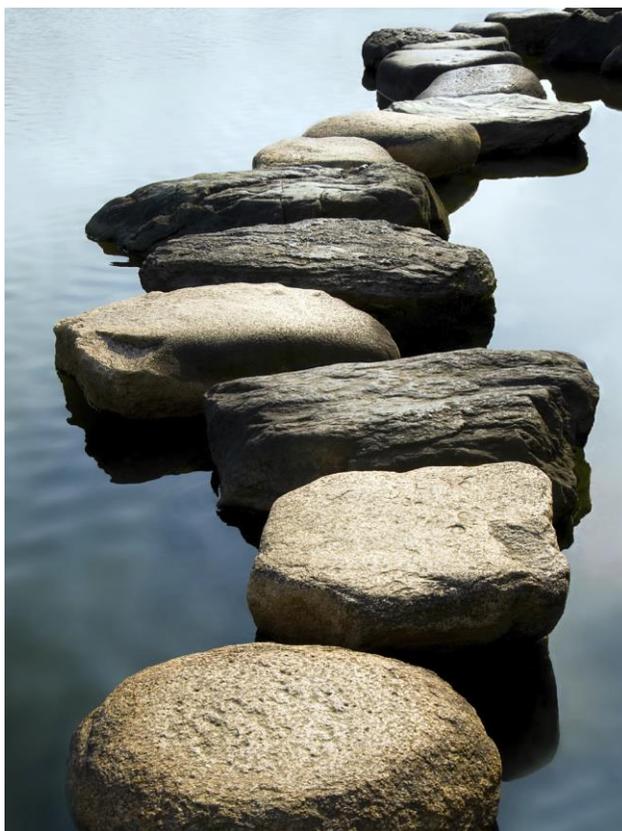


Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Handbook



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Introduction

This eight lesson mindfulness based stress reduction guide is based on work developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre and Bangor University of North Wales; and aims to assist you in becoming aware of the mental, emotional and doing patterns which do not serve you well, and which you may often not even be aware of. It offers resources to stop and look at these patterns, observing how they operate and enables you to become aware of the hold they have on you. As the material progresses you will discover how the mind resists just being with what is and how it constantly projects into the future or dwells in the past.

Zinn J.K, puts forward that "mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck and once we commit ourselves to paying attention in an open way, without falling prey to our likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices, projections and expectations, new possibilities open up and we have a chance to free ourselves from the straight jacket of unconsciousness."

Mindfulness practice has shown itself to be the most effective if you experience any of the following experience:

- Frequently focusing on the future, thinking/worrying about some possible future event(s), and/or thinking/rummaging about an event or events in the past and not able to readily release your mind to pay attention to the present and to what you are currently engaged in.
- Feeling anxious and stressed. Feeling tension for example in your chest, shoulders, back, tummy, etc. Feeling a sense of panic and/or dread. Feeling an over-all level of anxiety/apprehension that disturbs your feeling of well-being.
- Feeling over-whelmed and unable to separate the wood from the trees. Not able to think straight and not able to easily prioritize and organize/focus myself.
- Broken-sleep patterns. Finding it difficult to go to sleep at night and/or wake up in the middle of the night and not able to return to sleep so readily.
- Relationship stress/breakdown, conflict, communication difficulties, heightened levels of interpersonal stress.
- Feeling down, feeling blue, not able to get motivated, poor concentration, feeling depressed.

Mindfulness Defined:

"Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally, to things as they are. It's a way of shifting from doing to being so we take in all the information that an experience offers us before we act. Being mindful means that we suspend judgement for a time, set aside our immediate goals for the future, and take in the present moment as it is rather than as we would like it to be. It means that we approach situations with openness. Being mindful involves intentionally turning off the autopilot mode in which we operate so much of the time brooding about the past, for instance, or worrying about the future and instead tuning in to things as they are in the present with full awareness.

The intention in mindfulness practice is not to forcibly control the mind but to perceive clearly its healthy and harmful patterns. It is to approach our minds and bodies with a sense of curiosity, openness, and acceptance so that we may see what is here to be discovered, and be with it without so much struggle. In this way, little by little, we begin to release ourselves from the grip of our old habits of mind. We begin to know directly what we are doing as we are doing it. We are beginning a graceful transition from unawareness to awareness."

Ref: Williams M., Teasdale J., Zegal Z., Zinn JK. 2007

Lesson 1

Awareness of Breath - The Gateway to Awareness.

One of the first things we do in mindfulness based stress reduction is to become aware of our breath which we often forget.

You don't have to control your breath, just notice it. Observe, watch and feel the breath with a sense of interest in a relaxed manner.

With practice you become more aware of your breathing, and in turn are able to use it to direct your awareness to different aspects of your life. For example to relax tense muscles, or focus on a situation that requires attention and/or help with pain, anger, relationships or the stress of daily life.

Lesson 1 - Exercise 1

Mindfulness of Breathing - A Gateway to Awareness

1. Settling

Settle into a comfortable straight back chair. Place your two feet flat on the floor with your legs uncrossed. Sit away from the back of the chair so your spine is self-supporting.

Sit in a comfortable posture with your spine erect through not rigid. Let your shoulders relax.

Gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable. If not let your gaze fall unfocused on the floor four or five feet in front of you.

Bring your attention to the sensations of contact, the weight and pressure your body makes with the chair and the contact your feet makes with the floor.

2. Focusing on the sensation of Breathing

Bring your focus to your breath. Be aware of how your breath is, is it deep or shallow?

There is no need to change or control your breathing in any way. There is nothing to be fixed and no particular state to achieve.

Notice the breath as it travels through your nostrils, into your lungs and out through your mouth.

Allow yourself for a minute or two to just be with it as it is.

Now gradually bring your attention to your navel. As you inhale feel your tummy rising and as you exhale feel your tummy falling...rising and falling.

Allow your attention to settle on the full length of the breath. It may help to notice it by saying "in" or "rising" as you inhale and "out" or "falling" as you exhale.

As best you can stay in touch with the changing physical sensations for the full duration of the in-breath and the full duration of the out-breath perhaps noticing the slight pauses between an in-breath and the following out-breath, and between an out-breath and the following in-breath.

3. Working with the mind when it wanders

Sooner or later (usually sooner) the mind will wander away from the focus on the breath sensation, getting caught up in thoughts, planning, day dreams, the past or just aimlessly drifting away.

Whatever comes up, whatever the mind is pulled to or absorbed by, it is perfectly okay. This wandering and getting absorbed in things is what the mind does, it is not a mistake or a failure. When the mind wanders off the breath like this simply notice it and gently escort it back to the breathing and the rise and fall of the abdomen.

The more gently you are bringing your mind back the more you will experience ease. Even if the mind wanders off a thousand times that is okay, simply bring your awareness back to your breathing. Treat it with the same gentleness you would if you were teaching a toddler to hold a ball.

Continue with this practice for a few breaths or longer if you wish, reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your breath as best as you can, using your breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now.

4. Closing

When you are ready to bring your attention back to the room or place you are in, open your eyes if closed; knowing you can return to the awareness of your breath at any time.

Ref: Williams M, Teasdale J, Segal Z, Kabat-Zinn J. 2007 and Oscailt Mindfulness space course handbook 2007.

Lesson 1 - Exercise 2

A Three-Minute Breathing Space

The Breathing Space provides a way to step out of
Automatic Pilot mode
and reconnect with the present moment.

1. Awareness

Bring your awareness into the present moment by bringing your attention inwards. Then ask:
“What is going on with me at this moment?”

Whatever is going on be with it, don't move away from it or want it to be different. Even though it often takes courage, train yourself to stay with it for a few moments.

As you focus inwardly notice what thoughts are going through my mind right now?

Acknowledge these thoughts.

Notice how they arise and behave. You don't have to do anything with these thoughts, you don't have to change, problem solve or get rid of them, simply observe and acknowledge their presence.

Notice what feelings you are having. Bring words to mind that describe your current emotional experience for example feelings of frustration, tiredness, sadness, hurt, anger, happiness, contentment etc.

Acknowledge whatever feelings are present.

Scan your body and pick up any sensations you are currently experiencing. Scan your body from your head, shoulders, chest, arms, tummy, back, legs and sense what experiences are currently happening in your body. They may be sensations of tightness, tension, resistance, numbness, tingling, hot or cold etc.

Acknowledge these sensations. Notice these sensations without feeling driven to act on them . Be curious and non-judgemental in approach.

2. Breath

Now gently bring your awareness to your breathing, bring full attention to your breath, notice is it more shallow or deep. Being aware of each in-breath and each out-breath as they follow one after the other, sometimes it helps to count internally 1,2,3,4 when inhaling and count 4,3,2,1 when exhaling.

Alternatively, it helps to say the word 'in' as you breathe in and the word 'out' as you breathe out. Your breathing will act as an anchor bringing you into the moment and what is specifically happening for you right now and also helping you to connect to a deeper awareness and stillness in the present moment while staying with whatever is happening.

3. Expand

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing so that it includes your body as a whole. Sense your body from head to toe and follow the breath into and out from the whole body. Breathe through the pores of your skin. Breathe in and out. Take a few breaths like this.

Move your breath to the edge of the body and breathe.

Bring your awareness to just beyond the body, to the area where the body meets the space around it, and breathe in and out from this space.

This practice connects us to a bigger container for which thoughts, feelings and sensations, without us having to either ignore them or act them out.

This space offers the opportunity to step out of the automatic pilot and reside instead in awareness.

As you return to the next part of your day bring with you this expanded awareness, and allow it to influence your next choice.

Ref: Williams et al 2007 and Oscailt Mindfulness Space Course Handbook 2007

Lesson 1 - Exercise 3

A short Breathing Space to cope with difficult situations/experience

1. Becoming Aware

Begin by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. Place your two feet flat on the ground and arms down along your side or comfortably on your lap. (If you cannot sit up-right try lying down on your back.)

You may close your eyes or alternatively allow your eyes to fall comfortably on a spot a metre or so in front of you.

Allow yourself to begin to focus on your inner experiences. Moving away from your outer environment take a breath or two to help your attention to move inwards gently bringing your attention away from the outside, and gently turn your attention to a challenging situation that you are currently experiencing/facing; something unpleasant, something unresolved. This might be a misunderstanding or an argument, a piece of work that you are required to undertake but feel apprehensive about or a worry about something that might/might not happen in the future.

Once the troubling situation is brought to mind notice what thoughts go through your mind.

Notice what you are thinking. Observe your thoughts and acknowledge them.

Do not engage with them or get caught up with them.

Simply observe and acknowledge them.

Bring your attention to your feelings. What feelings are you aware of at this moment?

Notice them. Observe them.

Notice any unpleasant feelings you may be experiencing.

Acknowledge their presence.

You don't have to fix or change them or do anything with them.

Simply acknowledge they are there.

Now turn towards any pleasant feelings. Notice and observe them.

Acknowledge their presence.

Bring your attention to any body sensations you may be experiencing.

Scan your body (head, shoulders, arms, chest, back, tummy and legs) and pick up on any sensations; they may be sensations of tightness, tingling, tension, resistance, numbness, heat, coldness, aches or

others. Acknowledge these. Then when you are ready focus your attention on the region of the body where the sensations are strongest, gently breathe into that part of the body; firstly breathe onto the edge of the sensation and breathe out from its edge. Do this for a few breaths. Then breathe into the sensation itself and out from it a few times. (If at any time this becomes too much just gently bring your attention back to your regular breath...in and out. You can return to the sensation at another time). Otherwise breathe in and breathe out from the sensations as you soften and open.

2. Breathing

Redirect your attention to focus on the physical sensations of your breath and on your breathing.

Focus your attention on your tummy and feel the sensations of your tummy wall expanding as you breathe in...and falling back as you breathe out.

As you breathe in, breathe through your nose and as you breathe out breath out through your mouth (allowing your mouth to fall slightly open)

You don't need to change the rate of your breathing, just become aware of it in a curious and friendly way.

Notice how each breath is slightly different.

If you mind wanders off, that is okay, this is what the mind does.

Just gently and kindly guide your attention back to your breath.

Take a few breaths like this.

If you want you might say to yourself on the out breath "It's okay... whatever it is, it's already here, let me acknowledge it".

Accept yourself just as you are in this moment as much as you can.

3. Consciously Expanding

Now expand the field of your awareness so that in addition to the sensation of your breath, it includes a sense of your body as a whole.

Breathe into your whole body through your skin. Breathe in and expand your field of awareness out to the very outline of your body

Bring your breath to the very edge/outline of your body and breathe into the space. You can bring your awareness to just beyond your body, to the area where the body meets the space around it. Open to this space and breathe into and out from this space. Do this for a few breaths.

This practice connects you to a bigger container where thoughts, feelings and sensations can reside, without us having to either ignore them or act them out. This space offers us the opportunity to step out of our automatic responses and bring our inner wisdom to bear on the situation.

4. Closing

As we come to the end of this short breathing space exercise bring your attention back to where you are sitting (or lying), gently move, open your eyes if closed and bring your expanded sense of awareness with you.

Ref: Williams et al 2007 and Oshait Mindfulness Space Course handbook 2007

Lesson 2

"Thoughts are not facts"

Segal Z., Williams M., and Teasdale J., (2002) point out that our thoughts have a very powerful influence on the way we experience both our world and our feelings. As our thoughts vary and fluctuate so too does our perspective on life. Our mind can be like a television set up with many channels; whatever channel we are absorbed in determines our perspective for that particular period of time. The capacity of the mind to change its perspective is a very important one, but all too often this happens in a very mindless way. By paying attention to our breath we can have a greater insight into this process. The breath acts like an anchor for a mind that is constantly in motion. By bringing our awareness back to the breath rather than identifying with the various thought patterns that are constantly arising, we will gradually learn to get more distance and perspective in our thought process.

When we are both anchored in the breath and have created a sense of distance from our tendency to react to thoughts as they arise in the mind, we will be able to free ourselves from the tyranny of old thought patterns that automatically "pop into our mind". Over time and with this practice, we will realise that our thoughts are merely mental events whose very nature it is to come and go, and not a phenomena that has to be slavishly obeyed.

By observing our thought processes on a moment-to-moment basis, we are neither suppressing, repressing, nor acting on them. This place of non-reactive observation gives us the opportunity to get to know our minds in a deeper way than is usually possible. It also gives us the opportunity to get to know our more frequent habitual, automatic and unhelpful thinking patterns which can lead us into downward mood spirals. While engaging with this material, for example, it is important to become aware of the thought process that will inevitably arise that suggest, "There is no point on doing this" or "it is not going to work, so why bother". If such thinking is slavishly followed it will sabotage and undermine your efforts, and deny you the opportunity to open up to new awareness about the nature of your own mental and thinking process.

You do not need to fight your thoughts or struggle against them or judge them. Rather you can simply choose not to follow your own thoughts once you are aware they have arisen.

Take a few moments right now to look directly at the thoughts arising in your mind. As an exercise you might like to close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting in a cinema watching an empty screen. Simply wait for thoughts to arise. Because you are not doing anything except waiting for thoughts to appear, you may become aware of them very quickly. What exactly are they? What happens to them? Thoughts are like magic displays that seem real when we are lost in them but often change upon inspection.

But what about the strong thoughts that affect you? You are watching and then all of a sudden whoosh! - you are gone, lost in thought. What is that about? What are the minds states or the particular kinds of thoughts that catch you again and again, so that you forget that they are just phenomena passing through?

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

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

When we spend some time each day in a state of non-doing, observing the flow of the breath and the activity of our mind and body, without getting caught up in that activity, we are cultivating calmness and mindfulness hand in hand. As the mind develops stability, we strengthen the mind's ability to concentrate and to be calm.

Exercise 2, Exercise 1

Ways to see your thoughts differently

1. Just watch your thoughts come in and leave, without thinking that you have to follow them.
2. View your thoughts as a mental event rather than a fact. It may be true that this event often occurs with other feelings; and when it does, it is tempting to think of it as being true. But it is still up to you to decide whether it is true and how you want to deal with it.
3. Write your thoughts down on paper. This has the effect of letting you see them in a way which is less emotional and overwhelming. Also, the pause between having the thought and writing it down can give you a moment to reflect on its meaning.
4. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Did this thought just pop into my head automatically?
 - Does it fit with the fact of the situation?
 - Is there something about it which I can question?
 - How would I have thought about it at another time, in another situation?
 - Are there any alternatives?
5. Gently ask yourself:
 - Am I overtired?
 - Am I jumping to a conclusion?
 - Am I thinking black and white terms?
 - Am I expecting perfections?
6. For particular difficult thoughts, it may be helpful intentionally to take another look at them in a balanced open state of mind and let your "Wise Mind" give its own perspective.

Noticing self-critical commentary

Williams et al 2007 highlight the more we engage in the various meditation practices, the more we may notice ourselves having reactions to what we are expecting, judging how well things are going, and criticizing ourselves if we think we are not feeling what we are "supposed to be" feeling or that we are "not very good" at meditating. Such occasions are wonderful opportunities to remember that judging and criticizing are just more thinking, and can we, at such times, relate to these patterns of thinking as simply mental events?

Daily meditation practice can frequently be accompanied by a running critical commentary: You've lost again. Can't you even stay focused on your breath for half a minute? This is a waste of time. You're messing this up just like everything else you try. Can't you get anything right? What's wrong with you? This type of commentary is a common experience; however we may come to realize that awareness of these patterns of thoughts, as thoughts, is meditation itself.

So how can we help ourselves?

Williams and his colleagues suggest one possibility is to give a name to the patterns of thinking that habitually occur, and to use labels such as "Judging Mind" or "Hopeless Mind" or identify them as sub personalities: "My Worst Critic," "Doubting Thomas" and so on. The important thing is that we have a way of pointing to the common threads and general themes that cut across a range of specific thoughts that cross our minds. Ideally, the labels that we choose should help us to drop into a wider and wiser perspective on these thought patterns. Such labels may help us to see them, with some degree of nonattachment, as frequent visitors to the mind rather than identifying with them as part of ourselves or hearing them as the voice of true reality.

**We could label the whole critical judgmental package as "Critical Mind".
Once we have done this we are all able to identify the critical mind when it arises
and acknowledge it. This can enable us to let the critical mind come and go,
without giving it the power to trigger a cascade of negative thoughts.**

Lesson 3

Befriending feelings

Although our thoughts obviously affect our feelings, the thoughts originate in underlying, less perceptible feelings. Those feelings may persist just on the edge of awareness long after the individual negative thoughts have disappeared. So it's usually helpful once we acknowledge the presence of thoughts as mental events, to go underneath the thought level and work through directly sensed our body experience(s) the feelings we get from an unpleasant experience (such a sense of anger) as well as physical sensations (such as tightening in the shoulders). To do this, we bring an affectionate and discerning awareness to each aspect of our felt emotions and physical sensations.

The challenge before us at this point is to see if we can be with our unwanted emotions without making them worse. The very notion may seem strange and the task impossible as we so easily fall into aversion and automatic mode. Yet such an intentional, conscious practice, which amounts to a paradoxical embrace of what we fear most, can be a powerful liberating act.

Once we notice an unpleasant feeling, we focus, as best we can, on how we experience it in the body. This is aided enormously by connecting our awareness of the breath, in that very moment, with whatever the unpleasant feelings/sensations is/are. Intentionally breathe in to the area of painful or uncomfortable sensation(s), exploring its "edges" and any changes in intensity. Breathe into and out from this sensation(s). Use the next practice The Body- Scan to assist you. In such a moment, we have an opportunity to recognize any signs of aversion manifested in the body. Notice and breathe. The awareness itself does all the work.

Lesson 3 - Exercise 1

The Body Scan

Note: The body scan is typically done when lying down but you can assume other postures, sitting on a chair with your feet uncrossed on the floor. It is not the posture that is important but rather having a sincere commitment to the practice.

I will be guiding you through the body scan exercise as if you were lying down, but you can internally adopt the instructions if you are not lying down.

So lying here on your bed or a mat with your arms by your sides, palms facing downwards (or facing upwards which ever feels more comfortable) gently close your eyes.

Bring your attention to the body as you are lying here, and see if you can get a sense of the body in its entirety from the crown of your head to the tips of your toes and gradually bring awareness to your breathing without altering or manipulating your breath in any way, just notice how you are breathing right now; deep or shallow, flowing smoothly or more restricted, simply observing.

Notice also the weight of your body, paying attention to the weight of your head and thighs as they sink on the bed or mat.

Bring attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen as it rises with the in-breath and falls sinking back towards the spine with the out-breath.

So lying here alive and awake breathing in oxygen that nourishes the body and breathing out carbon

dioxide in a rhythmic cycle, gradually bring your attention from your tummy down the left thigh, past the knee, calf, foot and rest your awareness on the toes of your left foot and without moving them experience the big toe, the little toe and the toes in between.

Notice any sensations perhaps of heat or cold, moisture, tingling, numbness. You may register a blank.... that is okay too.

Bring your awareness to the ball of the left foot, to the pad, arch and sole of the foot.

Imagine you are breathing into and out from the pores in this region.

Bring your attention to the inside ankle and the heel, perhaps experiencing the sensations of pressure, with the heel making contact with what it is resting on.

Moving towards the ankle on the outside and towards the top of the foot and gradually moving upwards towards the calf muscles, shin and shin bone, be aware of the skin on the surface and deep inside the muscle as well.

If there is any tension in this region breathe right into it.

Moving upwards to the knee, the knee cap and the sides of the knee and deep into the joint, breathe right into the knee and explore this as the best you can.

Now gently let go of the knee and bring your awareness to your thigh and to your hip.

Breathe into your thigh and hip and be aware of any sensations here.

Experience the weight of your thigh as it makes contact with the chair (or the floor).

Simply being with whatever is present.

Before moving away from the left leg, imagine you are breathing into and through the hip, down through the leg, thigh, calf, foot and breathing out of the sole of the left foot. Do this a few times.

Then breathe in through the sole and out from the hip, bring oxygen to the entire leg.

Taking a couple of breaths like this, being curious, staying present and alert to any sensations.

(Pause)

Now let's move over to the right toes and without moving them, spread your awareness from the big toe to the little toe and to the toes in between.

Breathing in through the toes as if they were taking in oxygen. Move your attention to the sole of the right foot, the ball, the pad, the ankle, the inside ankle and the heel, gradually moving towards the ankle of your right foot and up to the top of your foot.

Imagine you are breathing into and out from all the pores of your right foot.

Move to the calf muscles and shin bone noticing whatever sensations are there, perhaps of blood flow, tingling or pulsation.

If there is any tension or discomfort simply breathe into and let go with the out breath.

Move your attention to the knee cap and the sides of the knee and into the knee joint.

Become aware of your right thigh, the region between the knee and the hip.

Experiencing whatever sensations are present, perhaps of tingling, blood flow, warmth, weight and contact.

Becoming aware of the entire region of the pelvis and hips, allowing the awareness to go deep into this area.

If there is any tension or pain allow your breath or awareness to embrace it in the spirit of openness and curiosity.

Notice any sensations of weight or contact with what you are lying on.

Before leaving this region imagine you are breathing deeply into the pelvis, hips, thighs, knees, calves, ankles and down into the soles of both feet and breathe out from the soles.

Breathing in through the soles of the feet up through the legs, and imagine you are breathing out from the hips and pelvis.

Do this for a couple of breaths.

(Pause)

Move to the lower back region, often a region of tension for many of us.
If there is any tension, tightness, heaviness or pain, breathe into it, and breathe out from it.
Simply being with whatever is happening right now.

(Pause)

And as you move to the middle back, pause at the area of the liver and kidneys.
Move to the upper back, the back of the rib-cage perhaps experiencing this region expanding with the in breath and deflating with the out breath, and up to and between the shoulder blades.
If there is any tension arising here, allow your breath to flow into and out from the area.

Moving down to the tummy experiencing the rise and fall of the abdomen, the lower tummy below the navel and then up towards the chest region and the lungs that take in the air, allowing oxygen into the blood and C2O to be removed.

See if you can tune into the rhythmic beating of your heart.

Gently move from this, bring your awareness to your finger tips; we can do both hands together.
Being with whatever sensations you are experiencing in the tips of your fingers, thumbs and small fingers.
Moving from one hand to another at a pace that suits you.

(Pause)

And to the knuckles, scanning each one.

(Pause)

And to the back of your hands, around to the palms of your hands.
Imagine you can breathe into and breathe out from the pores of your hands, and up to the wrists.
Aware of any pulsations that may be in this region.

And then to the lower arms, up to the elbows, slowly exploring whatever is happening right here and right now.

And then to the upper arms, up to the shoulders and into the shoulders themselves, often an area of tension for many of us.

Notice any sensations, breathing into and out from the shoulders and the neck and throat region, often quite sensitive regions of the body and up to the face beginning with the jaw, breathing into the jaw bone, letting go of any tension that may have accumulated here.

Moving into the chin, the lips and up to the nose. Noticing if you can feel the sensation of breath as it enters and leaves through the nose.

And the cheeks and cheek bones and up to the eyes and the region between the eyes and the forehead, and if there is any tension in this region breathe into it and breathe out from it.

Allowing your whole face to be cradled by your breath.

Allow your face to be just as it is without having to assume any particular expression.

Being with it on the surface and deep inside.

Moving to the head and to the top of the head experiencing the curve at the back of the head, experiencing the softness.

Now focus on a spot on the very top of your head about the size of a 20cent coin and imaging that spot.

Open it up like a blow-hole of a whale and breathe into it and breathe out from it.

Imagine you are breathing in through your nose and out through that spot.

Take a few deep breaths like this.

(Pause)

Then imagine you are breathing in through your head and that the breath is going down your body,

through your face, shoulders, arms, and torso and down the entire body, down your legs and the soles of your feet and breathe out from the soles of your feet.
Now imagine you can breathe through the soles of your feet up through your body and out from your head.
Just breathe a few breaths like this.

(Pause)

Fully aware of your entire body here, present to the flow of your breath into and out from your body.

If you can experience your whole body from the inside feeling complete, not rejecting anything, not clinging to anything. Being in touch with your essential nature and your capacity for stillness and presence, open to things just as they are.

Seeing the stillness itself as healing and allowing the world to be just as it is beyond your personal wishes and demands, beyond wanting your mind to be a certain way, experiencing deeply the fullness of the present moment, knowing that the very active engagement with this body scan is an act of loving care towards ourselves.

Recognizing that the awareness you have generated at this time is always accessible to you by attending to your breath.

As we come to the end of the body scan, you can wriggle your fingers and toes.

Open your eyes and become aware of the environment around you, orientating yourself in your own space, becoming aware of the sights, sounds and smells around you, centred in yourself to continue the activities of the day and carrying with you the awareness that you are never more than a breath away from your own capacity for mindful engagement.

Ref: Kabat-Zin Jon 2010, and O'Callaghan M. CD 2007

Tips for the Body Scan

1. Whatever is going on for you, just keep doing the body scan. Whether you fall asleep, lose concentration, get lost in distractions, don't feel anything, forget which part of the body you are suppose to be focusing on - it doesn't matter. The main thing is that you notice you've drifted off and you simply bring your attention back, even if you have to do this every few seconds.
2. Remember that thoughts and distractions are just that, experiences of the moment to be noted as passing events. When we do that, we can then gently bring the mind back to the body scan.
3. Let go all ideas of "success", "failure", "doing it really well", and "purifying the body". The only important thing is simply to follow the instructions and let go of any goals or achievements. The more you strive, the less effective it will be.

Overcoming body scan obstacles

The body scan seems easy on the surface. All you need to do is lie down, pop on the CD/podcast and guide your awareness through your body. In reality you're doing a lot more than that. If you've spent your life ignoring your body, trying a different approach takes both courage and determination. Problems may arise. Perhaps:

- ✓ You felt more pain in your body than you normally do.
- ✓ You wanted to stop the body scan.
- ✓ You couldn't concentrate.
- ✓ You fell asleep.
- ✓ You became more anxious, depressed or frustrated than when you started.
- ✓ You couldn't do the body scan.
- ✓ You didn't like the body scan.
- ✓ You couldn't stop crying.
- ✓ You couldn't see the point of the body scan.

All these are common experiences. Of course, experiences of pleasure and peace occur too! Remember the following sentence when you begin to struggle with the body scan, and other long meditations:

You may not always like it – you just need to keep at it!

Ref: S.Alidina – Mindfulness for Dummies 2010

Lesson 4

Awareness of Eating

Unawareness pervades our lives. Eating is a prime example. Even though it engages all our senses, we eat with almost no awareness. It's possible to eat several times a day, and never really taste our food. We may be eating and talking, eating and reading or simply eating while thinking of other things. We are fully entangled in the thought stream of the mind and the pressing needs of our daily lives.

Deliberately paying attention to each aspect of your sensory experience of eating can reveal things that you may not have noticed before.

The smell of food might be different from what you have imagined. The texture on the tongue may be a novel experience. The taste itself is something you may simply have not experienced before in this way, often richer than several amounts shovelled mindlessly into the mouth.

Being mindful in this way can radically transform the nature of our experience of eating.

To demonstrate it to yourself, you might like to try the following simple exercise to get a feel for the vividness of this experience. Give yourself permission to spend several minutes on this exercise.

Lesson 4 - Exercise 1

Eating One Raisin: A first Taste of Mindfulness

1. Holding

- First, take a raisin and hold it in your palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb.
- Focusing on it, imaging that you have just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life.

2. Seeing

- Take time to really see it; gaze at the raisin with care and full attention
- Let your eyes explore every part of it; examine the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any asymmetric or unique features.

3. Touching

- Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture, maybe with your eyes closed if that enhances your touch.

4. Smelling

- Holding the raisin beneath your nose, with each inhalation drink in and smell any aroma or fragrance that may arise, noticing as you do this anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or tummy.

5. Placing

- Now slowly bring the raisin up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the object in the mouth, without chewing, notice how it gets into the mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments exploring it with your tongue.

6. Tasting

- When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously, take one or two bites into it and notice what happens in the aftermath, experience any waves of taste that emanate from it as you continue chewing. Without swallowing yet, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in the mouth and how these change over time, moment by moment, as well as any changes in the object itself.

7. Swallowing

- When you are ready to swallow the raisin, see if you can first notice the intention to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow the raisin.

8. Following

- Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how the body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise in mindful eating.

Further Practice:

- (i) Use this exercise with other foods, and notice your observations.
- (ii) Each time you eat, slow down the process, use the steps of this exercise and observe the experience.

Ref: Williams et al 2007

Lesson 5

Becoming Aware of the Pleasant and Unpleasant Qualities of Experience

How can we become more aware of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) and of the physical sensations in our bodies in our daily lives?

To answer the question you might like to try the following:

Over the next week be on the lookout for even the smallest moments when you register an experience of "pleasant" or "unpleasant". You can use the Pleasant and Unpleasant Event Calendars (see overleaf) to keep a record of what was actually going on in the moment in question, with particular attention to the interplay of feelings, thoughts, and physical sensations during each event. Recording what you were actually experiencing in each instance can be very valuable.

Making a commitment to be aware of pleasant or unpleasant feelings in any moment requires that we be sensitive to what is actually going on for us inwardly. Of course, this requires tuning in, the exact opposite of experiential avoidance. Forming the explicit intention to be aware of what is pleasant or unpleasant in a particular experience and how it feels in the body, in the heart, and in the mind can not only help us to become more aware of the actuality of our experience, but also begins to reverse the automatic habit of experiential avoidance.

Alidina S (2010) outlines that this exercise also helps us to see that experiences aren't one big blob, and can be broken down into thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. This in turn makes difficult experiences more manageable rather than overwhelming. It assists you to notice your automatic habitual patterns, and helps you to learn how you habitually grasp onto pleasant experiences with a desire for them to continue, and how you can push away any unpleasant experiences, which can end up perpetuating them.

It enables one to become more curious about experiences instead of judging experiences as good or bad. This encourages you to understand and acknowledge your unpleasant experiences rather than avoiding them.

Lesson 5 – Exercise 1

Pleasant Events Calendar

Be aware of a pleasant event at the time of it happening. Use the 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?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What thoughts or images accompanied this event? (write thoughts in words; describe images)	What moods, feelings and emotions accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Example <i>Heading home at the end of my day in college, feeling the wind on my face</i>	<i>Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping, feeling refreshed and uplifted</i>	<i>“That’s good,” “How lovely”, “It’s so nice to be outside”</i>	<i>Relief, pleasure</i>	<i>It was such a small thing, but I’m glad I noticed it</i>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Lesson 5 – Exercise 2
Unpleasant Events Calendar

Be aware of a unpleasant event at the time of it happening. Use the 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?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What thoughts or images accompanied this event? (write thoughts in words; describe images)	What moods, feelings and emotions accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Example <i>Waiting in line at the canteen and someone pushes ahead of me</i>	<i>Tightness around my eyes, my jaw was clenched, then my shoulders sort of slumped</i>	<i>"I should be firm," "some people only look after themselves," "If I weren't so invisible, people wouldn't push me around"</i>	<i>I felt angry and taken advantage of. Then I felt guilty for not standing up for myself</i>	<i>"If something seems unfair I always blame myself"</i>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Lesson 6

Self Care

How we spend our time and the activities we engage in deeply impact on our state of being in the world. Often we find ourselves in mindless activities that do not serve us in any constructive way. By making a list of our activities it will help you become more mindful and also to discriminate between the kinds of activities that serve us and the ones that deplete us. While life will always throw at us activities that tend to deplete us, the aim is not necessarily to avoid them. The challenge is to bring awareness to these activities and to discover if there are ways that we can take care of ourselves while engaging in them. On the other hand if there are activities that nourish us, it might be worth exploring if there are ways of incorporating into our lives more nourishing activities of this kind.

It is rare for us to stop and take stock of the way we spend our day and it might be useful to ask yourself the following 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 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?
3. 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 nurturing activities, and to decrease the time and effort I give to depleting activities?

By bringing our awareness to all of the activities of our day, mindfulness becomes a lived reality, thereby embracing the richness and struggles of life with openness. We will gradually incorporate into our day activities that which help us respond more creatively with life. For example we might become aware of the impact that certain foods, music, television etc. have upon us and make clear choices about what we want to imbibe. The following exercise will help us to bring greater awareness to our day to day activities.

Lesson 6 – Exercise 1

Self Care in Daily Activities

1. Make a list of all your daily activities from the time you get up until the time you go to bed.
2. When you have done that- go down the list and categorise each one as:
N - Nurturing activity (something that nourishes you)
D - Draining activity (something that depletes you)
M - Mastery activity (something that may not be pleasant in itself - but feels good after you have completed it - like defrosting the fridge or clearing out your cupboards)
3. (i) Mindfully choose to increase activities that nurture you.
(ii) Mindfully choose to decrease activities that deplete you.
4. Track and notice your level of well-being as you consciously put step 3 into practice. You may like to keep a weekly record to enable you to make this practice more conscious

Ref: Segal, Williams, Teasdale 2002

Some Everyday Self-Care Mindfulness Tips

- When you first wake up in the morning before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths, letting the breath "do itself."
- Notice your body posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths.
- When you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while walking or standing. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing to get to the next moment? Even when you are in a hurry, be aware of the hurrying.
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without having to agree or disagree, fall into liking or disliking, or planning what to say when it's your turn? Can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating it? Can you notice how your mind and body feel? Can you notice what is conveyed by your tone of voice? Is your speaking an improvement on silence?
- When you find yourself waiting in line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rising and falling of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them, and as you exhale, let go of any excess tension. Be aware of any tension stored in your body. Is there tension in your neck, your shoulders, your stomach, jaw, or in your lower back?
- Focus attention on your daily activities - such as brushing your teeth, brushing your hair, washing up, or putting on your shoes. Bring attention to each activity.
- Before you go asleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths.

Ref: Williams M., Teasdale J., Segal Z., Zinn J.K. 2007

Lesson 7

Further Formal Meditation Practices

- A Sitting Meditation
- A Loving Kindness Meditation
- A Mindfulness Movement Meditation
- A Walking Meditation

Aldina 2010 outlined that meditation is like diving into the bottom of the ocean, where the water is still. The waves (thoughts) are at the surface, but you're watching them from a deeper, more restful depth. To submerge to that peaceful depth takes time and extended meditation in formal practice offers the diving equipment required to safely reach these tranquil places.

Aldina continues to say that formal practice is mindfulness meditation which one specifically makes time for daily. One decides when and long one is going to meditate for and then one does it; knowing that formal mindfulness routine lies at the heart of a mindful way of living. Without such a routine, one may struggle to be mindful in ones daily life. This lesson explores some further formal meditation practices from sitting, to relationship, to movement, to walking meditations.

Lesson 7 - Exercise 1

A Sitting Meditation

Use this time to set aside usual activities of the day, letting go of the tendency to be busy and constantly doing, allow yourself to relax into the moment, into the here and the now.

Mindfulness Meditation is really the art of staying with what is in the moment and not being swept away by the usual habits of the mind, where we lose ourselves in the thoughts of the past or plans for the future.

Meditation is best accomplished by sitting in a comfortable position either on a straight back chair with your two feet uncrossed on the floor or on a meditation cushion with your legs crossed or in what-ever posture is useable for you. It is important that your back is erect allowing the natural curvature of the spine, with your head balanced on the top of the spine and with your chin slightly tucked in. Your arms can be slightly out from your torso with your hands either resting on your legs or on your knees. Gradually become aware of your breathing, the in-breath and the out-breath. No need to manipulate the breathing in any way being with it as it is in this moment as it comes into and leaves your body.

(Pause)

Notice the movements in your body as you breathe (perhaps in the chest area, the abdomen or lower tummy).

(Pause)

Observing the very subtle movements in your spine and head as your body re-adjusts to gravity space and the act of breathing.

If you can bring your attention to the beginning of the in-breath and to the end of the out-breath and to the pause between the beginning of the exhalation and the start of the next inhalation.

Not putting any effort into this, simply rest for a moment in the pause between breaths. Now bring your

attention to the sensation at the tip of your nose, allow your attention to rest here for a few moments,

noticing and observing. Become aware of the breath as it enters through the nose, experiencing the nostrils expanding at the in-breath and allow the out-breath to leave through the mouth, also noticing the difference between the temperature between the in-breath and out-breath.

Now following the breath down to the chest, notice the sensation of inflation as you lungs fill with air and down in the tummy notice the rise and the fall of the tummy as you inhale and exhale.

Be alive and alert in your body at this moment, as the breath moves in and out of your body in an effortless rhythmic cycle.

(Pause)

You may find your attention wandering, being lost in thoughts, fantasies, and day-dreams or planning. It may be a little while since you have given full attention to your breath. That is OK. It can be helpful to expand your awareness of your breath to include your whole body from the crown of your head to the tips of your toes, right out to the limit of space your body occupies.

Becoming aware of the feeling of touch as you become aware of what you are sitting on perhaps feel the weight of your buttocks on your chair or cushion, sensing the weight of your legs on the floor, experiencing your sense of groundedness, sitting her alive and alert, in a gentle and dignified manner with full awareness of your breath and the sensations in your body.

(Pause)

If you find that the sensations or discomforts are over-whelming you have two choices: you can either move your body to a more comfortable posture. If you do this be aware of your intention to move and do it very gently or you can choose to embrace the discomfort by gently bringing your attention to where the discomfort is, and breathing right into it and breathing right out from it.

(Pause)

Allow yourself to move up close and familiarise yourself with those sensations. You can also move to the edges of the discomfort and the space around the edges. Take a few breaths like this.

(Pause)

Then move from this space back into the core of the discomfort, being open, curious and accepting to what the body is communicating to you in this moment

Getting a sense of your body in its entirety from the crown of your head to the tips of your toes.

Imagine you can breathe into all the pores of your body and out from all the pores in your body, sitting here in a dignified quiet posture.

(Pause)

Now gradually move your attention to hearing, you may hear external sounds or internal sounds, or even a particular quality of silence. You don't have to make any effort to listen, just let the sound come to you, noticing if you can how the quality of the sound changes. Staying with the quality of the sound without having to put any label on it, simply opening up to it, connecting to it, letting it come and go in its own rhythm. Be aware of the sounds and the space between the sounds and if you find that your mind has wandered off gently bring your awareness back to the breath and to your experience of sounds or of silence.

In this meditation you are developing your capacity to move your attention around in a flexible manner and also to focus and touch things deeply, starting with the breath, moving to the body as a whole, focusing on intense sensations and then on hearing.

Now let's focus on thoughts as they move through the mind without identifying with any thought in particular, develop an awareness of thoughts as they come in to our consciousness, linger and pass on, often giving way to another thought.

(Pause)

Rather than being reduced by your own thoughts, just allow them to come and go without being distracted by them. Just be aware of the thinking process itself, thoughts coming and going, in the same manner that sounds arise and pass away, observing shape shifting events, and rather than tightening and restricting, allowing a sense of space and release perhaps sometimes noticing the space between thoughts. Thoughts can be about anything, the past, the future, thoughts of planning, frightening thoughts, thoughts of being bored or even thoughts about thoughts, it doesn't matter, just let them all come and go, nothing needs to be sorted out as you sit here, simply being in the moment as it unfolds is enough.

If you find that you get caught up and lost in thoughts as soon as you notice this, come back to the breathing, anchor yourself again allowing an awareness of the flow of thoughts, as they come and go.

For the final few minutes we will let go of focusing on anything in particular and simply just sit here allowing whatever wants to come into consciousness come, without identifying with it, or pushing it away, letting whatever arises to arise, being in touch with the moment, being alive and alert to this present moment. Know deep in your bones, that the present moment is in fact the only moment you have to be alive.

Overcoming sitting meditation obstacles

One of the most common problems with sitting meditation is posture. After sitting for some time, the back or knees or other parts of the body start to ache. When this happens, you have two choices.

- **Observe both the discomfort as well as your mind's reaction to it, while remaining sitting still.** This is recommended if the discomfort doesn't hurt too much. Mindfulness is about welcoming experiences, even if they feel unpleasant at first. What does the discomfort feel like exactly? What's its precise location? What do you think about it? As all experience is a state of flux and change, you may find that even your feelings of physical discomfort changes.
- **By discovering how to stay with the sensations your meditation skills flow into your everyday life.** You can manage other difficult emotions and challenging problems in the same welcoming, curious and accepting way, rather than fighting them. Your body and mind are one, so by sitting still, your mind has a chance to stabilise and focus.
- **Mindfully move the position of your body.** If your bodily discomfort is overwhelming, you can, of course move your body. You may be sitting in an unsuitable posture. However, if possible, try not to react quickly to the discomfort. Instead, shift your position slowly and mindfully. In this way, you bring your shift of position into the practice. You're responding instead of reacting, which is what mindfulness is about. Responding involves a deliberate choice by you - you feel the sensation and make a conscious decision as to what to do next. Reacting is automatic, lacks control and bypasses an intentional decision by you. By becoming more skillful in responding to your own experiences in meditation, your ability spills out into everyday life - when someone frustrates you, you can respond to them whilst in control of yourself rather than reacting in an out of control way.

Besides posture, frustration can arise from the practice itself. You're so used to judging all your experiences, that you judge your meditation too. But mindfulness means non-judgemental awareness. Bad meditation doesn't exist - there is no such thing. Sometimes you can concentrate and focus your mind, and other times it's totally wild. Meditation is like that. Trust in the process, even if it feels as if

you're not improving. Mindfulness works at a level both above and below the conscious mind, so on the surface of things it may seem as though you're not getting anywhere. Don't worry - each meditation is a step forward because you have actually practiced.

Ref: S.Alidina. Mindfulness for Dummies 2010

Lesson 7 – Exercise 2

A Loving Kindness Meditation

1. You can practice loving kindness in a seated or lying down position. You can even practise it while walking. What's most important isn't the position you adopt, but the intention of kindness and friendliness you bring to the process. Make yourself warm and at ease. Gently close your eyes, or keep them half open looking comfortably downwards.
2. Begin by feeling your breath. Notice the breath sensation wherever it feels most predominant for you. This awareness helps create a connection between your body and mind. Continue to feel your breath for a few minutes.
3. When you're ready, see if certain phrases arise from your heart for what you deeply desire for yourself, in a long-lasting way and which you can ultimately wish for all beings. Phrases like:

May I be well. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I be free from suffering.

4. Softly repeat the phrases again and again. Allow them to sink into your heart. Allow the words to generate a feeling of kindness towards yourself. If that doesn't happen, don't worry about it – your intention is more important than feeling. Just continue to repeat the phrases lightly. Let the phrases resonate.
5. Now bring your mind to somebody you care about; a good friend or person who inspires you. Picture the person in your mind's eye and inwardly say the same phrases to him or her. Don't worry if you can't create the image clearly. The intention works by itself. Use phrases like:

May you be well. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be free from suffering.

Send loving kindness to this person using these words.

6. When you're ready, choose a neutral person; someone you see daily but don't have any particular positive or negative feeling towards. Perhaps someone you walk past every morning or buy coffee from. Again send a sense of loving kindness using your phrases:

May you be well. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be free from suffering.

7. Now choose a person you don't get on with too well. Someone you've been having difficulties with recently. Say the same phrases again, from the mind and the heart. This may be more challenging. If it is difficult, notice the difficulty and acknowledge it, don't try to fix it or change it, simply notice it and breathe. There is no need to force yourself to do or feel anything.

8. Now bring all four people to mind: yourself, your friend, your neutral person and your difficult person. Visualise them or feel their presence. Try to send an equal amount of loving-kindness to them all by saying:

May we be well. May we be happy. May we be healthy. May we be free from suffering.

9. Finally, expand your sense of loving-kindness outwards, towards all living beings, plants, animals land, air and sea, the whole universe. Send this sense of friendliness, care, loving kindness and compassion in all directions from your heart.

May all be well. May all be happy. May all be healthy. May all be free from suffering.

If the meta phrases suggested don't work for you, then here are other suggestions. Choose two or three and use them as your meta phrases, or you can be creative and come up with two on your own.

- ✓ May I be at peace with myself and all other beings.
- ✓ May I accept myself just as I am.
- ✓ May I love myself completely just as I am now no matter what happens.
- ✓ May I be free from the suffering of fear and anger.

Be patient with yourself and practice it slowly and lovingly. Let the phrases come from your heart and see what happens.

Ref: Mindfulness for Dummies. By Shamash Alidina 2010

Overcoming meditation obstacles to loving - kindness meditation.

- **You can't think of a specific person.** If you can't think of a suitable friend, or neutral person, or someone you're having difficulties with, don't worry. You can miss that step for now, or just choose anyone. The intention of loving kindness is more important than the specific person you choose.
- **You say phrases but don't feel anything.** This is perfectly normal, especially when you start. Imagine the phrases coming out of your chest or heart, rather than your head, if you can. Again the feeling isn't as important as your attitude of friendliness in the practice. The feelings may come in the future, or may not - you don't need to worry about that.
- **Your mind keeps wondering off.** This is simply the nature of mind, and happens in all meditations. As always, as soon as you notice, kindly and gently bring your attention back to the practice. Each time you bring it back, you're strengthening your mind to pay attention.
- **You feel very emotional.** Feeling emotional is a very common reaction. You may not be used to generating feelings in this way, and it can unlock deep-seated emotions. If you can, try to continue with the practice. If your emotions become overwhelming doing just one phase is perfectly fine. Alternatively, stop the practice and come back to it later on, when it feels more appropriate.

Ref: S.Alidina. Mindfulness for Dummies 2010

Lesson 7 - Exercise 3

A Mindful Movement Meditation

Movement can have a profound and soothing impact on the mind as the Body Scan. In its purest form, this is simply a meditation that involves anchoring awareness in the moving body.

When engaging with this meditation, it's important to be gentle with yourself as you do so. The intention here is not to push beyond the limits of your body. You need to look after yourself during these stretches, letting the wisdom of your body decide what is ok for you: how far to go with any stretch and for how long to hold it. In particular, if you have a physical problem with your back or any other part of the body consult your G.P. before embarking on even these simple stretches.

Stretching without striving.

1. First, stand in your bare feet or socks with your feet hip-width apart, with the knees unlocked so that the legs can bend slightly and with the feet more or less parallel to each other.

Raising both arms.

2. Then, on an in-breath, slowly and mindfully raise your arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor, and then, after breathing out, continue on the next breath raising them slowly and mindfully until the hands are raised above the head. While the arms are moving see if you can be aware to the sensations in the muscles as they work to lift the arms and then maintain them in the stretch.
3. Letting the breath move in and out freely at its own pace, continue to stretch upward, fingertips gently pushing towards the sky, feet firmly grounded on the floor. Take some time to feel the sensations of the stretch in the muscles and joints of your body, wherever they are presenting themselves; from the feet and legs up through the torso, shoulders, into the arms, hands and fingers.
4. As you maintain the stretch for a time, see what is happening to your breathing; allowing it to flow freely in and out. Remain open to any changes in the sensations and feelings in the body with each in-breath and each out-breath as you continue to hold the stretch. If you notice sensations of increasing tension or discomfort, open to this as well.
5. At a certain point, when you are ready, slowly - very slowly - on an out breath, allow the arms to come back down. Lower them slowly, feeling the changing sensations as they come down. Follow the sensations with close attention until your arms come back to rest, hanging from the shoulders.
6. If your eyes have been open you may wish to allow them to close gently at this point, and after each stretch of this sequence, focus attention on the movement of the breath and the sensations and feelings throughout the body as you can stand here, perhaps noticing the after-effects of doing the stretch.

Picking Fruit

7. (a) Next, opening the eyes, mindfully stretch one arm and hand up in turn, as if you were picking fruit from a tree that's just out of reach, with full awareness of the sensations throughout the body, and of the breath, as you look up beyond the fingers. Allowing the opposite heel to the out-stretched arm to come off the floor as you stretch, feel the stretch right through your body from the outstretched fingers of one hand to the toes of the opposite foot. When you let go of this stretch, allow the heel to come back down to the floor, then lower the hand, following the fingers with your eyes if you choose. Then moving the face to centre, let your eyes close, tuning into the after-effects of that stretch.

(Pause)

- (b) Now mindfully stretch as if picking up fruit with the other hand. Stretch your other arm and hand as if you were picking fruit from a tree that's just out of reach, with full awareness of the sensations throughout the body, and of the breath, as you look up beyond the fingers. Allow the opposite heel to the outstretched arm to come off the floor as you stretch, feel the stretch right through your body from the outstretched fingers of one hand to the toes of the opposite foot. When you let go of this stretch, allow the heel to come back down to the floor, then lower the hand. Move your face to the centre, let your eyes close, tuning into the after-effects of that stretch.

Sideways bending

8. Now slowly and mindfully putting your hands on your hips, allow the body to bend over as a whole to the left, with the hips moving a little to the right, so the body forms a big curve that extends sideways from the feet right through the hips and torso, making a crescent shape.

(Pause)

On an in-breath come back to a standing position, and when ready on an out-breath, slowly bend over, forming a curve in the opposite direction. It is not important how much you bend sideways but what does matter is the quality of attention that you bring to the movement. To finish this movement on an in-breath, come back to a standing position, let your eyes close (if not already closed) and tune into the after-effects of that stretch.

Shoulder rolls

9. Play with rolling your shoulders while letting your arms dangle passively, first raising the shoulders upwards towards the ears as far as they will go, then backwards as if you were attempting to draw the shoulder blades together, then letting them drop down completely, next squeeze the shoulders together in front of the body as far as they will go, as if you were trying to touch them together. Let the breath determine the speed of the rotation, so you are breathing in for half the movement and out for the other half. Continue 'rolling' through these various positions as smoothly and mindfully as you can, first in one direction and then in the opposite direction.
10. Finally, at the end of this sequence of movements, remain still for a while, and tune in to the sensations from your body.

Ref: Mindfulness, a Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World. Williams, D. Penman

Lesson 7 - Exercise 4

A Formal Walking Meditation

Note: A formal walking meditation, means you make special time and space to practice the exercise. However you can equally introduce an awareness of your walking in an informal way, when going about your daily activities. You don't have to slow down the pace at which you walk for that.

To practice formal walking meditation, sometimes called mindful walking, try the following steps:

1. Decide how long you're going to practice. I suggest ten minutes for the first time, but whatever you feel comfortable with. Also choose where to practice. The first time you try it, practice walking very slowly, so a quiet room at home may be best.
2. Stand upright with stability. Gently lean to the left and right, forwards and backwards, to find a central, balanced standing posture. Let your knees unlock slightly, and soften any unnecessary tension in your face. Allow your arms to hang naturally by your sides. Ensure that your body is grounded, like a tree, firmly rooted to the ground with dignity and poise.
3. Become aware of your breath. Come into contact with the flow of each inhalation and exhalation. Enjoy breathing.
4. Now slowly lean onto your left foot and notice how your sensations change. Then slowly shift your weight onto your right foot. Again perceive how the sensations fluctuate from moment to moment.
5. When you're ready, gradually shift most of your weight onto your left foot, so almost no weight is on the right foot. Slowly now take your right heel off the ground. Pause for a moment here. Notice the sense of anticipation about something as basic as taking a step. Now lift your right foot off the ground and place its heel first in front of you. Become aware of the weight of your body shifting from left to the right foot. Continue gradually to place the rest of the right foot flat and firmly on the ground. Notice the weight continue to shift from left to right. Walking meditation is like all other mindfulness practices. The mind will become distracted. When this happens gently guide your attention back to the feeling of the feet on the floor or the breath. No self-criticism or blaming is required.
6. Continue to walk in this very slow, mindful way for as long as you want. When you finish, take some time to reflect on your experiences.

A Walking body scan

This is another way of practicing walking meditation which you can use whilst moving at your own pace. In this walking meditation you gradually move your awareness up your body as you walk, from your feet all the way to the top of your head.

1. Begin by walking as you normally would.
2. Now focus on the sensations in your feet. Notice how the weight shifts from one foot to the other.
3. Continue to move your mindfulness attention up your body. Feel your lower legs as you walk, then your upper legs, noticing their movement.
4. Now observe the movement and sensations in the area of the hips and pelvis.
5. Continue to scan your awareness to the lower, and then the upper torso, then your arms, as they naturally swing to help you keep balance.
6. Observe the sensation in your shoulders, your neck, your face, and then the whole of your head.
7. Now get a sense of the body as a whole as you continue to stroll, together with the physical sensations of the breath. Continue this for as long as you wish.

Ref: Mindfulness for Dummies, S. Alidina 2010

Lesson 8

Acceptance and Change

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

One of the main themes of this approach has been that of discovering ways of responding to life that is not re-active, where we are not slavishly carried along in an automatic way. We have also learned that the first step in achieving this is to acknowledge, accept and be open to what is happening right now. This initial acceptance frees us from creating a battle within ourselves and possibly a battle outside ourselves too. However it does not mean that we have to just go along with what's happening, but rather by acceptance we initially give ourselves the space to reflect on what might be an appropriate response in any given moment. So the first step in accepting anything is to open up to it and to look into it in a deeper way than we might usually be accustomed to doing. This initial stance may help us maintain our calm and composure. How often have we reflected on the ways that we have responded to situations, and with a little thought, discovered that there were many more skilful ways of approaching them.

Of course we all at some stage or other face situations that seem unbearable and those we do not want to accept, but we recognise that we have very little power to change them. In these situations, where there is very little we can do, simply accepting what *is* can spare us a lot of unnecessary headache and heartache. Rather than 'banging our heads off a stone wall' and wishing and wanting things to be different, we can choose to adopt a stance of acknowledgment. The energy that we expend fighting and struggling can be put to better use gathering the resources we need to respond more skillfully to whatever challenges faces us.

An Eight-Week Mindfulness Programme

**In order to structure your formal practice
in Mindfulness Meditation
consider the following eight-week
Mindfulness Programme**

An Eight-Week Mindfulness Programme Template.

Week 1. Waking up to the Autopilot.

The main obstacle to our development of mindfulness is the tendency to experience life as though we were on automatic pilot, rushing from one activity to the next without fully engaging in the here and now.

Our practice this week is to become aware of how this automatic pilot operates in our lives, knowing that when we are in this mode we are more likely to react to life rather than respond to it.

Practice: **The Body Scan Meditation** - Lesson 3, Exercise 1 (Once a day)

Mindful Awareness of a Self-Care Daily Activity - Lesson 6, Exercise 1 (Daily)

The Raisin Meditation - Lesson 4, Exercise 1 (Once during the week)

Mindful of Breathing, A Gateway to Awareness Meditation - Lesson 1, Exercise 1 (once/twice a day)

Week 2. Dealing with barriers

One of the biggest obstacles to mindfulness is our tendency to get caught up in making judgements about our thoughts. We identify with some, battle with others. It is easy then to get caught up in judging or blaming or wanting things to be different, with the results that the present moment is rejected and lost.

The first step to retain our freedom is simply to acknowledge whatever is arising in the mind in the present moment, and to let go our tendency to want things to be different.

Practice: **The Body Scan Meditation** - Lesson 3, Exercise 1 (Once a day)

Complete the Pleasant Events Diary - Lesson 5, Exercise 1 (One entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of your thoughts, feelings and body sensations as you engage in this one pleasant event. Notice and record in detail as soon as you can, the actual thoughts that come to mind, the feelings you experience and the precise nature and location of body sensations.

A Three-Minute Breathing Space Meditation - Lesson 1, Exercise 2 (Once a day)

Mindful Awareness of a Self-Care Daily Activity – Lesson 6, Exercise 1 (Choose a different activity from last week)

Week 3. Movement - Mindfulness of Breath and the Body in Movement

Mindful movement is important in helping us to strengthen the connection with our body. Our body is both physical and emotional and it is often through the body that emotions are expressed and suppressed.

If we are aware of what is going on in our body it is easier to recognise what is going on both mentally and emotionally.

Practice: **Mindful Movement Meditation** - Lesson 7, Exercise 3 (On days 1, 3, 5 and 7)

Mindfulness Walking Meditation - Lesson 7, Exercise 4 (On days 2, 4 and 6)

The Body Scan Meditation - Lesson 3, Exercise 1 (On days 2, 4 and 6)

A Three-Minute Breathing Space Meditation - Lesson 1, Exercise 2 (Twice a day)

Week 4. Staying Present

Without mindfulness we will be pulled along by many things and we will lose ourselves. Practice helps us to stop running headlong through our lives as though we were being chased. Too often we are carried along by the energy of the people around us by circumstances, by our thoughts. If you don't practice stopping, the time can seem to have gone by in a dream.

Practice: **Sitting-Meditation** - Lesson 7, Exercise 1 (On days 1, 3, 5 and 7)
Movement Meditation - Lesson 7, Exercise 3 (On days 2, 4 and 6)
The Three-Minute Breathing Space - Lesson 1, Exercise 2 (Twice a day)
Complete the Unpleasant Events Calendar - Lesson 5, Exercise 2 (One entry per day)

Week 5. Turning towards Difficulties

We often react before we are fully conscious of what we are reacting to. For example if we are attracted to a feeling that is arising in us, we tend to be carried along by it. If on the other hand we do not like what is arising in us, we tend to reject it and struggle to get rid of it, often out of irritation, annoyance, fear or guilt. Our body tends to contract as we attempt to push the unpleasant feelings or thoughts away.

The simplest way to be at ease is to relax into whatever is happening for us, whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent, just let it be. It can sometimes take a lot of courage to allow whatever arises in the mind to be there, and it is worth cultivating a kind of non-fear that lets things be just as they are.

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

Practice: **Mindfulness Sitting Meditation** - Lesson 7, Exercise 1 (Daily)
The Three-Minute Breathing Space to cope with Difficult Situations/ Experiences - Lesson 1, Exercise 3. (Practice whenever you feel yourself starting to get stressed)
The Three-Minute Breathing Space - Lesson 1, Exercise 2 (Twice daily)

Week 6. Thoughts are not facts

"Awareness is not the same as thought. It lies beyond thinking, although it makes use of thinking, honouring its value and power. Awareness is more like a vessel which can hold and contain our thinking, helping us to see and know our thoughts as thoughts rather than getting caught up in them as reality" Jon Kabat - Zinn.

Practice: **Undertake ways to see your thoughts differently** - Lesson 3, Exercise 1 (Three times a week)
Sitting Meditation - Lesson 2, Exercise 1 (Daily)
The Three-Minute Breathing Space - Lesson 1, Exercise 2 (Twice daily)
The Three-Minute Breathing Space to cope with Difficult Situations/ Experiences - Lesson 1, Exercise 3. (Practice whenever you feel yourself starting to get stressed)

Week 7. How Can I Best Take Care of Myself?

How we spend our time and the activities we engage in deeply impact on our state of being in the world.

Practice: For forty-five minutes each day practice mindfulness meditation using different combinations of the following three practices

The Body Scan Meditation - Lesson 3, Exercise 1

Mindfulness Movement - Lesson 7, Exercise 3

Sitting Meditation - Lesson 7, Exercise 1

Self-Care in Daily Activities - Lesson 6, Exercise 1

The Three-Minute Breathing Space to cope with Difficult Situations/ Experiences -

Lesson 1, Exercise 3. (Practice whenever you experience unpleasant thoughts, feelings and/or sensations)

Loving Kindness-Meditation - Lesson 7, Exercise 2 (Days 2, 4 and 6)

Week 8. Developing your own Mindful Practice.

The task now is to weave the practices into a routine that is sustainable for you in the long run. Be realistic and remember that your choices are not set in stone, and you can be flexible in your practices to suit your needs.

Sometimes, you may feel the need for reconnecting with the body in the Body Scan Meditation (Lesson 4, Exercise 1), while at other times you might choose deliberately to bring a worry or problem right into the centre of your practice, using the Breathing space to cope with difficult situations/experiences (Lesson 1, Exercise 3). The choice is yours. You now have the skills to decide for yourself.

Ref: The eight week course in Mindful Living handbook, Oscailt, Complementary Health Centre, Dublin 4 2007 and Mindfulness - Finding peace in a Frantic World, M. Williams, D. Penman 2011

Note: All exercises are given in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Handbook. Refer also to accompanying C.D.

Review Reflection Questions

1. What have you learned from the guide on mindfulness based stress reduction?
2. What are your biggest blocks/obstacles to living more mindfully?
3. What strategies might help you to stay present and not to get stuck in automatic pilot in the future?

References and Further Reading suggestions

Wherever you go, there you are. Mindfulness Meditation for everyday life.
By Jon Kabat - Zinn. Piatkus 2010

Full Catastrophe Living. 'How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation.'
By Jon Kabat - Zinn. Piatkus 2010

Mindfulness for Dummies
By Shamash Alidima 2010.

A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World.
By J. Mack, G. Williams, M. Williams and D. Penman. Piatkus Books 2011.

Guided Mindfulness Meditation and Manual.
By Mary O' Callaghan. Oscailt Complementary Health Centre, Dublin.

The Mindful Way through Depression. 'Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness.'
By Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat - Zinn. The Guilford Press 2007.

The Miracle of Mindfulness. 'The Classic Guide to Meditation.'
By Thich Nhat Hank 2008.

The Power of Now
By Eckhart Tolle. Hodder and Stoughton 2005