hand (for just a moment or for the rest of the meditation)

*May you and I (we) be happy.
May you and I (we) be peaceful.
May you and I (we) be healthy.
May you and I (we) live with ease.*

- Now, letting go of the image of the other, and letting the full focus of your attention rest directly on yourself. Visualizing your whole body in your mind's eye, noticing any stress or uneasiness that may be lingering within you, and offering yourself the phrases.

*May I be happy.
May I be peaceful.
May I be healthy.
May I live with ease.*

- Perhaps there are different words that speak to you more directly than the ones we already used. See if you can offer yourself some words that you might like to hear from others, or you would say to others.
- Finally, taking a few breaths and just resting quietly in your own body, accepting whatever your experience is, exactly as it is. We are simply setting an intention to open our hearts and seeing what happens.

Mindfulness Meditation – Six months' time

Imagine in six months' time you have a regular mindfulness meditation practice that you are happy with. What benefits are you gaining from it?

What does your practice look like? eg. 20 min meditation 5 days a week, drinking a cup of tea mindfully each day, mindful walking on the way to work every day, etc

What challenges have you had to face to maintaining your practice?

How did you work with them?

What resources did you need to support you?

What's one step you can take today towards building your practice?

Home Practice – Session Seven

“Pick an amount of time that you can really commit to doing every day. It is the everydayness that is going to build the practice.” Joseph Goldstein

This will be the last week of home practice on this course. What would be useful for you to focus on this coming week?

1. MEDITATION:

What meditations will you do? When? Where? How often? How long for?
What will you do to make it happen?

2. MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY:

What will you do? When? How often?

3. BREATHING SPACES:

Which ones will you do it?

4. OTHER: You might decide to consciously bring mindfulness into your relationship with your work; health; family; diet; exercise; sleep; etc

What will you do?

Signed:

Date:

Session Eight – Letting Everything Become Your Teacher

- Choiceless awareness, Mark Williams and Jon Teasdale
- Autobiography in five short chapters, Portia Nelson
- What will you take away?
- Feedback

The deep stillness we seek does not arise because the world is still or the mind is quiet. Stillness is nourished when we allow things to be just as they are for now, in this moment, moment by moment and breath by breath.

Mark Williams, *Mindfulness, Finding Peace in a Frantic World* CD

Living Peace

Peace can exist only in the present moment.

It is ridiculous to say, 'Wait until I finish this, then I will be free to live in peace.' What is 'this'? A diploma, a job, a house, the payment of a debt? If you think that way, peace will never come. There is always another 'this', that will follow the present one. If you are not living in peace at the moment, you will never be able to. If you truly want to be at peace, you must be at peace right now. Otherwise, there is only 'the hope of peace someday'.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Choiceless awareness meditation, Williams and Teasdale

In the early stages of this practice, it might be wise just to play with it for relatively short periods of time, returning to the breath or featuring some other specific chosen object of attention at other times. It sounds so simple to "just sit" without any chosen object to attend to—to simply be awareness itself to be the knowing. It is not so easy. Yet with time and motivation, the practice of choiceless awareness can become more and more robust and more and more compelling.

We begin with a few minutes of focusing on the breath, and then, if we care to, we allow the field of awareness to expand to include any or all of the following: body sensations (including the breath), sounds, thoughts, and feelings. Then, whenever we feel ready to, we see if it is possible to let go of any particular object of attention, like the breath, or class of objects of attention, like sounds or thoughts, and let the field of awareness be open to

whatever arises in the landscape of the mind and the body and the world.

We simply rest in awareness itself, effortlessly apprehending whatever arises from moment to moment. That might include the breath, sensations from the body, sounds, thoughts, or feelings. As best we can, we just sit, completely awake, not holding on to anything, not looking for anything, having no agenda whatsoever other than embodied wakefulness.

This practice invites us to be completely open and receptive to whatever comes into the field of awareness, like an empty mirror, simply reflecting whatever comes before it, expecting nothing and clinging to nothing; awareness itself attending to the entire field of present-moment experience in utter stillness.

As we engage in this practice, we may become increasingly aware of the distinction between the objects to which we can direct our attention, if we choose, and the space of awareness in which all our experiences arise. The objects could be thought of as celestial bodies hanging in space. In choiceless awareness, we become the space that holds whatever condenses momentarily within it. Awareness, like space, is boundless, having no edges or limits. The invitation is to settle into this awareness, to be the knowing.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, Portia Nelson

Chapter 1

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

Chapter 2

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

Chapter 3

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

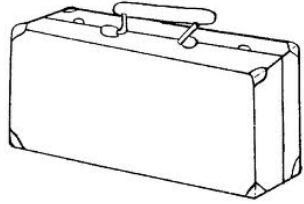
Chapter 4

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

Chapter 5

I walk down another street.

What will you take away?



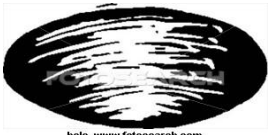
What will you leave behind?



What path are you choosing?



A hole



hole www.fotosearch.com

A refuge



A gift



Online Course Feedback, February 2021

How was your experience of the course?

What impact (if any) has the course had on your day-to-day life?

What suggestions do you have for the course trainer and organiser?

Anything else you'd like to add?

Are you happy for future students to see these comments?	Yes/No
If yes, are you happy to include your name or initials, occupation and where you live, eg. R.Thomas, teacher, Cardiff ?	Yes/No

If yes please write here:

Please send back to Mindful Space, 19 Ffordd y Capel, Efail Isaf, PONTYPRIDD, CF38 1AP