MTI Detailed Curriculum Notes (2018)

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MBSR CLASS ONE: Opening to new possibilities

**Notes on All Class Flows**

Starting each class with a longer practice period achieves several intentions: It settles everyone— teacher included—and attunes the group to presence and attentiveness. If participants have not practiced at home, the initial group practice is inclusive and provides a strong experience from which they can speak and participate as fully as those who’ve done the home practice every day. After a longer practice period, the dialogue is quintessentially different than if the class begins with a conversation about practice. Arriving in the body, offering the possibility of coming to rest in one’s own presence drops the mind into different territory—not the usual “reporting” or even reflecting mode. Rather the expression is enlivened by this *beinginess* and this *beinginess together*, that draws more deeply and breaks out of automaticity, supporting insight and clarity.

CFM summary

This 3-hour session includes a review of the intervention and the establishment of a learning contract with the patient/participant. The theoretical underpinnings of Mind-Body Medicine and the application of self-regulatory skills as related to the patient's individual referring diagnosis are also established. The patient is experientially introduced to mindful eating, mindfulness of breathing and the body scan. Home practice is assigned using the first guided recording (body scan meditation) as a means of beginning to learn to become familiar with mindful awareness of the body.

Theme

From our point of view, *as long as you are breathing,* there is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what challenges you are facing. Challenges and difficulties are workable. Mindful awareness, defined as paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally, is fundamental to this work since the present moment is the only time anyone ever has to perceive, learn, grow or change.

Building trust within the group; defining and applying mindfulness to our life experientially; opening and starting to explore; acknowledging alternative perspectives; trusting self to see themselves with fresh eyes.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 30 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 30 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening Practice

Body Scan

Standing Yoga – A few poses from the standing yoga sequence can be spread out through the program rather than done in its entirety in one class.

**Informal practices**

Eating meditation

**Class sequence Summary**

* Welcome and Intro

- Acknowledgement of what it has taken to be here.

- Check in…what’s it like to be here: in a new group…sensations, emotions, thoughts….share in dyads, one word reflection around the group.

* + Origins and overview
  + Logistics
* Guidelines for participation
* Why am I here? Dyads, round
* Comfort, challenge and panic zone (OPTIONAL)
* Frameworks (very brief)
  + Definition of mindfulness
  + Stress/distress
* Sultana Practice
* Yoga Practice intro: standing pose.
* Abdominal breathing in lying
* Body scan
* Rationale for body based practice
* Set home practice

**Class Detail Notes**

**Welcome and brief intro to class by instructor**

Arrange room in a circle.

**Introduction**

*Introduce myself as a teacher*

*Acknowledgement:*what it has taken to get here

*Logistics:* Toilets, mobiles phones, no breaks, if you have to leave the class altogether let me know, we start on time.

**Reflection**

**W**hat’s it like to be here: in a new group…sensations, emotions, thoughts….share in dyads, one word reflection around the group.

**The MBSR program origins**

- A program to complement medical treatment to reduce suffering, bringing together Eastern and Western approaches

- In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn who was a student of Buddhist meditation practices was working in a hospital and saw that many people, even though they were getting the best care available, were still suffering terribly – especially when their condition could not be helped eg. terminal illness, chronic illness, and depression and anxiety because of illness. He discovered that even in a short time (8 weeks) people could make quite remarkable changes in themselves so that they suffered less (He would have liked to have called the program Mindfulness Based Suffering Reduction but thought ‘stress” would have more traction. But it is really about finding out about how to reduce our suffering.

Secular program which teaches practices based on Buddhist psychology.

Body/mind connections: what we do with our body effects our mind, our emotions, our thoughts/ what we do with our mind effects our body….

Evidence based with 35 years research

*To change one’s life: Start immediately. Do it flamboyantly.*

*William James*

**Review of guidelines for our group**

Experiment/scientist/laboratory metaphor …….exploring the relationship between body and mind: what we do with the body effects the mind, and vice versa. You will be exploring this within your own self and experience what is true for you.

* Self-care: take your own authority in responding to invitations.
* Confidentiality: looking after each other
* No advice-giving: “Keep it close to home”; most people know what they have to do or certainly are able to find out; respect for each person’s own journey.
* One person speaking at a time.
* Listening and speaking in the group. Perhaps brining awareness to what you are hearing, seeing etc as you listen and noticing what it is like for you to speak or not speak in the group.
* Be prepared – to give things up and to be uncomfortable
* Experiential learning…learning through your own experience in the practice and from each other
* Communication with instructor (ie available for contact during the week via email/phone)
* How to use the course book and CD’s: fill in the homework sheets, and various
* other home practice
* Rather than think of the course as a weekly class supported by some homework assignments, it may be better to think of it as eight weeks of practice supported by a weekly class, as that is where the learning will be.

JKZ: “People are geniuses, if we let them be.”

**GUIDELINES**

Self-care

Confidentiality

Listening and speaking in the group

No advice-giving

One person speaking at a time.

Be prepared

* to give things up
* to be uncomfortable

Experiential learning – experiment!

Communicate with me

How to use the course book and audio

Eight weeks of practice supported by a class

**Guided internal reflection:** What has brought you here? What is your intention? What is calling for attention your life? What is it you really want?

Option: Dyad or small group reflection before group go-around.

Option: asking people to capture something of what they’ve learned by writing/drawing intentions, goals, hopes etc in workbook.

**Group go around:** Go around the room and give people the opportunity to introduce themselves, what they are here for, and their expectations for the program. The instructor makes instructive comments, observations, and welcoming remarks from time to time in response to individuals. This is not a discussion; avoid cross-talk between participants. Mindful listening and speaking may be introduced here.

**Comfort, challenge and panic zones: skilful learning OPTIONAL**

(Perhaps draw three concentric circles on the board.) In the learning, we can think about three places we can be. One is the comfort zone, where you stay comfortable, not extending yourself much. All fine, but we don’t’ learn much in that zone. Then there is the challenge zone, where we might be opening to new challenging aspects of ourselves, and there is lots of learning there. Then there is panic zone, where we are overloaded, overwhelmed, and we don’t learn much there either. So if you find yourself there, be in touch with me, and I will help escort you back to your comfort zone again.

**Frameworks for our learning:** (connecting this to what people have raised)

***Mindfulness:* JKZ definition:**

**The awareness that arises** through paying attention:

on purpose,

in the present moment and

non- judgementally. (JKZ)

Another way of saying this is: Mindfulness involves the cultivation of attention, intention and attitude. These are cultivated simultaneously, not in a linear fashion.

***Stress reduction***

This is a stress reduction course and we will be exploring lots of ways to do this including drawing on Western understandings of stress physiology.

But I’d like to start with an unusual definition of stress which is actually a 16th Century definition of distress. I like this connection, because it points to the possibility of really honouring and getting to know our stress as distress…it matters! Not something to be fobbed off or dismissed.

*Definition of distress/stress*

"The sore pressure or strain of adversity, trouble, hunger, sickness, pain, or sorrow; anguish or affliction affecting the body, spirit, or community."

I like this definition because it points to the nature of stress/distress as not just a personal responsibility, but something that arises in a particular context, and is generated in a particular context. One of the things we might examine over the eight weeks is what aspects of my distress I can take responsibility for, and what parts I need to understand in terms of my context, and not take it too personally.

**Eating meditation**

Introduction to mindfulness meditation using the ordinary act of eating, followed by a dialogue about the experience. Focus on direct sensory observation – what can be seen, felt, smelled, tasted, heard. Observing and then slowly eating one raisin, with guidance from instructor, stopping for observations from participants. Bringing friendly curiosity to this investigation, then eating a second raisin in silence. Instructor is attentive to observations that become deductions, opinions and theories removed from immediate experience. Group dialogue can inquire what is experienced through this practice, and instructor stays alive to the recognition of past experience influencing the present; interconnection; relationship between hunger, satisfaction, emptiness, and fullness; and what shows up when present for the full act of eating. Not needing to necessarily bring these topics forward, but allowing them to arise in the group.

**Yoga:** **Introduction to Mountain Pose and other standing postures.**

(With an emphasis on contacting a groundedness and openness in the body, and perhaps focussing on metaphors of “taking one’s ground in one’s life”, “taking a stand” in relation to the issues they have brought to the class, and that

“understanding” is embodied. That what we will be learning here, we are going to be learning through the body as well as the mind, so that it can be grounded in

our ordinary day-to-day experience. Also an emphasis on finding middle ground in relation to gravity, exploring forward and backwards, and side to side leanings, noticing shifts in sensations and also in what it is like to find a middle ground….is there more of a sense of working with gravity rather than against it, when we are well aligned?)

**Abdominal Breathing:**

Tie the moment-to-moment awareness of eating exercise to experiencing the breath in the same way. Introduce various comfortable postures for lying down: corpse pose, astronaut pose, or sitting in chairs if necessary. Focus on the feeling of the abdomen rising and falling with the inbreath and the outbreath, mindfully “tasting”

the breath in the same way that the group tasted the raisin. Non- judgmentally observing one’s own breathing from moment to moment; and bringing one’s attention back to the breath and the present moment when it wanders.

**Body Scan:**

From mindfulness of breathing, move into guided body scan with people continuing to lie on floor or sitting in comfortable position.

Finish with discussion of people’s experiences with the body scan and assign daily home practice.

Give instructions for use of the 45 minute Body Scan recording for home practice during week One. (We also offer a 30 minute and 15 mintue track, but ask them to do the 45 mins each day this week.)

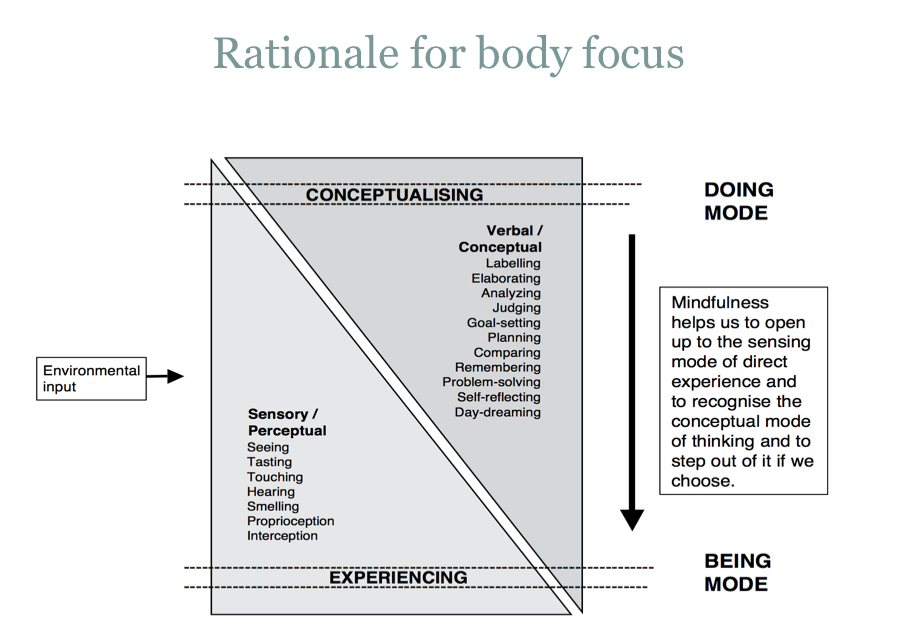
OPTIONAL: group body scan before the longer body scan. This involves going around the circle and asking each particpant to name a body part and associated sensation. Eg: hands tingling.

**Practice discussion**

Explorations in dyads/triads and then big group of experience in the body scan.

And then speak about the body scan a central home practice this week.

**Rationale for Body based practice – auto pilot**

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(Have the diagram from the course book up on the flip chart and use it in the following piece of teaching…)

You might have noticed that we have started our training in mindfulness meditation with focussing really strongly on the body; sultana, the standing practice, the abdominal breathing, the body scan. There is good reason for this.

All of the information we are perceiving is coming in through our senses:

seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, interception, and also perceiving things coming into our minds.

This is the sensory/perceptual system. As this info comes in, we make sense of it in language: by verbalising and conceptualising it. elaborating, comparing, naming, planning, problem solving, evaluating….this is the verbal/conceptual system – which is very necessary in a human life.

The problem for most of us is that we are on auto-pilot and often spend huge swathes of time in our conceptual worlds, and hardly any time in our sensory world. We literally miss out on so much of the life we are living, and find ourselves caught up in a conceptual life.

Initially in the training, we are going to help ourselves interrupt auto-pilot and open up to the possibility of living more in the present moment with what we are actually seeing, hearing, tasting etc. It is not that thinking is unimportant. Not at all. Just in this part of the course, we are wanting to strengthen the capacity to be connected to out bodily experience. It offers a lot of good info as well as being a way to notice and interrupt our auto-pilot.

**Set Home practice**

Body Scan 6 x

Eat one meal mindfully, or first bite, first sip

Pay attention to one task, bringing attention to the bodily actions of doing it.

**Home practice Week 1**

Body Scan 6 x

Eat one meal mindfully

Pay attention to one task, bringing attention to the bodily actions of doing it.

**Poem/sit to finish**

MBSR CLASS TWO:

Perception and Creative Responding

Summary

This 2.5 hour session includes one hour of experiential mindfulness training and skill development, and one hour or more of focused dialogue and reflection concerning the role of perception and conditioning in the appraisal and assessment of stress. The pivotal role of self-responsibility in the positive development of short and long-term changes in health and health-enhancing behaviour’s is introduced. Home practice is assigned with an emphasis on the regular daily practice of the body scan for a second week, plus introduction of short periods of sitting meditation, and the application and integration of mindfulness into the participant’s everyday life.

Theme

Perception and creative responding: how you see things (or don’t see them) will determine in large measure how you will respond to them. This ties in with how people see their participation in the program; how they see their pain, their illness; the stress and pressures in their lives; the level of commitment they will bring to the program and to the personal discipline it requires. Make the connection to stress reactivity and recovery from acute stressors, and the principle that “It’s not the stressors per se, but how you handle them” which influences the short and long-term health effects they may have on your mind and your body.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour  
Group Discussion – 40 minutes  
Didactic Presentation (nine dots) – 30 min including group discussion Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 20 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening meditation  
Sitting Meditation  
Standing Yoga (a few postures)  
Body Scan  
AOB sitting meditation (introduction with postural guidance)

**Informal practices**

For home practice: Mindfulness of routine activities: brushing teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out garbage, shopping, reading to kids, eating (participant chooses one)

**TYPICAL CLASS SEQUENCE SUMMARY**

Body scan

Yoga to wake up

Practice review

* immediate and then home practice
* exploring obstacles that are arising

Intro to Perception

* Gorilla video - priming
* Nine dots exercise: exploring lenses of thoughts, emotions, sensations, impulses
* “Maybe” story OPTIONAL
* Pleasant/unpleasant/neutral – introduction to hedonic tone
* Appraisal re: stress
* Pleasant events set up

Awareness of Breath

* brief posture intro
* AOB short sit/exploration
* STOP Breathing Space OPTIONAL this week.

Finish/set homework

*The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.* WB Yeats

*Preconceived notions are the locks on the door to wisdom.* Merry Browne

*Expectations? Suffering under construction.*

Nancy Bardecke

**CLASS DETAIL NOTES**

**Guided body scan**

**Standing yoga (5 mins to wake up!)**

**Large group discussion: (**Optional: use dyads/small group first)

Discuss the body scan experience of this session as well as the home practice, with particular attention to how successful they were at taking the time for it. Opening up exploration of problems and obstacles they encountered: sleepiness, boredom; how they worked with them or not: what people are learning about themselves from it, if anything.

Establish the universality of the wandering mind and the notion of working with it with acceptance and repeated re-focusing of attention; the coming back is a s much a part of the meditation as the staying on the object of attention; noting where the mind goes and what is on one’s mind; emphasize the importance of desisting from repressing and suppressing thoughts or feelings or forcing things to be a certain way. Best way to get somewhere is not to try and get anywhere….letting go. A new way of learning. The body has it’s own language and it’s own intelligence. Non-conceptual.

**Discuss eating one mindful meal** and/or their relationship with food this week.

**OPTIONAL: Obstacles to Practice – accessing motivation**

(This often comes out in the discussion about practice and it can be useful to go a bit more specifically into this in a formal way to help them get in touch with their intention or purpose and commitment at this time.)

*Brainstorm obstacles that they noticed this week*

Some may be:

Kids…

Habits….

Routines….lack of routine

Work…..

stress….

Tiredness

Drinking wine

Other things I’d rather do…preference for more entertaining activities

Distracting thoughts…can’t be bothered focussing…quite daunting.

Avoidance of the effortful, the difficult, not knowing how to do it yet etc.

*Responding points:*

1. **Fitting in practice is almost impossible. Have to build it in.** Deciding this is the spot for it. this is when I am going to do it.

*Schedule it in* like you would an appointment. Spending time for oneself.

2. **Anchoring back to why am I doing this?**

You can have a go at this now, re-wire the brain, get more resilient, more ability to manage emotions, more energy in 5, 10, 15, 20 years time or you could do it *now*. Given you have paid the money, set aside the time. Why not do this for yourself now. Remember your “why”….we are not going to get a different outcome if we perpetuate the same actions that we have been doing the last year or five years.

3. **JKZ: I don’t have to like it, just have to do it.**

Letting go of habitual liking/disliking….just do it.

***EXPLORING PERCEPTION*** *(bringing this forth as is relevant for the moment)*

We generally have the idea that what we can see, hear, taste, touch is “reality”.

But perception can be a very slippery thing.

EG: Talk about Basketball game/gorilla: visual perception trick (priming)

How many gorillas might there be in this room?

In Weeks One, Two and Three we are inviting people to begin to notice things about their experience – both *what* they are experiencing, but even more importantly *how* they are experiencing. That is, how they are shaping what it is that they are tasting, seeing, hearing, touching, sensing by appraisal – an often out-of-awareness process.

Ordinary things/experiences (taken for granted) is begun to be appreciated as extraordinary (eg the workings of ones’ body, the complex social processes that bring our food to us)

And so often we can get quite attached to our perceptions, thinking we are “right”. In this course, we have an opportunity to begin to hold all hypotheses lightly….(maybe read The Cookie Thief). So just because we feel we are right, doesn’t mean it is so. Maybe getting into the habit of asking “Is that so?”

When we come into contact with any situation, we are making continuous appraisals of it, out of awareness. Our past experience and current state, influence how we “read” the present moment. Including our responses to the practice. This will shape how we experience the practice too. Being open to outcome.

**Nine dots exploration**

Ask participants to complete the nine dots puzzle: to attempt to solve a puzzle.

Then invite them to share their experience of doing it in terms of thoughts, emotions and sensations (process rather than the solution or not)

Possible teaching points:

* Diversity of response

(ie it is not the puzzle *but our relationship to it* that is important in generating our experience)

* Interrupting automatic perceptions as if they are “facts” about the object but noticing the *process* of perception
* Increasing awareness of and ability to describe sensations, emotions, thoughts
* Habits of perception are embodied: in the body, emotions and cognitions

Asking people to start noticing HOW they are perceiving not just WHAT they automatically notice

* Wholistic view V partial view

We often try to solve our problems honing in on the immediate concerns or variables, without expanding the focus of our attention to include a more wholistic view. Opening our perception wider can sometimes give rise to new kinds of solutions. (EG nine dots exploration where people don’t think to look “outside the box”)

Our response tells us about our ***appraisal***of the task:

This is interesting

I can’t do these things

Ask for help?

Avoidance?

Strong focus on getting it right

Not caring about the outcome

Thinking it is a stupid task…

What is the point of this?

These are all individual responses to the task; not facts about the task.

Notice the pattern….familiar?

In order to feel “stressed” we need two things:

*A the experience that a change is needed, or that there is a demand to meet*

*AND*

*B that I don’t have the resources to meet that demand.*

Both of these things involve appraisal – which may be inaccurate. Practicing mindfulness, we begin to start seeing our automatic appraisals of situations, and how they shape our experiences.

**“Maybe” - A Chinese parable OPTIONAL**

This is a useful way of introducing how we make meanings that can lead to more or less suffering:

*A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbours exclaimed, “Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!” The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”*

*A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares back to the farm as well. The neighbours shouted out, “Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!” The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”*

*Later that week, the farmer’s son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, “Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!” The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”*

*A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer’s son, still recovering from his injury. Friends shouted, “Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!” To which the farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”*

**Pleasant events calendar**

*Some theory to share to frame this exploration:*

As outlined above human beings have a nervous system which is constantly making split second decisions about whether I should move towards something (it is pleasant), or away (unpleasant/threatening) or not pay much attention at all (neutral experience). This makes sense as it is efficient, and also life saving at times. Over the next few weeks we are going to be paying attention to this process of automatic appraisal, bringing it into awareness.

As soon as a contact is made, then a feeling/hedonic tone arises – either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, depending on our appraisal of that contact. We have a nervous system that automatically wants us to move towards the pleasant, and away from the unpleasant, and to not particularly notice neutral contacts.

The wanting of pleasant things and the not wanting of unpleasant things is happening outside our awareness all the time. The point of cultivating awareness through meditation is to some extent, to notice these processes – to bring the into awareness, so we have more CHOICE about our responses.

A more subtle point, is the unpleasantness or pleasantness does not reside “out there” or “in here” but is generated in the moment of a contact being made with a sense organ and an object.

This week we ask people to begin to pay attention to those things that you might automatically appraise as “pleasant”. And really pay attention to them. How do we know they are pleasant? What kinds of thoughts get generated by a pleasant experience? What kinds of physical sensations? What kinds of emotions? To really begin noticing our appraisal of things as pleasurable.

And we ask them keep a diary in the form of the pleasant events calendar: thoughts, feelings, sensations

**Introduce sitting meditation with awareness of breathing (AOB) as primary object of attention**:

Short guided AOB practice, including short exploration of posture (finding an upright way of sitting that embodies a sense of dignity)

Short share in dyads

Short discussion re: AOB in large group.

**Breathing Space – OPTIONAL depending on time**

Ask participants to begin walking, then quicken their pace, faster, faster….then call out STOP.

- Stop and notice what is happening

- Take a breath; resting attention with the sensations of breathing

- Open to observation: observing body, breath, sounds, emotional tone, thoughts, visual field, others

- Proceed

Repeat this, and then lead in to making the connection to our capacity to stop at any time in the day, to bring our attention to this moment, pause and then proceed. A good way to start integrating our practice into every day life: informal practice.

**Set home practice**

* Body Scan 6 x
* AOB sitting meditation: 10-15 minutes per day – No recording. Participants are instructed to do this on their own. This is not about controlling or changing the breath, but rather being with the breath and the sensations of breathing, noticing when attention wanders, and deliberately returning attention to the breath
* Fill out Pleasant Events Calendar for the week – one entry per day
* Choose one daily activity to bring full awareness to for the week:
* Home practice manual: fill out Pleasant events calendar
* Mindfulness of routine activities: teeth brushing, putting out the rubbish, showering, driving.

**Finish**

With sit/poem

CLASS THREE: Practice and the pleasure and power of being present

Summary

In this 2.5 hour session, participants practice several distinct yet interrelated formal mindfulness practices -- mindful hatha yoga (ending with a brief body scan), sitting meditation and optional walking meditation -- for a minimum of 90 minutes. This extended formal practice period is followed by inquiry into and exploration of participants’ experiences with in-class and assigned home practices. Typical topics include challenges and insights encountered in formal practice and in integrating mindfulness into everyday life.

Theme

There is pleasure and power in being present. Attending to and investigating the way things are in the body and mind in the present moment through the practices of yoga and meditation.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 70-90 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 20 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening meditation

Sitting meditation – awareness of breath and body

Mindful Lying Down Yoga

Walking Practice (If time) – This practice can be introduced at any time from week three on, but should be introduced at least one time prior to the all day-class

Closing meditation

**Informal practices**

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindful listening and speaking

Class Sequence Summary

Bringing an intention to practice/attitudinal foundations

Lying Movement 30 – 40 mins

Sitting practice (AOB and whole body) 20 - 30 mins

Walking 20 mins

Practice and Home practice discussion

Pleasant events calendar review

Set home practice

Sit to finish

**CLASS DETAIL NOTES:**

**Bringing an intention to practice:**

At the beginning of class sharing the different intentions/attitudes that they might bring to the practice by inviting everyone to look at the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness in the back of the course book and pick one that “speaks” to them – given how they are feeling right now, and how the week has been and sharing this in pairs.

During the meditations reminding them of the attitude they chose and in the practice discussion, invite them to bring it into their practice from moment to moment.

After the practice, inviting them to share in pairs how bringing the attitude to their practice was useful. In the large group asking them how they thought their practice would have been different if they could have brought that attitude in duringthe week and how the following week of practice might be different.

**Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness**

*Acceptance*– bringing openness to, kindness towards and welcoming of experience just as it is in the moment.

*Non-judging* – assuming the stance of impartial witness to your experience.

*Patience* – a recognition that things can only emerge in their own time.

*Beginners mind* – a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time with fresh curiosity and vitality.

*Trust* – a faith in the validity of our own experience and an allowing of the process of bringing awareness to experience to unfold in its own way.

*Non-striving* - an attitude of willingness to allow the present to be the way it is without trying to fix things. Striving may interfere with fully knowing the present and so being able to respond to it rather than to react.

*Letting be* – seeing the possibility of moving out of the perpetual human tendency to want to hold on the pleasant and get rid of the unpleasant.

*Kindness* – bringing an attitude of warmth and friendliness to ourselves and what

arises in us, no matter what it is

**Lying down Yoga practice:** 40 mins

**MBSR lying movement – basic movements**

Lying flat then feet flat on floor

Pelvic rocks

Arms raising, into long stretch

Knees to chest, circles, rocking, head up.

Leg into chest, each side, with and without head.

4 point kneeling: Cat/cow

4 point kneeling: reach with arm/leg

Bridge

Side twist with legs to each side

Back: leg raises, with one knee bent – head down and then lifting

Side support: leg lifts

Front of body: leg lifts, one each side. Then both legs and head.

Curling over, knees to chest.

Lying flat.

Slowly going through the sequence of postures for the Lying Movement practice, with comments interspersed as required. Emphasis on mindfulness and approaching one’s current limits with gentleness. Participants are encouraged to avoid any postures they feel would cause injury or a setback, or to experiment with caution and care when in doubt. Particular attention is paid to people with chronic problems with the low back, next and chronic pain in general. Verbal guidance is explicit and accurate (ie lying on the floor, as you breath our, drawing the right knee to the chest and wrapping your hands or arms around the shin..) so that people know what to do without having to look at the teacher…who is engaged in the postures while giving instructions. The teacher may move around the room and instruct people individually as needed. Ask permission of students to make adjustments to postures through physical contact.

Ending with more flowing Body scan.

**Sitting meditation with awareness of breathing (AOB):** 20 – 30 mins

Specific guidance related to establishing a stable upright and balanced sitting

posture. Also guiding people to begin to notice pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experience. (20 – 30 mins)

**Walking meditation:** 15 – 20 mins

Teach a focussed narrow concentration walking practice with a focus on sensation in the feet and legs….lifting, moving placing, and only walking on a short set path. The length of the mat is perfect.

*When we walk like we are rushing, we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity. Be aware of the contact between your feet and the earth. Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet.*

*Thich Nhat Hahn*

**Practice and home practice discussion**

This often forms the second major part of this class. Exploration of what people are experiencing through inquiry.

**Pleasant Events Calender:**

**Optional: short guided reflection**

Before a formal group discussion with the participants about the Pleasant Events Calendar, consider leading a short guided reflection that asks participants to select one pleasant event, focussing on the physical sensations, emotions and thoughts as they arise in memory, and then as they arise in the present moment.

Introduce this practice as a transition to the yoga practice which follows….

Go over pleasant events calendar being particularly attentive to exploring the ordinariness of experiencing a moment as pleasant. Particular emphasis on body/mind connections, patterns, what people observed/learned about themselves. Wondering together whether there were any pleasant events experienced during the body scan in the past week. Investigating what qualities in all of these pleasant moments or events caused them to be labelled as pleasant? What qualities do these distinct pleasant moments or events have in common?

**Home practice setting:**

Assign the home practice. Emphasise getting down on the floor and working mindfully with your body every day, if only for a few minutes.

* Alternate Body scan with Lying yoga every other day, (one practice per day 6 x per week)
* Sitting meditation with AOB: 10 – 15 minutes per day in silence
* Home practice manual: Unpleasant events calendar for the week; one entry per day.

**Sitting practice to finish:** AOB expanding awareness to whole body 10 mins…some silence (like the ongoing home practice)

MBSR CLASS FOUR: Investigating stressful experience and approaching the difficult

Summary

During this 2.5 hour session, participants engage in a combination of the three major formal mindfulness practices that have also been practiced at home during the preceding three weeks – the body scan, mindful hatha yoga and sitting meditation. Instruction emphasizes the development of concentration and the systematic expansion of the field of awareness.

Theme

How conditioning and perception shape our experience. By practicing mindfulness, we cultivate curiosity and openness to the full range of experience and through this process cultivate a more flexible attentional capacity. We learn new ways to relate to stressful moments and events, whether external or internal. Exploration of mindfulness as a means of reducing the negative effects of automatic habitual stress reactivity as well as the development of more effective ways of responding positively and pro-actively to stressful situations and experiences. The physiological and psychological bases of stress reactivity are reviewed and in-depth discussion is directed toward the use of mindfulness as a way of working with, reducing, and recovering more quickly from stressful situations and experiences. Daily practice aimed at recognizing and experientially inquiring into automatic habitual reactive patterns is assigned for home practice.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 15 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 15 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening meditation

Standing Yoga

Sitting meditation

Closing meditation

**Informal practices**

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindful listening and speaking

Class Sequence Summary

* Intro to the class......theme of opening to the difficult (Poem)
* Standing yoga: 30 – 40 mins
* Sitting Meditation (AOB, body, difficult sensations) 30 mins
* Practice and home practice review and mid course feedback form
* Unpleasant events exploration
  + Exploring the thoughts, emotions, sensations and impulses arising in a stressful moment
  + Stressful/unpleasant event meditation with focus on opening to difficult experience
  + Stress physiology and other teaching perspectives coming out of this.
* Set home practice
* Sit to finish

Between the stimulus and the response is a space.

Within that space lies our freedom.

Victor Frankel

It is precisely because we resist the darkness in ourselves that we miss the depths of the loveliness, beauty, brilliance, creativity,

and joy that lie at our core.

~Thomas Moore

"Learning to suffer consciously is an art that has been lost in our times. By training yourself to enter into an intimate, curious, embodied relationship with difficult psychological and emotional experience, you reclaim your right as an alive, sensitive, empowered human being. And proclaim your willingness to practice transmutation for the benefit of life everywhere.

Each time we turn from a painful feeling, bodily sensation, or disturbing emotion, we practice self-aggression, encoding circuitry of self-abandonment, as we hope to end-run the reality of our vulnerability. The split-off material is not healed, but placed into the shadow, where it is sure to surge in less-than-conscious ways in our relational worlds. We need only look around (and inside) with eyes wide open to see the consequences of this."

[*http://alovinghealingspace.blogspot.com.au/*](http://alovinghealingspace.blogspot.com.au/)

**CLASS DETAIL NOTES**

**Intro to the class......**

Exploring the difficult.

Maybe set the frame for this with reading The Guest House or Fearing Paris.

**CONTACTING PAIN (Pema Chodron)**

When you contact the all-worked-up feeling of shenpa [getting hooked on a negative emotion], the basic instruction is the same as in dealing with physical pain. Whether it’s a feeling of I like or I don’t like, or an emotional state like loneliness, depression, or anxiety, you open yourself fully to the sensation, free of interpretation. If you’ve tried this approach with physical pain, you know that the result can be quite miraculous. When you give your full attention to your knee or your back or your head—whatever hurts—and drop the good/bad, right/wrong story line and simply experience the pain directly for even a short time, then your ideas about the pain, and often the pain itself, will dissolve.

*Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain. ~* Unknown

*Unpleasantness is not our rival, unless we let it become so. ~* Judith Erdman

*For fast-acting relief, try slowing down. ~* Lilly Tomlin

**Standing Yoga postures 30 – 40 mins**

as per audio track and/or postures that feel relevant to class

**MBSR Standing forms**

Standing

Reaching hands upwards

Reaching arms out to the sides

One arm reaching to sky

Both arms stretching to the side

Shoulder: raising up, squeeze together in the front, let drop, squeeze together at back

Neck rolls: dropping chin to chest, rolling from side to side.

Balancing on one leg, raising arms and leg to side, (both sides)

Standing twist

Forwards standing fold –curling up and down

Reaching one arm up forwards and then the toher

Tree – one side and the other

Butterfly

Forward bend with one leg bent.

Shavasana

**Sitting meditation: 30 mins**

**With focus on breath, body sensations, and the whole body.** Particular emphasis on working with painful physical sensations. Introducing ways of working with discomfort/pain: (shifting posture if pain is posturally related; using uncomfortable sensations as object of awareness by investigating quality, duration, and nature of sensations— highlighting continual changing aspect; or shifting attention to the breath if sensations are overwhelming).

**Practice and Home practice review**

**Group discussion** exploring the opening sitting meditation in this session. Inquire into the experience of working with physical sensations, the daily sitting practice, and yoga. Fine-tune yoga instructions as required. Invite exploration about the relationship between practicing yoga and the body scan. Connect to daily life experience.

**Unpleasant events (stress) exploration:**

**Lead a short guided reflection** that asks participants to select one unpleasant event, focussing on physical sensations, emotions, impulses and thoughts as they arise in memory, and then as they arise in the present.

**Ask participants to share in dyads, and then in the big group**, and tease out the experiences in terms of: trigger, body response, thoughts and feelings, behaviour and what the next response was…to avoid, or explore etc.

**At white board**, invite participants to “popcorn” out what they discovered, brainstorming and then listing as a group the emotions, the thoughts and the body sensations (for the body sensations you can draw in the sensations on a diagram of the body) and list the kinds of thoughts, impulses, behaviors and emotions and sensations that arise in a stressful moment.

*So this is the nature of unpleasant experience.*

(Through out this class, like in other classes, the teacher and the participants may have many opportunities to flexibly move from didactic, reflection and inquiry to unpack participants experiences of the unpleasant in more detail (using templates like RAIN, or the Diary of Reactive Habits, the field of awareness , the stress physiology and motivational systems can all be helpful). SEE NOTES AT THE END OF THE CLASS NOTES TO DRAW ON AS NEEDED.

Useful explorations of the stressful, difficult experience are using the perspectives of:

* Diary of Reactive Habits (as a map of how things arise)
* viewing stress/challenge in terms of Paul Gilbert’s motivational systems
* Handy model of the brain, and other info about brain body interactions.

**Approaching the difficult practice**

As a large group inviting each person to choose something stressful to explore using their mindfulness practice to turn towards it in a led meditation, then unpack in the big group.

Then reflect together on the question about what mindfulness offers in terms of paying vivid and careful and caring attention to the difficult moments in our lives.

What did they experience? what opened things up? What settled things? etc.

**Week four feedback reflection:** (form at the back of these notes)

We are up to week 4. How has it been going so far? Pause and take stock: What am I learning? How does it show up in my life? How am I engaging with this program in terms of commitment to weekly classes and daily practice? Am I willing to recommit for the second half of the course? Note that growth is non-linear. Letting go of expectations for the second half based on experience of the first half of course. Invitation to practice and take each moment as a new beginning; a fresh opportunity to be fully engaged, fully alive.

Midway assessments are handed out, completers moving into dyads to discuss their experience of the program so far. (If no written midway is used, dyads and a large group discussion can be substituted.)

**Set home practice**

* Alternate Sitting Practice 1 with Lying Yoga, every other day, 6x a week**.**
* Sitting mediation in silence 10 -15 mins per day with attention to breath, other physical sensations, and awareness of the whole body.
* Be aware of stress reactions and behaviours during the week without trying to change them.
* Awareness of feeling stuck, blocking, numbing and shutting off to the moment when it happens this week.
* Review stress physiology notes if interested.

**Conclude class with sitting meditation.**

10 mins…some silence (like the ongoing home practice)

***Poems for going into the dark places:***

**Well of Grief**

Those who will not slip beneath

the still surface on the well of grief

turning downward through its black water

to the place we cannot breathe

will never know the source from which we drink

the secret water, cold and clear,

nor find in the darkness glimmering the small round coins

thrown by those who wished for something else.

David Whyte

**Sweet Darkness**

When your eyes are tired

the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone

no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark

where the night has eyes

to recognize its own.

There you can be sure

you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your womb tonight.

The night will give you a horizon

further than you can see.

You must learn one thing.

The world was made to be free in.

Give up all the other worlds

except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet

confinement of your aloneness to learn

anything or anyone that does not bring you alive

is too small for you.

* David Whyte

Extra Week Four Notes - for informing didactic

Here are some notes that you might want to draw on in responding to participants or even in planning some succinct didactic presentation. Don’t use all of these models. They are presented here as a resource to develop your understanding and be able to bring different ways of exploring to the class with some flexibility.

1. **Handy model of the Brain**

<https://www.google.com.au/search?q=youtube+dan+siegel+hand+model&oq=Dan+Seigel+hand&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l2.4846j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

An easy and helpful way to understand what is happening with the brain when you feel stress/distress and how mindfulness helps. Participants go through the process with their own hand as facilitator demonstrates and explains.

1. This is your **brain** (open hand)
2. **Forearm is spinal chord**.
3. **Line at base of palm** where the thumb folds in marks your **brainstem** which is unconsciously scanning all the time for threat or safety.
4. Your **thumb** (fold thumb across palm) is your **limbic system.**
5. **Thumb’s first knuckle** is your **amygdala** which detects and processes fear and anxiety.
6. **Thumb’s second knuckle** is your **hippocampus** responsible for memory.
7. **You put your hand on a hotplate….that sends the amygdala into threat and alarm mode.**
8. The **hippocampus (memory)** says “I’m never going to do that again.”
9. Close fingers down over thumb. The outside of your fist is the neocortex-the newest part of the brain.
10. Right where your fingernails are is the prefrontal cortex, the part that makes us human.
11. In the prefrontal cortex you will find logic, language and the capacity for empathy.
12. Look and sense closely in the sensations at the ends of the two middle fingers. They connect the brainstem, the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex.
13. When that area is working, when we are paying attention, using logic and language and empathy, the brain is integrated and the limbic system is calm.
14. Then let’s add a threat…someone says something to you that threatens your ego.
15. Here’s what happens…..the amygdala and brainstem go into alarm and (lift your fingers straight up) you flip your lid.
16. Now the prefrontal cortex is offline, unavailable.
17. You don’t make so much sense with logic or language, and you’re not about to be empathic or compassionate with those around you. (Maybe you can recall this process when you think back to a time when you were really upset).
18. This is where mindfulness comes in handy.
19. **You need to bring your prefrontal cortex back on line.**
20. **The fastest way to do that is to become curious**…to turn your attention to what’s happening right now, particularly in the realm of body sensation.
21. As the prefrontal cortex is activated, the activity of the amygdala reduces and you begin to come in to balance. (note that the amygdala will always remain active but not in the same way when we perceive fear or anxiety when it really revs up).
22. That is really our practice.
23. We turn attention to what is happening in the moment, in the body and mind, and often, we get this side effect of feeling calm.
24. The great thing is, that this “handy” model is a practice in itself.
25. If you have flipped your lid, you can watch and feel yourself make the model with your hand.
26. Turning the thumb in and wrapping the fingers around, which brings your attention to body sensations and begins to engage the prefrontal cortex…..and reduces the activity of the amygdala.
27. Then maybe you can turn to the emotions of the moment and further to where the emotion is embodied….with mind of the scientist inquiry.
28. The reduction of reactivity in the limbic system is well researched.
29. This allows the meditator to be more easily open to moment by moment experience.
30. What is more, this openness seems to extend beyond formal meditation practice to become a trait, a capacity in every day being in the world.
31. Studies are showing that mindfulness practice is associated with structural changes in the brain with those long term mindfulness practitioners’ brains becoming thicker than in non meditators in the areas responsible for sensory, cognitive and emotional processing. (Lazar et al 2005).
32. MBSR participants who reported reduced levels of perceived stress in just eight weeks of practicing, showed reduced grey matter in the right amygdala, the area in which negative emotion and reactivity are inhibited by the engagement of the prefrontal corted (as demonstrated earlier in the handy model of the brain. )
33. MBSR participants also have more gray matter in brain areas associated with learning and memory, regulation of emotion, internal representation of the self and the capacity to perceive other perspectives. (Holzel et al, 2011).
34. Useful to add in the Rick Hanson info Tim sent youtube clip of re frontal regions of pre-frontal cortex and insular.

Dan Siegel hypothesises thatmindfulness activates the same social circuitry that gets activated in a kid who has a very safe, empathic parent**….**ie puts us into the soothing system.

Helpful utube clip on brain changes with mindfulness practice:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDl6_9TmgCY>

**2. Stress physiology exploration**

Ask people to imagine a stressful event. Ask them which of each of these functions in the body would go up or down (in as much detail as you want about the physiology impacts of acute and chronic stress.) Of course all these things are a brilliant short-term adaptive response to a challenge.

* Blood pressure?
* Heart rate?
* Muscle tension?
* Immune function?
* Sweating?
* Digestion?
* Reproduction?
* Cellular repair?
* Brain function?

**Back ground knowledge which can come forth…**

• Ongoing physiological regulation

* More balance between sympathetic and parasympathetic arousal
* Balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain
* Engages the prefrontal cortex – which mediates positive emotions, and body regulation, attunement, emotional balance, response flexibility, empathy, self-knowing awareness, fear extinction, intuition, and morality
* Activates the Left Pre-frontal Cortex which is associated with “approach” behaviours and positive emotions
* Deactivates the Right Pre Frontal Cortex which is associated with “withdrawal” behaviours and negative emotions.
* Calms the limbic system deactivating the amygdala – the threat detector
* Strengthens the neural connections between the limbic system and the higher brain functions in the cortex – enabling the cortex to more effectively inhibit unskillful reactivity.

• Getting skilled at detecting the early cues of stress reactivity, anxiety or depression in the form of subtle body sensations, posture, feelings and thoughts as they arise, and choosing one’s response to them.

• Interrupting automatic pilot reactivity  
• Consciously opening to new, positive pleasant experience which is very important for the stressed brain and for strengthening positive neural associations

• Paying attention to thoughts and emotions as events in the mind and body, not “reality”

• Developing wisdom in terms of what actions, speech and thoughts generate more peace and ease, and which actions, speech and thoughts generate more stress and suffering.

• Developing equanimity (non-reactivity) in the face of our experience so we are not so reactive to our thoughts, emotions and body sensations.

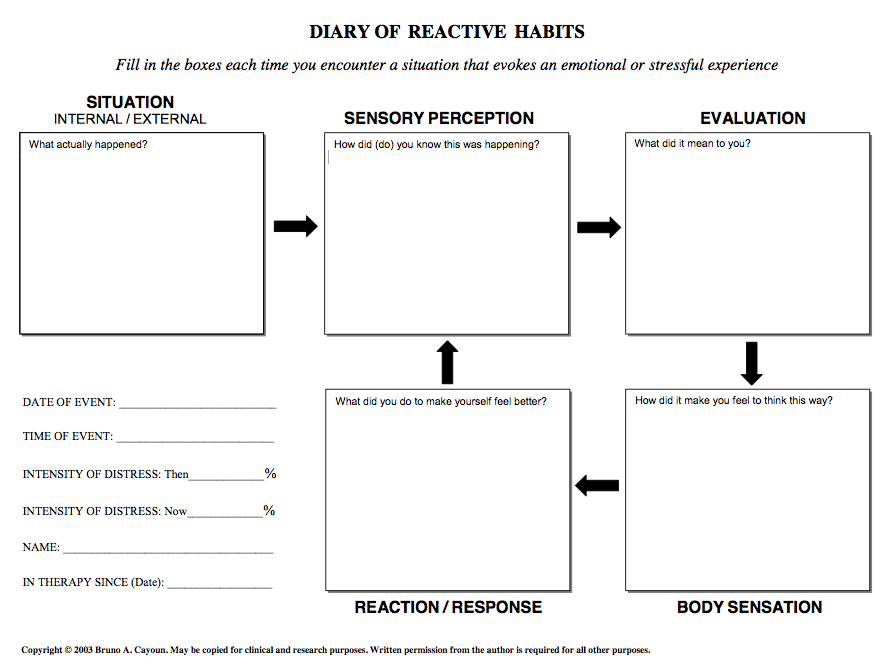
• Cultivating kindness and compassion for ourselves and others.

**Exploring a difficulty** **using the Diary of Reactive Habits**

(from MiCBT) On the board, t “unpack” one or a few examples.

In using this model, it can be very helpful for people to see that it is their *evaluation of the stimulus* which leads to unpleasant body sensations (consisting of emotions) and then to clearly see that their *reaction/response* is some kind of attempt to help them feel better (eg, yelling, self soothing, drinking, avoiding, procrastinating, ruminating.) Some reactions will be more adaptive than others.

The mindfulness project offers the possibility of inhibiting our habitual reactions and choosing to bring equanimity and acceptance in the moment. (We can especially practice this in formal practice.)

****

(Goenka-style Vipassana model, as expressed by Bruno Cayoun in MiCBT)

**Rationale:**

This is quite a clear model for understanding the generation of suffering in a step by step way which opens up loci for mindfulness to be applied so that choice is possible. It also gives rationale for the importance of getting a good grounding in paying attention to the body with equanimity in MBPs. I have found that it opens up people’s thinking about inquiry as it literally gives a map of what might be inquired into, as unfolding process. (It comes from Theradvan understanding of the generation of experience from a Goenka style Vipassana model, as expressed through MiCBT, Bruno Cayoun.)

1. **Whole group contemplation/reflection**

Bring to mind something that was upsetting, that you would like to explore, maybe a pattern that you know quite well – of an angry response, a moment of being hurt, a moment of stress reactivity. a habitual way of thinking that generates some distress…..whatever…

And I am going to ask you some questions about it…..just to unpack it a little….

Where were you? What was the situation? Who was there with you?

And what was the specific thing that you reacted to? Was it something that you heard (a comment, a sound)? something that you saw (eg an email, the look on someone’s face), something that you thought (ie a mental image or self-talk)?

*What did it mean to you* to see, feel, hear, notice this sensory perception? Ie how did you make sense of it, how did you evaluate it?

And what did you feel, when you believed those thoughts….what body sensations arose in you, when you evaluate it in this way Get as vivid as you can…you may even notice the body sensations arising in this moment.

And what is it that you *want to do to make yourself feel better*….to relieve these body sensations……your reaction/response when you feel these body sensations…ie what is your reaction or rsponse?

**Sharing in partners** what it was like to do this exploration.

1. **Exploration with white board.**

(put up the model on the board)

Invite someone to share their experience, and unpack it using the model exploring:

**Where we place our attentional resources under stress**

People who are stressed, anxious, depressed generally place most of the their attentional resources on the Evaluation and Reaction/response, and less in Sensory perception and Body Sensations. Mindfulness training rebalances this so that people learn to place more attentional resources in Sensory perception (what is actually coming my way) and Body Sensation (learning to know body sensations with some sensory clarity, without reacting to them..ie with equanimity) thereby reducing the need to react/respond out of a need to avoid distress. More choice opens up.

This makes sense in terms of the threat defence system.

Mindfulness asks people to move into an exploratory motivational system, out of the threat defence system.

**Encouraging recognition of experiential avoidance**

**Opening up moments of choice** (eg seeing how I evaluate, seeing how I don’t keep paying attention to the stimuli, but colour it with expectations from the past), seeing the schematic nature of my evaluations, seeing my reactivity to body sensations, or inability to know them, seeing my choices, and ability to make others.

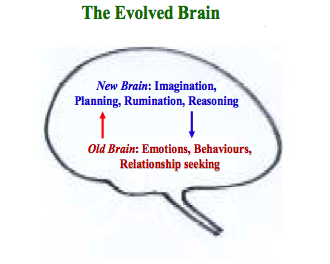
**Emotions and Motivational systems (Paul Gilbert)**

This can be a really good way of understanding and getting a bit more perspective on our experience of stress and ease and taking it all a bit less personally. Emotions are our signals, telling us to move towards or away from something or someone.

Our experiences are shaped by all sorts of forces, including:

* **evolution: we have a particular kind of brain…old brain, new brain.**

We have a brain that has evolved over millions of years to handle threat so that we survive. We also have a brain that can reflect, imagine, think, create and plan.



Think of a zebra who has the unpleasant experience of *nearly* being eaten by a lion. Once it has been able to run away effectively, it goes on happily eating, looking, grooming etc. It is using it’s old brain, to manage the that response, and then moves back into equilibrium. Because of our particular capacity for memory and reflection, a human would probably start worrying: “Oh my god! I nearly got eaten. I can just imagine the pain of that lion’s teeth ripping into me, and what would have happened to my baby if I’d been eaten. Or worse, any single day, this could happen to my baby.!!!”

You can see how it is our capacity to think and remember, and plan and reason, that can lead us into patterns of stress reactivity, anxiety and depression! But this capacity for language, for attentional control and learning, can also be what gives us some ground for transforming our stressful states.

* **constitution (genetic)**

We got certain kinds of genes from our parents, grand parents, great grandparents.

Apparently about 50% of whether we prone to anxiety and depression is genetic. We had no say about it at all. Letting you mind wonder back to your grandparents, your great grandparents, your great great grandparents. These people that we didn’t even know, living their lives in the way they did, have shaped us a lot.

* **we were born into a particular family, had particular learning and cultural experiences**

The kind of society, the kind of family we were born into has impacted a great deal about what we feel on a day to day basis because we have been trained up to appraise things in a certain way, and to feel anxious, calm etc. Incredible. Again, these contexts we had no or very little choice about, but they have shaped our day to day experience since the day we were born.

* **our present moment state** (whether we are rested, tired, hungry, etc)

Nietzsche once said this wonderful truth: “When we are tired, we are attacked by ideas we conquered long ago.” Isn’t that so true? Our emotional response to a challenge is very dependent on our state in the moment.

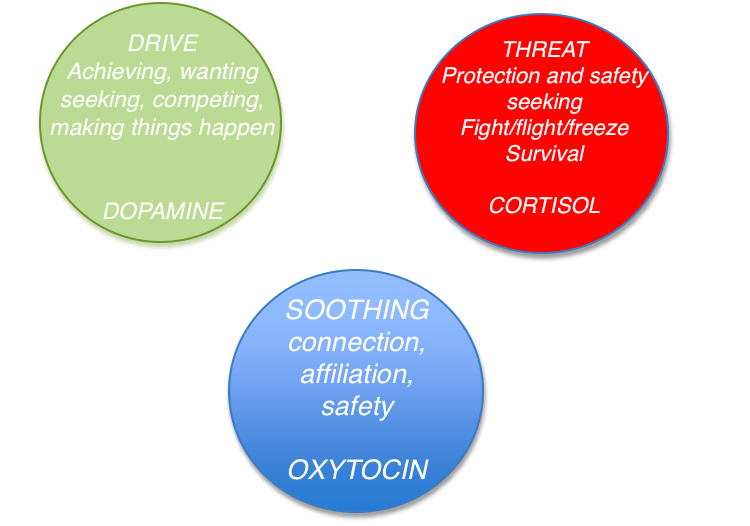
* **the present moment stimuli**: what is coming at us.

Notice how most of this is largely out of our control. We had no control over our genetics, our parents, our culture, our school situation.

**These three emotional regulation systems make sure we survive.** Human beings are hard wired to avoid threats (THREAT) , to make things happen and to explore and investigate (DRIVE)and to get soothing in the company of others (SOOTHING) – Put diagram below on the board….

Our history and constitution determines how we operate in these systems.

Sympathetic arousal



Parasympathetic arousal

CLASS FIVE: Space for making choices; exploring mindstates and open awareness

Summary

During this 2.5 hour session, participants engage in a combination of the major formal mindfulness practices that have also been practiced at home during the preceding four weeks – mindful hatha yoga and sitting meditation. This session marks the halfway point in the course. It emphasizes the capacity of participants to adapt more rapidly and effectively to everyday challenges and stressors. Experiential practice of mindfulness continues with an **emphasis on developing problem, emotion, and meaning-focused coping strategies. (See Lazarus and Folkman, and Folkman.)** A central element of the session is oriented around the participant’s capacity to recover more rapidly from stressful encounters when they occur. Strategies continue to be developed with emphasis on the growing capacity to attend more precisely to a variety of physical and mental perceptions and to use this awareness as a way of deliberately interrupting and intervening in previously conditioned, habitual behaviors and choosing more effective responses. Daily mindfulness practice is assigned, with an emphasis on the observation and application of mindful awareness in daily life.

Theme

**Theme One**

Awareness of being stuck in one’s life, highlighting the conditioned patterns of escape from difficulty (i.e. fight and flight – stress reactivity

/automaticity/mindlessness.) Investigation of the ways people often cope by escape or denial – naming the shadow side of our conditioned coping patterns: substance dependency, numbing and suppression of feelings, suicide. Honoring that these coping methods may have been protective and supported survival, and are now counter- evolutionary and limiting, if not destructive.

**Theme Two**

Connect mindfulness with perception/appraisal in the critical moment (the moment of conscious contact), and with the arising of reactive physical sensations, emotions, cognitions and behaviors. Emphasis on attentiveness to the capacity to respond rather than to react to stressful situations. Explore the effect of emotional reactivity in health and illness. Learning to honor the full range of emotions and when called for, to express them with clarity and respect for self and other.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 20 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 10 minutes

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 10 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 20 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening meditation

Standing Yoga

Sitting meditation - (the longer, full sit is offered, including all five objects of awareness and more silence)

Closing meditation

**Informal practices**

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindful listening and speaking

**Class Sequence Summary**

* Standing yoga
* Sitting Practice

**45 minute Sitting meditation with 5 elements -** breath, body, sounds, emotions, thoughts, as “events” in consciousness, distinguishing the event from the content, and then open presence. Stillness is emphasized.

* Practice and home practice review
* Reflection on Week 4 feedback from teacher
* Interrupting stress reactivity

- reacting V responding

* Thoughts/concepts/thinking exploration

Ex: Exploring an unhelpful thinking pattern:

* Set home practice
* Sit/walking to finish

**Some inspirations:**

***How patterns (Karma) are not fixed destiny (JKZ)***

*Here’s how mindfulness changes old patterns (karma).*

*When you sit, you are not allowing your impulses to translate into action. For the time*

*being at least, you are just watching them. Looking at them, you will quickly see that*

*all impulses in the mind arise and pass away, that they have a life of their own,*

*that they are not you..but just thinking, and that you do not have to be ruled by them.*

*Not feeding or reacting to impulses, you come to understand their nature as thoughts,*

*directly. This process actually burns up destructive impulses in the fires of concentration*

*and equanimity and non-doing. At the same time, creative insights and creative impulses*

*are no longer squeezed out so much by the more turbulent destructive ones. They are*

*nourished as they are perceived and held in awareness.*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, Wherever you go, there you are*

**The detox period ~ Pema Chödron**

*When you refrain from habitual thoughts and behavior, the uncomfortable feelings will still be there. They don’t magically disappear. Over the years, I’ve come to call resting with the discomfort “the detox period,” because when you don’t act on your habitual patterns, it’s like giving up an addiction. You’re left with the feelings you were trying to escape. The practice is to make a wholehearted relationship with that.*

*We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and mystery.*

*~* H.G. Wells

**Class Detail Notes**

**Standing Yoga: 20 mins**

**Sitting meditation** **45 mins**

Perhaps use a poem to scaffold and introduce the open awareness practice: (Awareness or A Reply to Rumi). Introduce the change we are making in moving from a concentration practice on an object to open awareness in this class.

Sitting meditation unfolds with breath, body, sounds, emotions, thoughts, as “events” in consciousness, distinguishing the event from the content, and then open awareness. Stillness is emphasized. Perhaps offer metaphors as way of coming to understand our thoughts, emotions, sensations as “events” in a process, rather than solid truths. Finding another place to stand…..observing the flow of our inner life. (EG mind like sky, ocean). Getting clear that it is not so important about what they notice, it is the awareness of the contents that is important.

**Practice and homework review: reacting V responding**

Inquire into experiences practicing the meditation and yoga home practice, as well as the new meditation introduced at the beginning of class.

Explore observations of reacting to stressful events during the week. Note habitual behavioural patterns, thoughts and emotions associated with the feeling of being stuck in these conditioned reactions. Include patterns that arise during mediation practice.

Introduce the possibility of responding with awareness in these moments, rather than reacting automatically. In making the distinction between responding and reacting, emphasize the fact that often reacting is adaptive and skilful. It’s not the external stressor, but how you respond which is important in terms of impact on body and mind (within limits).

Perhaps refer again to Diary of Reactive Habits to help people being to see how suffering is created.

Emphasis on validating problem, emotion and meaning focussed coping strategies and our flexible use of these.

**EX 1: Exploration of thoughts/concepts/narratives: and how they shape our experience of events.**

*Discussion:* Invite people to share what they discovered about the nature of “thinking” in the practice. Pointing to all the different ways we experience thinking: images, narratives, monologues, dialogues, random intrusions, coherent frameworks, persistent statements. Noticing how thoughts may be accompanied by/generate sensations or emotions. How thoughts may be quite familiar. Pointing to the natural and perennial nature of thinking, no need to react, banish, fight with our thinking, but to become skilled at seeing it.

**EX 2: Contemplation of a habitual thought**

Exploration of a difficult thought/conceptualisation/way of thinking.

(Exploring dependant origination and the impact of mindfulness on interrupting our automatic generation of habitual responding)

With a partner, discuss one familiar pattern of thinking or familiar thoughts which are not helpful to you in your life. Eg. “I am not good enough” “I haven’t got enough time”, “My kids are so lazy”.

Then teacher leads a structured exercise:

Write the thought down.

Sit with this thought, observing it.

What feelings arise? (Write them down)

What sensations? (Write them down)

What other thoughts? (Write them down)

Draw a line under what you have written.

Again, write the original thought down, opening to examine this thought, exploring the sensations, emotions, thoughts……write them down.

Draw a line under what you have written.

And then a third time. Notice what happens as we revisit this thought with awareness.

Share with a partner your experience, what they found out.

In the big group, explore the experience. Discuss together how you might respond to these familiar thoughts during the coming week. Explore how becoming aware may help us find a perspective and even transform these thoughts, and the emotions and sensations that accompany them.

**Discuss the upcoming all day**

Discuss the upcoming all day session. Explain the intentions underlying this session and describe in detail the structure and format of the day, including options for self-care and teacher availability. Discuss how to work with extended periods of silence and practice. Provide suggestions for preparing for the day, including what to bring: Lunch, loose fitting clothes (layers), mat or blanket.

**Home practice setting:**

* Sitting meditation (with audio) 45/30 mins Alternate with either the body scan or either of the yoga practices.
* Bring awareness to moments of reacting and explore options for responding with greater mindfulness, spaciousness and creativity, in formal meditation practice and in everyday life. Remember that the breath is an anchor, a way to heighten awareness of reactive tendencies, to slow down and make more conscious choices.

**Short Meditation to finish**

* Perhaps with emphasis on metaphors for spacious awareness (eg sky, ocean, waterfall, etc) to assist with widening perspective.

CLASS SIX: Interpersonal Mindfulness

Summary

In this 2.5 hour session, experiential training in MBSR continues with an emphasis on the growing capacity to cope more effectively with stress. Discussion is oriented around the continued development of "transformational coping strategies," attitudes and behaviors that enhance the psychological characteristic known as “stress hardiness" or resilience. Theory is linked directly to the MBSR methods and skills being practiced, grounded in the actual life experiences of the participants. The emphasis continues to be on the broadening of participants’ inner resources for developing health-enhancing attitudes and behaviors and the practical application of such competencies given each person’s particular life situation and health status. Daily mindfulness practices are assigned again for homework with an emphasis on the observation and application of these skills in daily life. Participants engage in an in-depth exploration of stress as it presents within the domain of communications. The focus of this strategy-building session revolves around the application of previously learned MBSR skills and methods in the area of communications. A variety of communication styles are examined both didactically and experientially, and strategies for more effective and creative interpersonal communication are developed.

Theme

Stressful communications; knowing your feelings; expressing your feelings accurately; developing a greater awareness of interpersonal communication patterns; and barriers to doing so. Interpersonal mindfulness: staying aware and balanced in relationships, especially under conditions of acute or chronic stress, the strong expectations of others, past habits of emotional expression/suppression and the presentation of self in everyday life. Based on the skills that we have been developing through the entire program, emphasize cultivating the capacity to be more flexible and to recover more rapidly during challenging interpersonal situations.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 10 minutes  
Group Discussion – 1 hour and 10 minutes  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 10 minutes

**Formal practices**

Opening meditation

Standing Yoga

Sitting meditation

Closing meditation

**Informal practices**

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindful listening and speaking

**TYPICAL CLASS SEQUENCE**

* Movement practice or walking in twos and threes – 15 mins
* Sitting practice with less instruction: 30 – 45 mins
* Practice and home practice review
* Interpersonal Mindfulness

Intro: with a few readings

Choice of:

Ex: Exploration of a difficult communication, or

Ex. Walking practice (pairs and threes)

* Set home practice
* Sit to finish: Friendliness theme

**Standing yoga/walking in 2s and 3s. 15-20 mins**

**Sitting meditation with less instruction:** breath, body, sounds, thoughts and emotions, choiceless awareness/open presence (30 – 40 mins)

(Emphasis on not avoiding difficulty, or resisting pain. Exploring the freedom that might come if we accepted and explored what is here.)

**Home practice exploration:** Discuss the home practice, especially experiences with the sitting meditation recording. What did you notice about responding more creatively in life and in meditation? Were there new responses? What surprised you?

**Discuss the past Day of Mindfulness session**: Any responses people want to share.

**Introduction to interpersonal mindfulness**

When we start opening up to the reality of suffering and that everyone has suffering their lives, our attitude to others can start transforming. We may begin to be quite interested in causing less suffering to other people, through our reactivity. We may start feeling more spontaneously generous, and kind to others.

We can also being to get clear that the recipient of any of our own reactivity to others through emotions – like anger – is ourselves. This can be motivating in having more skilful, less reactive interactions with other people, and to bring more equanimity to the moment, when they annoy, hurt or anger us.

I’d like to read a couple of things to open up this exploration of caring for others through awareness… Just noticing how they touch you….

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each [person’s] life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm any hostility.*

*—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

*"Have compassion for everyone you meet,  even if they don't want it.  What seems conceit, bad manners, or cynicism  is always a sign of things no ears have heard,  no eyes have seen.   You do not know what wars are going on  down there where the spirit meets the bone."*

*Miller Williams*

*If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain;*

*If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one the pain,*

*Or help the one fainting robin unto his nest again,*

*I shall not live in vain. ~ Emily Dickenson*

***Relationship Booster***

*Here is a relationship booster*

*that is guaranteed to*

*work:*

*Every time your spouse or lover says something stupid*

*make your eyes light up a if you*

*just heard something*

*brilliant.*

*(Rumi)*

*Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I undertake the training to speak truthfully and kindly. ~ The Fourth Precept*

*Don't meditate to fix yourself, to heal yourself, to improve yourself, to redeem yourself; rather, do it as an act of love, of deep warm friendship to yourself. In this way there is no longer any need for the subtle aggression of self-improvement, for the endless guilt of not doing enough. It offers the possibility of an end to the ceaseless round of trying so hard that wraps so many of our lives in a knot. Instead there is now meditation as an act of love. How endlessly delightful and encouraging.*

*Bob Sharples*

*Meditation: Calming the Mind*

**Communications and mindfulness: Exercises**

There are a number of exercises that can be used to facilitate exploration of this area. The intention of engaging in any of these interpersonal exercises is to cultivate awareness, rather than skill development etc. The form of the exercise is less important than the essence of this intention. (See notes at the end for a summary of possibilies.)

Embodying relational patterns tends to make them more available to awareness. The dialogue and inquire during these exercises allows a heightened awareness of habitual patterns and behaviours, not only in the realm of interpersonal communication but also in one’s inner life. It is essential to pause and reflect together on these experiences and to notice how relational patterns are externalisations of internal mind and body states. Participants make connections between their present-moment experience of witnessing and/ore participating in these exercises and the personal cognitive, emotional and behavioural patterns with which they have become familiar during the course. These exercises also provide an opportunity for participants to experiment with new behaviours and ways of engaging interpersonally.

# Exploring a difficult communication exercise:

a. Internal contemplation

Bring to mind a communication you’ve had recently which was difficult. Reflect on this situation. What did you say? What did they say? What were your feelings at the time? What were you wanting from the communication? Did you get it? What were they wanting ? Did they get it?

What were your sensations? Thoughts?

Is this a familiar feeling? Do you see any pattern in this communication? Is it a pattern in your life? Let that pattern be….let it be there, as it is.

Allow yourself to stay open to an image which captures this pattern? What is it like?

b. Drawing

Take some time now to draw that pattern….the pattern of the communication experience that happened. Finding an image/drawing/representation on paper which captures something of the experience. Making sure that you find a symbol or image for it……

c. Exploration in partners.

(After each transition, ask participants to come back home to their own experience, by closing eyes, opening to body, breath, feelings etc.)

i Decide non-verbally, who will be the speaker and who will be the listener.

ii The speaker speaks for 5 minutes, telling the listener about their drawing and the pattern.

Only share what you want to with your partner.

The listener is silent, but can respond non-verbally.

iii The listener then responds (for 2 minutes) sharing what they have received (heard/seen) as accurately as they can.

iv The original speaker then speaks (for 1 minute) about how that felt – to receive the feedback from the listener.

SWAP

Share with your partner how it was to do this exercise together.

Feedback in big group.

Ask: What was your pattern in speaking, and in listening

how easy was it –

to stay present to what the other person was saying?

to follow instructions precisely?

to inhibit your automatic way of responding (over-empathising, telling your own story, giving advice?) Were you able to hear this internally?

Emphasise: sense of space and respect for speaker, taking time, staying with perceptual info, rather than leaping to meanings, taking in the whole communication: verbal and non verbal….tone, facial expression, body language, congruence etc

**Rachel Naomi Remen on listening**

*"Listening is the oldest and perhaps the most powerful tool of healing.*

*It is often through the quality of our listening and not the wisdom of our words that we are able to effect the most profound changes in the people around us.*

*When we listen, we offer with our attention an opportunity for wholeness.*

*Our listening creates sanctuary for the homeless* [*parts*](http://www.livetrue.biz/PoemsandReflectionsfortheSoul.en.html) *within the other person.   
That which has been denied, unloved, devalued by themselves and by others.    
That which is hidden.*

*In this culture, the soul and the heart too often go homeless.   
 Listening creates a holy silence.   
When you listen generously to people, they can hear truth in themselves, often for the first time.*

*And in the silence of listening, you can know yourself in everyone.  
Eventually, you may be able to hear, in everyone and beyond everyone, the unseen singing softly to itself and to you."*

**Walking in relationship**

(can also be done straight after sitting practice at the beginning of the class)

Begin walking in the room, slowly mindfully. Opening to the sensations of moving, the visual field, the sounds.

Then opening to the possibility of walking with another….finding, just through the walking, someone who you will walk for a while with…..noticing how it is that your walk with another. How do your orient to them? Their pace, their rhythm, their way.

Opening all of your senses to “finding” this person, to matching them, and noticing too how they might be attempting to find you. Taking great care with each other – just through being aware - in this process….and then letting that partner go…..opening to walking in your own rhythm again….noticing if your way has been altered or changed by your experience of attuning with your partner.

And then finding another (same process). From time to time, coming to a stop. How do negotiate this non-verbally with a partner. And then moving on. Etc.

**Assign homework**

**Finishing meditation: with emphasis on friendliness, kindness and compassion**

(Inspired by Vidyamala Burch, Breathworks)

This practice is like planting seeds.

Bringing attention to the breath.

Imagining that every breath we take is imbued with kindness. Gentleness. Permission. Compassion.

If it is right for you, on every in-breath, breathing in kindness for yourself, gentleness on yourself, compassion for yourself, the deep permission to be yourself in this moment. Nothing to be banished. Putting out the welcome mat for all that arises in you.

Allowing and letting be all that is here....and touching it with this attitude of deep kindness towards yourself.

And imagining that the breath, as it travels into your lungs, into the bloodstream is now travelling to each and every cell of your body, carrying these precious qualities of acceptance, kindness, friendliness, compassion deep inside you, becoming you.

And giving thought to others, in this room. Knowing that they too suffer, they to get stressed, they too get confused, they too are breathing. And in this moment, wishing others in this group well. As we sit and breathe together, imagining that for each of us, we are breathing in compassion and kindness on every breath, allowing every cell to be bathed in this quality.

You may wish to extend this sense of friendliness and kindness to others you care about. Wishing that they too, could bathe in this breath of kindness and compassion as they breath in and out. May they be well, may they find a way to meet their suffering with integrity and courage.

Perhaps you may want to extend these good wishes to others, who you don't know very well.

And if it is right for you, you may even want to extend these good wishes to someone who is difficult in your life. Knowing that they too get caught up in stress reactivity, they too suffer pain, uncertainty, troublesome emotions. You may want to extend the wish that they find a way to be kind to themselves and to others.

Noticing what is arising in you as you practice in this way. Noticing if there is any constriction, conflict, tension arising. Not a problem. Opening to these sensations, feelings, thoughts with receptivity as best you can. Opening and softening to what is here.

Sitting now for some time, and as you open to each moment, knowing that there is always this possiblity of meeting what is here with patience, gentleness, kindness, compassion. And the space and permission to be yourself.

**Home practice:**

Alternate Sitting Meditation recording with Body Scan and/or Standing/Lying Yoga.

Bring awareness to interpersonal moments with others in life.

**Back ground notes for teacher**

**Various other communication explorations**

Note: the intention behind engaging in any of the following (or any other) communication exercises is the cultivation of awareness. The form of the exercise is less important than the essence of this intention.

Some of the options for communications exercises may include, but are not limited to:

* Aikido-based “pushing exercises”, role-playing the initial contact (taking the hit); avoiding conflict/stepping aside/passive-aggressive; being submissive; aggressive, engaged in an equal struggle; and assertive/blending/ “entering”, staying engaged and with eye and wrist contact, but stepping out of the path of the aggression. Demonstrate with a volunteer (choose carefully, trusting your intuition). Importance of centering in the moment, taking a firm stand, not running away but not having to be in total control; the importance of stepping out of the way, of making contact (hand to wrist), of turning, of acknowledging the other person’s point of view; showing one’s own point of view; staying in the process without knowing where it is going or being fully in control; maintaining mindfulness, openness, staying grounded and centered
* Verbal aikido role play – similar to above, but done with dialogue with volunteer
* Experiencing and exploring patterns of communication by physically enacting and expressing different patterns and options (i.e. passive, aggressive, assertive, etc.), then having class take postures, possibly interacting in pairs, small groups or the entire class
* **Exploring patterns of relating: Passive-Aggressive-Assertive**

EX 1: 10 mins

In any stressful situation involving others, the human organism is organised to respond in three basic ways to others: with passivity, assertiveness or aggressiveness. Each of these has it’s own logic and can be adaptive depending on the situation. Let’s explore these patterns together and how they impact our connection with others.

Find a place in the room to stand, teacher lead a short grounding exercise, asking people to connect in to their sense of the ground, and their alignment – ie posture in relation to this moment, this exercise. (Posture can be an important gateway to awareness and also a choice point in orienting to our experience in an empowered way.)

Now ask participants to take-up a **passive posture** and exaggerate it to gather information. Ask them to say out loud what they notice in physical sensations, feelings and thoughts. Teacher repeating out loud their responses.

Shake it off and reground. Then repeat above instructions for **Aggressive** and then **Assertive** (grounded, receptive to what’s here. alert and open)

Now ask them to partner up and take up their **passive posture** standing opposite each other and place their palms together. Exploring the experience of making contact with a passive stance, embodying a passive attitude. What is this like? Is it satisfying, unsatisfying? Ask them to talk about the experience when they're ready.

Repeat above instructions with **Aggressive posture**.

Now ask pairs to choose an A and B. 'A' takes on **passive posture** and 'B' takes on **aggressive posture,** then talk about their experience between themselves when ready. Then swap positions.

Now ask them to both take on their **assertive posture** and place there hands together and explore what the contact is like. Then talk about the experience together.

Large group share.

* Exploration of assumptions: Guided by instructor, participants face each other in silence, and are led into noticing differences between observation and assuming or interpreting/mind reading. This may be followed by structured dialogue between participants
* Speaking and listening exercise: in dyads, participants are given a topic based on class discussions and content. One speaks, one listens, then reverse roles
* Embodiment experiment

1. TO BEGIN explore walking in the circle without touching, embodying:

*I’M SORRY* 30 seconds- use prompts i.e.playing possum, shrinking away, not feeling up to it

( Invite group share about what they noticed in posture, then shaking it out)

*I WAS HERE FIRST*

(invite group share about what they noticed in posture, then shaking it out)

*THERE IS ROOM FOR BOTH OF US*

(invite group share about what they noticed in posture, then shaking it out)

1. Inviting further exploration for those who would like to continue (check in so reluctant folk can watch)

Find a partner about your size, stand nearly-opposite about 4 meters away from each other.

We’ll take turns embodying an attitude, repeating the phrase and walk past the person with your handshake hand up, or not..touching or not… and end up on the other side.

(Teacher demonstrates the walk with a willing and grounded student)

C. WARMING UP Now leading students to embody as follows:

1. Both ‘I’m sorry’ (then,partners feed back to each other)

2. Both ‘I was here first’ “

3. Both ‘There’s room for both of us ‘ “

1. More…& Shaking out and mindful tune in between sequences

I’m sorry vs I was here first (share then reverse roles)

I’m present and aware vs I was here first (share, then reverse roles)

I’m sorry vs I’m present and aware (share, reverse roles)

**TO END, BOTH EMBODY: There’s room for both of us.**

THEN SIT DOWN AND SHARE IN BIG GROUP.

CLASS SEVEN: Making choices

Summary

In this 2.5 hour session, experiential training in MBSR skills continues. The all day class is reviewed and discussed. There may be a continuation of the discussion of communication that began in class 6. Participants are asked to exercise greater personal latitude in the choice of formal mindfulness practices done as home practice during the week between this session and the final one. Emphasis is on maintaining 45 minutes of daily practice, without recorded instructions. Participants are encouraged to create their own blend of the various practices. (For example, 20 minutes of sitting, 15 minutes of yoga, 10 minutes of body scan.) The intention is to further maintain the discipline and flexibility of a personal daily mindfulness practice by encouraging people to become attuned to the changing conditions in their lives.

Theme

Integrating mindfulness practice more fully and personally into daily life. Participants are asked to purposefully reflect on life-style choices that are adaptive and self-nourishing as well as those that are maladaptive and self-limiting.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 1 hour and 35 minutes  
Group Discussion – 45 minutes  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 10 minutes

Formal practices

Sitting meditation options: Mountain, Lake or Loving Kindness

Other options: Yoga (class choices), window, walking

Informal practices

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindful listening and speaking

**TYPICAL CLASS SEQUENCE**

* Movement practice: (standing yoga, changing chairs, participant inspired postures)
* Sitting Practice (30 – 40 mins) with less instruction
* Review of practice, homework, reflection on changes over the weeks
* Exploration of a single day: Nourishing and Draining Ex (from MBCT)
* Early warning signs of stress and Living on Purpose:
  + Finding a “life practice” to explore for the following week
  + Motivating through self compassion
* Set home practice
* Sit to finish.

*Begin Again.*

~ Grace Paley

**CLASS DETAIL NOTES**

**Movement practice**

*Standing yoga, walking or could include one of these options:*

1. **Standing yoga or walking meditation**
2. **Changing seats exercise**: After participants take their seats in the room, invite them to close their eyes and notice how it feels to be sitting where they’re sitting. Ask them to:

Pay attention to what’s familiar, if this is a seat they choose often, or what’s different if it’s a new seat.

Notice physical sensations, thoughts, and/or emotions that may be present as they sit in this familiar or new place.

Then invite them to open their eyes, and get a sense of what the room looks like from this perspective. Is it the same room? Why did they choose to sit where they did when they came in? Scan the room for a seat in which they’ve never sat or where they think they won’t like to sit. Ask participants to move to that seat, in silence, and to close their eyes and notice how it feels to be in the new place, with a new perspective, perhaps sitting near new people. Ask them to consider whether they tend to stay in the same places or to explore new places, making sure to emphasize that these are simply patterns, and that one pattern isn’t better than the other. Can we be at home wherever we are? Mention awareness of choices of positioning oneself in a room, the idea of taking one’s seat in the meditation (taking a stand sitting, no matter where you are.) Invite awareness of attachment to place. Where am I in my life – in this moment? Where am I going? Don’t know...

This changing of seats may be repeated again or even a few times. Finally, invite participants to find a seat and establish themselves in a posture for sitting meditation, consciously choosing to return to “their” familiar seat or to explore being in a different place.

3) **Yoga choices exercise**: each participant does a standing body scan and identifies an area that needs attention. Individually and with the group, explore yoga poses that address that area of the body, or favorite yoga postures learned in the program. Each participant, with help from the teacher if necessary, teaches their chosen pose. Emphasis is on using yoga in ordinary daily experience, not as a special, rarified activity.

**Sitting Meditation 30 – 40 mins**

Open awareness, using the breath as an anchor if lost.

Also possible to include aspects of Mountain or Loving-kindness, depending on the needs of the group.

**Home practice discussion**

Discuss the home practice. Connect the discussion to the experience of doing the meditation practice this week, both formal and informal (daily life). Emphasis on importance of making the practice one’s own. This week, no recordings for home practice. Or people may choose to explore different practices which are on the CDs (eg. Opening the heart, mountain, lake etc) Encourage people to take the same 45 minutes and practice on their own. They decide what, how much of each etc.

**Exploring a day: Nourishing and Draining Ex. (adapted from MBCT)**

**Key question:** How do you spend your time, and do the choices that you make about this really support your well-being? There’s an influential relationship between how we spend our time and our state of mind, and it’s all too easy amidst the pressures of life and work to give up what nourishes us, or to go through the activities of our day in ways that are depleting

* Ask the participants to think through the key activities that they engage in on a typical day and to write these down, listing between 10 and 15 items.
* Explain Nourishing / Depleting: Point out that participants may have noticed as they were doing this that there were some activities to which they feel drawn, that seem to lift their mood, energise and perhaps bring feelings of calm or centredness. Others may seem to bring a certain sinking feeling or to be draining. Some activities may involve nourishing and depleting aspects or to vary on different occasions. Ask them to identify each of the listed activities as N or D or N/D.
* Inquire into what they noticed as they did this? The N/Ds are often particularly interesting, because it may be the mode in which the activities are done that determines whether they are N or D. A shift in mode changes the whole experience. [NB the opening question was how do you spend your time rather than what do you spend your time doing?]
* If the balance of your list is tilted towards the depleting, what might you be able to do to change this? e.g. More regular N activities? Savour N activities more? Not multitasking whilst doing N activities? Are there D tasks you could let go of? Could you do any of the D tasks in a different mode of mind? Could you do Breathing Spaces before, during or after D tasks? Could you turn towards the difficult rather than resisting? Do you in fact need to make more time for doing any of the D tasks so that you can do them in a different mode? NB Doing D activities mindfully, turning towards them, tends to make them less unpleasant. If it feels appropriate, invite participants to discuss these questions in pairs and then to write a plan on the hand-out. Little changes can make a big difference.
* Read passage on hand-out by Thich Nhat Hanh on Washing the Dishes: doing routine activities in Being Mode.
* **Explore with the group what reasons we might have for not changing** – for putting off altering the balance between nourishing and depleting. Explain how when mood is low, action needs to precede motivation, rather than the other way round.

Ask participants to write down a list of everything that they do in a day.

Then write an N next to the things that they experience as nourishing and a D next to the ones that they experience as draining.

Reflecting in pairs on what they have discovered.

**A Life Practice**

Out of this awareness of choices in a day, let’s look at how we might implement a deliberate choice of how we spend our time this week.

So this project of developing mindfulness skills is not just about paying attention, on purpose, non-judgementally. It is really about our lives and opening up more possibilities and choices of acting skilfully to look after ourselves and others. Hopefully all this paying attention develops wisdom to be able to make good choices.

*Contemplation:*

Closing your eyes, bringing attention to an area in your life that is emerging as something you would like to attend to more, take better care of, maybe awareness of some different kinds of actions that might be needed in certain areas….relationships, loved ones, work, ways of listening and speaking, how we spend our time, care of the body, eating, exercise, work, maybe reflecting on whether your work is reflecting what you really want to be doing, the community more broadly, your contribution there, is there something that you care about that you would like more involvement in.

**Sharing in pairs** to explore this.

**Big group sharing**: one word (about the area of life you want to explore/change)

**Introducing the idea of an action, a “practice” this week:**

Let’s now explore what might be one action, one behavioural shift, in this area of life, that you could undertake this week. It could be the smallest thing…maybe making a phone call to connect, or changing the way you respond to emails, etc etc.

Taking one small action to attend differently to what matters to you in this one “wild and precious life”?

**Sharing in dyads.**

Sharing in big group:

Then one word round of what action is going to be undertaken this week.

Invite participants to all stand up and declare their practice (without going into how they got there or what its about) to three people in the group.

Perhaps read: “Hokusai Says” to finish this exploration.

**Assign home practice**

* No recordings this week. Practice formal sitting yoga, walking and/or the body scan on your won, every day for 45 minutes. (If this is too difficult, then alternative recordings one day and self-guidance the next day.)
* Undertake your life-practice and see what you discover.
* Practice being as alive and awake as you possibly can each day.

**Finish with sitting meditation.**

**Background Notes for Teacher:**

**R-A-I-N**

**Intro: Exploring RAIN as a template or summary of the practice process**

- Recognition

- Acceptance

- Investigation

- Non-identification

NOTE: Investigation refers to our explorations of the 4 foundations of mindfulness. It is not an “exercise” but a way of exploring our experience and could be considered a summary of the program.

Note: Identification refers to the fact that we are continually constructing a personal identity, sometimes which causes us suffering. The notion of non-identification can be illuminated quite simply through poems, and exploration of people’s. experience. What happens when we don’t take our anxiety, our misfortune as a personal failure? What happens when we don’t identify with our experience as “me”, “my”, “mine”?

Eg

***Praise and Blame***

*Praise and blame,*

*Pleasure and pain*

*Loss and gain.*

*Fame and disrepute*

*Rest like a great tree, in the midst of them all. (Buddha)*

We usually strive to avoid certain experiences, and crave to have others. The wisdom of non-identification points to the perennial nature of these experiences. If we didn’t take them so personally, maybe we would suffer less, and not be so reactive and stressed.

ASK the group: Can we accept our experiences as “weather passing through the sky” and literally not take them so personally? What freedoms are possible when we do this?

“As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives.” – Henry David Thoreau

**Recognition**

Recognition is the first step of mindfulness. When we are stuck in our life, we must begin with a willingness to see what is so. It is as if someone asks us gently, ***what is happening now***? Do we reply brusquely, “Nothing”? Or do we pause and acknowledge the reality of our experience, here and now?

With recognition we step out of denial. Denial undermines our freedom. The diabetic who denies his body is not free. Neither is the driven, stressed-out executive who denies the cost of her lifestyle, or the self-critical would-be painter who denies his love of making art. The society that denies its poverty and injustice has lost a part of its freedom as well. If we deny our dissatisfaction, our anger, our pain, our ambition, we will suffer. If we deny our values, our beliefs, our longings, or our goodness, we will suffer.

With recognition our awareness becomes like the dignified host. We name and inwardly bow to our experience: “Ah, sorrow; and now excitement; hmm, yes, conflict; and yes, tension. Oh, now pain, yes, and now, ah, the judging mind.” *Recognition moves us from delusion and ignorance toward freedom*. We can see what is so.

**Acceptance**

The next step is acceptance. Acceptance allows us to relax and open to the facts before us. It is necessary because with recognition, there can come a subtle aversion, a resistance, a wish it weren’t so. Acceptance does not mean that we cannot work to improve things. But just now, this is what is so. In Zen they say, “***If you understand, things are just as they are. And if you don’t understand, things are still just as they are.***”

Acceptance is a willing movement of the heart, to include whatever is before it. In individual transformation we have to start with the reality of our own suffering. For social transformation we have to start with the reality of collective suffering, of injustice, racism, greed, and hate. We can only transform the world as we learn to transform ourselves. As Carl Jung comments, “*Perhaps, I myself am the enemy who must be loved?*”

With acceptance and respect, problems that seem intractable often become workable. A man began to give large doses of cod-liver oil to his Doberman because he had been told that the stuff was good for dogs. Each day he would hold the head of the protesting dog between his knees, force its jaws open, and pour the liquid down its throat. One day the dog broke loose and the fish oil spilled on the floor. Then, to the man’s great surprise, the dog returned to lick the puddle. That is when the man discovered that what the dog had been fighting was not the oil but his lack of respect in administering it. With acceptance and respect, surprising transformations can occur.

**Investigation**

The third is, investigation. Thich Nhat Hanh calls it ***"seeing deeply"***. In recognition and acceptance we recognize our dilemma and accept the truth of the whole situation. Now we must investigate more fully. Buddhism teaches that whenever we are stuck, it is because we have not looked deeply enough into the nature of the experience and to direct our investigation to four areas that are critical for understanding and freedom. ***The four foundations of mindfulness are: body, feelings, mind, and dharma, the underlying principles of experience.***

Starting with investigation in the body, we mindfully locate where our difficulties are held. Sometimes we find heat, contraction, hardness, or vibration. Sometimes we notice throbbing, numbness, a certain shape or color. We can investigate whether we are meeting this area with resistance or with mindfulness. We notice what happens as we hold these sensations with mindfulness. Do they open? Are there other layers? Is there a center? Do they intensify, move, expand, change, repeat, dissolve, or transform?

In the second foundation of mindfulness, we can investigate what feelings are part of this difficulty. Is the primary feeling tone pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? Are we meeting this feeling with mindfulness? And what are the secondary feelings associated with it? Often we discover a constellation of feelings. We investigate how each emotion feels, whether it is pleasant or painful, contracted or relaxed, tense or sad. We notice where we feel the emotion in our body and what happens to it as it is held in mindfulness.

Next the mind. What thoughts and images are associated with this difficulty? What stories, judgments, and beliefs are we holding? When we look more closely, we often discover that some of them are one-sided, fixed points of view, or out-moded, habitual perspectives. We see that they are only stories. They loosen their hold on us. We cling less to them.

The fourth foundation is called dharma. Dharma is an important and multifaceted word that can mean the teachings and the path of Buddhism. It can mean the truth, and in this case it can also mean the elements and patterns that make up experience. In mindfulness of the dharma we look into the principles and laws that are operating. We can notice if an experience is actually as solid as it appears. Is it unchanging or is it impermanent, moving, shifting, recreating itself? We notice if the difficulty expands or contracts the space in our mind, if it is in our control or if it has its own life. We notice if it is self-constructed. We investigate whether we are clinging to it, resisting it, or simply letting it be. ***We see whether our relationship to it is a source of suffering or happiness***.

**Non-identification**

In non-identification we ***stop taking the experience as me or mine***. We see how our identification creates dependence, anxiety, and inauthenticity. In practicing non-identification, we inquire of every state, experience, and story, is this who we really are? We ***see the tentativeness of this identity.*** Instead of identification with this difficulty, we ***let go and rest in awareness itself****.*

Without identification, we can live with care, yet we are no longer bound by the fears and illusions of the small sense of self. We see the secret beauty behind all that we meet. Mindfulness and fearless presence bring true protection. When we meet the world with recognition, acceptance, investigation and non-identification, we discover that wherever we are, freedom is possible, just as the rain falls on and nurtures all things equally.

## Session 8: Going forth

Summary

In this 2.5hour session, experiential mindfulness practice continues and participants are given ample opportunity to inquire into and clarify any lingering questions about the various practices and their applications in everyday life. A review of the program is included with an emphasis on daily strategies for maintaining and deepening the skills developed during the course of the program. Creating a satisfying closure by honoring both the end of this program and the beginning of the rest of your life.

Theme

Keeping up the momentum and discipline developed over the past 7 weeks in the meditation practice, both formal and informal. Review of supports to help in the process of integrating the learning from this program over time: books, recordings, graduate programs, free all day sessions for all graduates 4 times per year; mention retreat centers.

Recommended time allocations

Formal Practice – 60 minutes or more  
Group Discussion – 1 hours and 20 minutes  
Logistics (attendance, announcements, homework) – 10 minutes

**Formal practices**

Body Scan  
Yoga  
Sitting Meditation

**Informal practices**

Reminder during class discussions (both small and large group) of mindfully listening and speaking

**TYPICAL CLASS SEQUENCE**

* Sit or Body scan (30 - 40 mins)
* Sitting meditation (mostly silent)
* Practice and home practice review
  + Life-practices: how did it go?
* Review of course
  + Reflection/review/summary/discussion
  + Letter to self
  + Written feedback forms
* Final round

*Tenderly I now touch all things,*

*Knowing that soon we must part.*

*St John of the Cross*

*Anyway, forget what I have said. It is up to you to observe things, my friend. Come as you were born.* ~ Alamo Oliveira

*Nobody can carry anyone else on his shoulders to the final goal. At most, with love and compassion one can say: ”Well this is the path, and this is how I walked it.”*

*Each person has to take every step on the path him /herself.* ~ Buddha

**CLASS DETAIL NOTES**

**Practice – body scan lying or sitting (30 – 40 mins)**

**Sitting meditation (20 mins)**

**Life-practice and home practice review**

In same dyads from last week, discuss how the specific life-practice went this week. What did you learn? What was challenging?

How was the practice without CDs?

Discuss in big group.

**Contemplation: reviewing their learning**

Ask class to reflect back on the journey they have travelled with the course and with each other. What were your expectations? Hopes? Fears? What have you experienced? What strengths have emerged? What vulnerabilities have you noticed? What has the journey been like? What satisfaction in the learning have you had? What frustrations? Disappointments? What were the costs to you?

Honouring this complex picture of your experience over the last eight weeks. Recognising and honouring the what you have brought in order to engage open-heartedly with this practice. What is it that you have learned about yourself?

**Quads sharing**: 4 mins each, others simply listening.

Engage the big group in a conversation/discussion of what they have learned from the formal practice and the informal practice, drawing out themes and processes from the course in a summarising way. Also pointing to ongoing ways that what has been learned can continue to be implemented after the course.

**Going forth**

It is sometimes a sad thing to be letting go of the class and the bonds and structure we have built together. But there are ways of going forward with your practice. It can be a tricky thing to continue alone and there are ways of connecting with others to keep learning n this way.

* Practice groups
* Other courses
* Online – talks, seminars
* Retreats: are a good way of consolidating or refreshing and deepening practice and the teachings. Can be wise to actually schedule one in, to actually plan your on going mindfulness journey while you are connected to the value of it for you.

**Writing a letter…and completing course paperwork**

**Guided reflection** – what do you want to be sure to remember – something you’ve touched or learned about yourself. Option of setting three short-term (3 months) and three long-term (3 years or more) goals which come out of your direct experience in the program and with the meditation practice. Include potential obstacles to reaching these goals and your strategies for working with them.

Participants take time to write a letter to themselves about what they have learned and what they want to keep connecting to. You might think of it like this: if a beloved person, who knows you deeply, was going to write something to you, to point to the most important things in your life, to help you keep connecting, keep opening in ways that are nourishing....what would they write?

**Complete post-program paperwork.** (This may also be preceded by a guided reflection that incorporates some or all of the questions below.) As each participant completes their letter or paperwork they are placed in pairs by the instructor to discuss how the course has been for them.

**Provide:**

Paper and envelopes (which class members address to themselves)

Teacher to then send this letter in three months to each participant.

**Final round**

Give people the opportunity to say something if they want to.

Each participant shares their experience of the course with the whole group, how they feel about the course ending, what they have learned, how they will keep the momentum of their practice moving and growing.

Each person takes the bell, then speaks, then rings the bell and hands it on to the next person.

**Final meditation: (perhaps including kindness)**

Focussing on experience of completion, all the complex feelings of letting go.

And on appreciating the efforts they have made in working in the course to become more mindful and look after themselves better.

Possible poems for the end:

**Oh Friend**

Had I known you are in the breeze

I would have walked more.

Had I known you are in the stillness of now

I would have sat more.

Had I known you are everywhere in everything

I would have lived more.

Had I known you are eternal

I would have died more.

Amire Hossien Imani

**Everything changes**

Everything changes. You can make

A fresh start with your final breath.

But what has happened has happened. And the water

You have poured into the wine cannot be

Drained off again.

What has happened has happened. And the water

You have poured into the wine cannot be

Drained off again...but

Everything changes. You can make

A fresh start with your final breath.

Bertolt Brecht