

MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTIONS

www.mindfulness.org.au

SETTING & POSTURE

Even though we can practice mindfulness in any place and in any posture, some conditions are more conducive. So first we find a relatively quiet place where we are unlikely to be disturbed. We then adopt a relaxed but alert posture. The traditional position is sitting cross legged on a cushion on the floor, but sitting on a chair with the back straight and unsupported and relaxed will do just as well.

EYES OPENED OR CLOSED

When beginning practice it is better to close the eyes. Ultimately it is very useful to be able to practise mindfulness with the eyes open as it allows us to expand its application to a much broader range of settings.

THE ANCHOR: BREATH OR MANTRA

We then use the breath as an anchor for our attention. A repeated phrase called a mantra can be used for the same purpose. However, the breath has the advantages of immediately bringing the attention into the body. Moreover, awareness of the breath immediately focuses our attention on a function that is under both conscious and unconscious control. This is a very appropriate place for psychological work to occur. So we focus our attention on the breath without trying to control it. We let the breath breathe itself.

ALL THOUGHTS ARE “JUST THOUGHTS”

All thoughts including images are regarded as equal while meditating. It does not matter how noble or base they might be; how profound or banal they might be. This is how we cultivate the non-judgemental awareness that is the cornerstone of mindfulness. So for the purpose of mindfulness they are all "just thoughts".

DEALING WITH DISTRACTION FROM THE BREATH (OR MANTRA)

Soon enough we will realise we have become distracted from our breath and immersed in our thought stream as is our well established habit. When this happens we *gently* bring attention back to the breath without criticism or struggle. We have just been for a dip in our thought stream. So we lightly return to the solid ground of our awareness of our breath. It is this gentle process of moving in and out of the mind-stream that creates the decentering effect described by Segal et al (2002)

Similarly, **sensations** such as sounds, aches itches and tingles are quite acceptable. The same applies for impulses and urges to move. We can just allow all these mental events to be. When they lead to discursive thoughts, such as: "I wish that dog next door would stop barking", then we treat that like any other thought. So we just gently return our attention to our breath.

Strong emotions can sometimes be problematic. They can lead to the practitioner being overwhelmed by a vortex of intense thoughts and feelings. In this case it is often helpful to be mindful of the changing physical sensations in the body associated with the emotion. As the practitioner watches the fluctuations and changing nature of these sensations, the sense of being overwhelmed can often be replaced with interest or even curiosity about the experience.

Therefore so called “distractions” become part of the way awareness of the breath expands to a broader and more inclusive mindful attitude.

ESTABLISHING A REGULAR DAILY PRACTICE

Many people have great difficulty establishing a regular daily practice. Usually it is best if a practitioner links the mindfulness practice into their normal daily routine. Most people have a predictable morning routine into which mindfulness can be slotted. The important thing is that the practice should not be based on whether a practitioner feels up to it on a particular day or not. Instead it needs to be established as a good habit which is practised without internal disputation, much like brushing your teeth.

Sometimes flexibility and imagination are required to find an appropriate time and place. People with young children often find it easier to meditate at work in their office. Single parents of preschool children often find it very difficult to find time. Sometimes they can fit it in when the children are napping. Some people meditate on the train on the way to work in the morning.

MINDFULNESS CLASSES IN AUSTRALIA: www.buddhanet.net/aus_dir/med-teach.htm
Vipassana (Goenka) as researched by Alan Marlatt: www.dhamma.org/ausnz.htm

SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- *Development of a stronger “Observing Self”*
- *It can be applied in a variety of settings.*
- *We can see thoughts as “Just thinking” without feeding or fighting them.*

“The practice of mindfulness defuses our negativity, aggression, and turbulent emotions.....Rather than suppressing emotions or indulging in them, here it is important to view them, and your thoughts, and whatever arises with an acceptance and generosity that are as open and spacious as possible.”

- *Mindfulness allows covert desensitization to negative thoughts and feelings to occur spontaneously.*

- *We can see the temporary nature of sensations, feelings and thoughts.* This allows for the practice described by Allan Marlatt as “Urge Surfing” which he uses as part of “Relapse Prevention” (see p3 of handout). Often trying to change things compounds the problems for example when someone tries to get rid of unpleasant feelings by taking substances. Also the internal struggle to put something out of your mind usually results in increased tension and a rebound phenomenon where the avoided thought feeling returns even stronger (Wenzlaff et al 1991)

THE “JUST WORRYING” LABELLING TECHNIQUE

As a preamble to discussing this technique with a client it is often helpful to differentiate worrying from constructive problem solving. Worrying involves repetitive circular thinking, which is associated with anxiety and produces no enactable practical outcomes.

This technique simply involves a person labelling worry as “just worrying” and then bringing their attention back to their breath or to simply change the subject of their thinking. Every time a person catches themselves worrying they just label it again and change the subject. It doesn’t matter if a person does it 10 times in one minute or if they only realise they have been worrying after a period of 2 hours and then apply the technique. The important thing is that the person applies the technique when they realise they are worrying.

This technique involves no criticism or internal struggle, just simple non-judgemental labelling. **Therefore it is important in this regard that the client does not change the label from “just worrying” to “don’t worry”.**

This technique is very powerful and most people find that their worrying thoughts dissipate almost totally within a few days. Then they usually start worrying about a week later because they have forgotten about the technique through lack of need to use it. At that point a reminder of the technique usually suffices.

The same technique can be applied to other disturbing repetitive mental events using labels such as “just doubting” or “just criticising”. This is subtly but significantly different to avoidance. It is not running away from the aversive mental stimulus. Rather it is the non-judgemental labelling which is encapsulated in the word “just”

MINDFULNESS IN ACTION TECHNIQUES

These techniques are useful for bring mindfulness into the activities of everyday life. They also are a good place to start with clients who have very low impulse control and distress tolerance. Linehan (2003 pp170-171 & 174-175) describes a number of these techniques as a way of developing distress tolerance in her “Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder”

Mindfulness in action techniques include:

Focussing awareness of an aspect of a physical habit that previously has largely been outside of conscious awareness e.g.

- Noticing how tight you hold the steering wheel when driving.
- Being aware of what happens to your breathing or voice tone in an argument.

Focussing awareness on the breath when a specified environmental cue occurs. This technique has been described in detail by **Thich Nhat Hanh** (1991) *Peace Is Every Step : The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* New York: Bantam Books pp22-30

Also see: **Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2002).** Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for depression: A new approach to preventing relapse. p307

The cues we might use include:

- Waiting for phone to be answered
- Waiting at a red traffic light
- Walking
- Listening to Music
- Getting Dressed

Detailed awareness of the mental phenomena associated with cravings such as thoughts, physical sensations and feelings. This is different to urge surfing as this technique includes no expectation that the craving will be outlasted.

URGE SURFING – RELAPSE PREVENTION (ALAN MARLATT)

<u>URGE SURFING – RELAPSE PREVENTION (ALAN MARLATT)</u>	
	Exercise
<p>Urges are ocean waves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow gradually until they crest and subside. - Clients “ride” the waves without giving in - Learn that urges will pass. - Also learn that new urges will appear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sit with back unsupported in a chair or on a cushion on the floor - Start Mindfulness Meditation - Wait for any sense of discomfort e.g. Restlessness, an itch - Note the desire to move and resist it - Note the changing position shape and quality of the discomfort over time - Notice thoughts that arise: e.g. "I wish this itch would go..." - These thoughts are just thoughts - So gently bring your attention back to breath & body sensations
<p>Mindfulness skills enable the client to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe the urges as they appear, - Accept them nonjudgmentally, - Cope with them in adaptive ways. 	

INITIAL PROBLEMS PRACTISING MINDFULNESS & SOLUTIONS

Therapists who do not have a regular mindfulness practice themselves have a great deal of difficulty successfully teaching it. This even applies to the teaching of a simple process like urge surfing. Indeed the research shows that therapists need to have their own well established mindfulness practice in order to be effective mindfulness trainers. (Segal et al 2002 pp83-84)

Mindfulness may initially lead to increased awareness of repressed unpleasant feelings such as agitation, grief or boredom. Louise had been badly sexually abused for years as a young girl. When she initially came to see me she couldn't remember the last time she had cried. Nonetheless, when Louise began doing regular mindfulness meditation she cried for most of the duration of her daily twenty minute sessions.

I encouraged Louise to allow the crying to happen and to be mindful of the changing physical sensations in her body associated with the grief. This is often a workable way to stay mindful in the presence of intense emotion. In this way Louise began her successful recovery from the abuse and the poorly developed self efficacy that went with it.

The client needs some pre-existing strength of personality in order to establish a regular mindfulness practice. We can see from the above case that some impulse control and distress tolerance are required. It often helps to meditate with the client in therapy sessions. When the therapist can tolerate the client's affect, a message is powerfully communicated that the client's affect is tolerable. This can lead to the rest of the therapeutic session being more grounded and less scattered. Even if the client does not persist with home practice they often benefit by having experienced decentering and the noticing of the automatic flow of the mind and the continually changing nature of mental phenomena. This can provide the basis for later success in therapy with such things as urge surfing or learning distress tolerance.

Sometimes it is better to begin with simple awareness of body sensations rather than breath focussed mindfulness. If it is still too difficult it can be helpful to start with very brief sessions of mindfulness of 5 minutes or less. If even that is too difficult, "mindfulness in action" techniques can be used. (see page 3)

Many people have great difficulty establishing a regular daily practice. Usually it is best if a practitioner links the mindfulness practice into their normal daily routine. More details can be found in Mindfulness Instructions on page 1.

Westerners, especially therapists, have great difficulty letting go of striving for specific outcomes. In mindfulness we apply effort to focussing our attention on the breath and then opening to awareness of other mental phenomena. With mindfulness we acknowledge that the effort to "Get somewhere" is often the wrong kind of effort for catalysing change or growth or healing, coming as it usually does from rejection of a present moment reality without having a full awareness & understanding of that reality.

So when practising mindfulness, we need to let go of other outcomes, such as getting rid of urges, feeling better, thinking more logically or optimistically. This becomes easier with practise as we naturally begin to trust the method more. In the meantime it helps to read the literature. It also helps to reflect on the inevitability of change and the ultimate impermanence of all phenomena and of all relationships. Contemplation of the Serenity Prayer can also be helpful, in this regard.

WHY MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTORS NEED THEIR OWN REGULAR PRACTICE

Mindfulness is an experiential skill, like swimming, playing a musical instrument, playing chess or rock climbing. Anyone teaching these skills is in fact a coach. To teach an experiential skill (to coach) requires some mastery of that skill. The coach's experience creates an invitational stance because of the continuity between the experience of the instructor and the student. This continuity of experience allows the instructor to tune into the subtleties of the student's mindfulness experience. The instructor can then tailor their coaching to the specific requirements of the student.

Moreover, experiential information is often conveyed non-verbally. This can be done skilfully if the instructor carries the information at an experiential level, within the body. So if instructions about staying non-judgementally with the contents of consciousness are based on the instructor's own experience, then tone of voice, gesticulations and affective expression will all be congruent. This will enhance the verbal message being conveyed.

The student needs to know the instructor has skill and experience. They then sense that their instructor embodies a way of practising mindfulness. This makes it easier to learn by modelling, just as a rock climbing student might do with an instructor. An example of where this might manifest would be the ability of the instructor to competently relate to unpleasant affect.

Non Buddhist Contacts for Learning Mindfulness

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Jon Kabat-Zinn

Open Ground www.openground.com.au ph 1300 720 322
Sydney, Canberra Alice Springs, Perth

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Zindel Segal, Mark Williams & John Teasdale

Prof. Graham Meadows, Monash Uni, Melbourne, Bernadette.O'Grady@med.monash.edu.au
ph: 03 95541580

Maura Kenny, Adelaide romo@chariot.net.au 08 8269 8188

Dialectic Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Marsha Linehan

Mental Health Australia www.mhaustralia.com ph: 03 5442 1850
Organises the only accredited DBT courses around Australia

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) Steven Hayes

Russ Harris Melbourne russharris@optusnet.com.au; Tel: 0425 782 055

Independent Teachers

Stephen Brown – Melbourne www.tranx.org.au/meditation.html ph: 03 9886 9400

Bruno Cayoun Hobart www.mindfulness.info ph: 03 6223 1138

Rosemary McIndoe - Melbourne based gives workshops around Australia

www.pathoutofpain.com.au ph: 03 9347 5083

Michael Anderson - Torquay & Melbourne asport@bigpond.com ph: 03 5266 1065

Some Mindfulness Reading - Articles

Baer, Ruth A. (2003) Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 125-143. <http://home.earthlink.net/~wendylliles/articles/baer.pdf>

This is the current state of the art review of mindfulness research

Breslin, F. C., Zack, M., & McMMain, S. (2002). An information-processing analysis of mindfulness: Implications for relapse prevention in the treatment of substance abuse. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 9(3), 275-299.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~wendylliles/articles/breslin.pdf>

Davidson, Richard J., Kabat-Zinn, Jon, et al. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65, 564-570. <http://home.uchicago.edu/~wliles/articles/davidson.pdf>

Neff, Kristin D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2, 85-102. <https://webpace.utexas.edu/neffk/pubs/SCtheoryarticle.pdf> Self compassion evolves naturally out of non judgemental awareness. This article discusses the advantages of this concept over the concept of self esteem, which can lead to narcissism and avoidance of facing one's limitations.

Wenzlaff D., Wegner, M., & Klein S.B. (1991) The role of thought suppression in the bonding of thought and mood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60, 500-508

<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~wegner/pdfs/Wenzlaff,Wegner&Klein1991.pdf>

Witkiewitz, Katie, Marlatt, G. Alan, & Walker, D. D. (2005). Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 19 (3).

Witkiewitz, Katie. & Marlatt, G. Alan. (2004). Relapse prevention for alcohol and drug problems: That was Zen, this is Tao. *American Psychologist*, 59 (4), 224-235.

Some Mindfulness Reading - Books

Aronson Harvey B. (2004) *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground, Reconciling Eastern Ideals and Western Psychology* Boston & London: Shambhala

Harvey Aaronson is a multilingual interpreter as well as a psychotherapist. He clarifies a number of linguistic confusions such as the different ways the words “ego” “anger” and “attachment” are used in Eastern and Western psychological traditions

De Mello, Anthony. & Stroud, J.F. Eds. (1990). *Awareness*, New York: Doubleday.

Using humor, compassion, and insight, Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello mixes Christian spirituality, Buddhist parables, Islamic sayings, Hindu breathing exercises, and psychological insight.

Epstein Mark (1995) *Thoughts Without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective* New York Basic Books

Epstein Mark *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart*

Mark Epstein integrates Object Relations psychoanalytic theory and Buddhist psychology in his books

Germer Christopher K., Siegel Ronald D., Fulton Paul R. (2005) *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy* New York, Guilford Press

This is a special book in that it is truly trans-theoretical in regard to western psychologies, as it discusses the practical application of mindfulness intelligently and coherently from cognitive, humanistic and psychoanalytic viewpoints

Hayes Steven C., Follette Victoria M. & Linehan Marsha M. eds. (2004) *Mindfulness and Acceptance: Expanding the Cognitive-Behavioral Tradition* New York, London: The Guilford Press

A discussion of the theory and research in relation to the new wave of mindfulness based cognitive therapies that have been developed over the last 15 years.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness.* New York: Dell Publishing.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are.* New York: Hyperion Press.

Linehan, Marsha M. (1993). *Skills training manual for treating borderline personality disorder.* New York : The Guilford Press.

This book is a step-by step guide for teaching clients four sets of skills: mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance. Mindfulness is regarded as the core skill upon which the other three depend. It is useful for substance use clients without BPD as well. It includes useful, clear-cut handouts that may be readily photocopied.

Marlatt G. Alan, D. M. Donovan Eds. (2005) *Relapse Prevention.* New York: Guilford Press.

Merton, Thomas. & Thich Nanh Hahn, (1971). *Contemplative Prayer.* New York: Image Books

In this book the western monk Thomas Merton integrates the Christian contemplative tradition with what he has learnt from the Eastern Mindfulness tradition.

Magrid Barry (2002) *Ordinary Mind: Exploring the Common Ground of Zen and Psychoanalysis*
An integration of Self Psychology (as promoted by Prof. Russel Meares in Sydney) and Zen

Safran Jeremy D. (2003) ed *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism* Sommerville MA USA, Wisdom Publications
Has multiple authors many of whom hold highly esteemed academic positions in the field of psychoanalysis in the USA

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2002). *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for depression: A new approach to preventing relapse.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Illustrative transcripts and a wealth of reproducible materials, including session summaries and participant forms, enhance the clinical utility of the volume.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* New York: Bantam Books

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) *The Miracle of Mindfulness.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.