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Mindfulness Meditation Handbook

A solid teal rectangular block containing the text 'P2W PILOTING 2 WELLBEING'.

P2W
PILOTING 2
WELLBEING

Reyné O'Shaughnessy

Mindfulness Meditation

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***“Mindfulness is about being
fully aware of our lives.”***

~Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.

Suggestions

In order to realize the benefits of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, please consider ...

... making a personal commitment to MBSR practice for 45–60 minutes daily at least 6 days per week for the next 8 weeks. Your commitment is essential. It is the practice of mindfulness meditation that will enable you to realize its benefits. This commitment can be a challenging one, and may require a lifestyle change. You may have to rearrange your schedule to allow time for daily practice, carving out time from other activities. Once you taste the benefits of MBSR, then you may find that maintaining a daily practice becomes easier and highly rewarding.

... making a personal commitment to practice mindfulness in daily living (informal mindfulness practice). We can bring mindfulness to eating, walking, driving, interpersonal relationships, anytime throughout the day. This conscious act of remembering and bringing attention to the present moment and simple activities throughout the day, enhances your formal meditation practice. Both formal and informal practice are just that, practice at being fully present to each moment as life unfolds just as it is

... putting goal attainment on hold. Putting aside any desire to use MBSR to reach a certain objective (e.g., relaxation, pain relief, inner peace) will allow you to fully experience a primary part of the program, which is “non-doing” or “non-striving.”

... approaching your practice with an attitude of kindness, compassion, gentleness, openness and inquisitiveness toward yourself and others. Your role is to just observe, developing a deeper awareness. . . .

... sharing relevant events, materials, or experiences for the good of the group. You are invited to share, in whatever manner you are most comfortable, a brief summary or copy of an article, book, poem, movie, idea, story or anything that is relevant to the formal or informal practice of mindfulness or stress management. This information may be shared during any session.

... practicing the specific weekly assignments as suggested in the workbook You may choose, now, to make a commitment to yourself to practice the techniques learned in this class over the next 8 weeks.

PART 1

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)



In the practice of mindful meditation, one can cultivate the sense of oneself as a present moment awareness. It observes the thoughts that arise in the mind and views them as something to be noted, perhaps responded to, but not to be identified with as me. As one begins to quiet the mind, this review of our thoughts in relation to our cells can be cultivated more and more deeply, which can result in more clarity about who we really are. When we realize we are not our thoughts, we can explore them more deeply and begin to move into a greater stillness that offers us further information about who we may really be at our core. Just as the ocean has waves on the surface of the water as well as the silent depths below, we too can do the thought patterns on the surface, as well as quiet depths within. And so, in answer to this person's question, the fish does have the possibility of knowing something of the water it is in.

In addition to mindfulness meditation in the medical setting, the training has also been broadened in scope to include inmates in prison systems, inner-city

residents, Olympic rowing athletes, judges, the Chicago Bulls basketball team, the Seattle Seahawks, corporate Executives, LeBron James, as well as grammar school children. Over 240 mindfulness-based stress reduction programs are currently being offered around the country. And structures vary with respect to their backgrounds, most being healthcare professionals with teaching and clinical experience in the healthcare field, or having extensive meditation and yoga background.

Whether we are pressed by serious pain or stress, or simply by a mild sense that things are not as we would like them to be, mindfulness meditation is a tool that allows us to see our world as if standing and looking at a landscape of our own particular life and world around us from a new vantage point. We can begin to recognize the way in which we contribute to our discontent and can decide to make a change. Mindfulness meditation offers that opportunity.

Robert Lewis is a certified yoga teacher since 1978, trained in Integra Yoga, with several years of study in Iyengar Yoga, and training in gentle patient oriented yoga as offered at UMass-Memorial Medical Center's stress Reduction Program founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

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PART 2:

Meditation: It's Not What You Think

It might be good to clarify a few misunderstandings about meditation right off the bat. First, meditation is best thought of as a way of being, rather than a technique or a collection of techniques.

I'll say it again.

Meditation is a way of being, not a technique.

There are, in fact, hundreds of them, and we will be making good use of some of them. But without understanding that all techniques are orienting vehicles pointing at ways of being, ways of being in relationship to the present moment and to one's own mind and one's own experience, we can easily get lost in the technique and in our misguided but entirely understandable attempt to use them to get somewhere else and experience some special result or states that we think is the goal of it all...

Second, meditation is not relaxation spelled differently. Perhaps I should say that again as well: meditation is not relaxation spelled differently.

That doesn't mean that meditation is not frequently accompanied by profound states of relaxation and by deep feelings of well-being. Of course it is, or can be, sometimes. But mindfulness meditation is the embrace of any and all mind states in awareness, without referring one to another. From the point of view of mindfulness practice, pain or anguish, or for that matter boredom or impatience, frustration or anxiety or tension in the body are all equally valid objects of our attention if we find them arising in the present moment, each a rich opportunity for insight and learning, and potentially, for liberation rather than signs that meditation practice is not "succeeding" because we are not feeling relaxed or experience bliss in some moment.

We might say that meditation is really a way of being appropriate to the circumstance the one finds oneself in, in any and every moment. If we are caught up in the preoccupations of our mind, at that moment we cannot be present in an appropriate way or perhaps at all. We will bring an agenda of some kind to whatever we say or do or think, even if we don't know it...

For meditation, and especially mindfulness meditation, it is not throwing off a switch and catapulting yourself anywhere, nor is it entertaining certain thoughts and getting rid of others. Nor is it making your mind blank or willing yourself to be peaceful or relaxed. It is really an in-world gesture that inclines the heart and the mind toward a full spectrum awareness of the present moment just as it is, accepting whatever is happening simply because it is already happening...

Meditation is not about trying to get anywhere else. It is about allowing yourself to be exactly where you are and as you are, and for the world to be exactly as it is in this moment as well. This is not easy, since there is always something that we can rightly find fault with if we stay inside our thinking. And so there tends to be great resistance on the part of the mind and body to settle into things just as they are, even for a moment. That resistance to what is maybe even more compound if we are meditating because we hope that by doing so we can effect change, make things different, improve our lives, and contribute to improving the lot of the world...

So, from the point of view of awareness, any state of mind is a meditative state. Anger sadness is just an interesting and useful way to look into it as enthusiasm or delight, and far more valuable than a blank mind, a mind that is insensate, out of touch. Anger, fear, terror, sadness, resentment, impatience, enthusiasm, delight, confusion, disgust, contempt, envy, rage, lust, even dullness, doubt, and torpor, in fact all my states and body states are occasions to know ourselves better if we can stop, look, and listen; in other words, if we could come to our senses and be intimate with what presents itself in Awareness in any and every moment. The astonishing thing, so counterintuitive, is that nothing else needs to happen. We can give up trying to make something special or curved. And letting go of wanting something special to work, maybe we can realize that something very special is already occurring, and is always occurring, namely life emerging and each moment as awareness itself.

This is an excerpt from the book *Coming to our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness*. Copyrighted 2005 Joh Kabet-Zinn, PH.D.

PART 3

Overcoming Obstacles in Meditation

Here are five obstacles that have been in people's way for thousands of years and the antidotes to get over them.

1. **Doubt** – The uncertainty about whether something will work or not often plagues many people in the beginning of their practice. The thought is, “this can work for others, but it won't work for me.” Sometimes doubt is healthy, teaching us to look closely at things before we buy them. But the un-healthy doubt just takes us away from the experience before it teaches us anything.

Antidote: We have to remember that thoughts are just thoughts; they are not facts (even the ones that say they are). When we notice this doubt slipping in, just take note of it, perhaps even notice the fear that is often underneath it, and then gently return back to the practice.

2. **Restlessness** – Let's face it, it's hard to sit still when the mind can be so busy. We're trained from a young age to do, do and do some more. The mind may rebel a bit when learning how to be. You might catch it running through a million to do lists and try and count the minutes until the end of the practice. This is all completely natural.

Antidote: It's important to recognize that restlessness and boredom are just sensations like any other. If you look deeply at restlessness or boredom, underneath it is often some form of anxiety or fear. But you don't need to investigate it to reduce impact, just naming it as you recognize it may really reduce its impact. You might even try adopting a beginner's mind and getting curious about the sensations of restlessness. This is how you get back in the driver's seat.

3. **Irritation** – Getting irritated occurs for many reasons. Maybe we don't feel like we're having a good meditation experience or there's an annoying noise in the room or it's a secondary emotion that comes after feeling restless. In other words, we're irritated that we are so restless in the practice.

Antidote: Well our urge is to resist the irritation; we have to remember the old adage “what we resist persists.” The work here is to include it as a part of a mindfulness experience, as noted in the chapter “It is what it is, while it is” in In the Now Effect. Our work is to recognize the irritation, allow it to be

there and we can either investigate deeper or watch it as it naturally comes and goes.

4. **Sleepiness** – Being the sleep-deprived nation that we are, it is easy to feel a bit sleepy when we come down from our busy minds. Our body does what it naturally wants to do, go to rest. We also feel sleepy sometimes when an experience is overwhelming, so it's good to be curious whether the tiredness is telling you that you need more rest or that there's a feeling that needs to be expressed.

Antidote: If from time to time you fall asleep when meditating, consider it a good nap that you need. However, if this is happening often you might try sitting in a more upright posture, standing up, having your eyes slightly open or maybe splashing some water on your face before starting.

5. **Wanting** – You'll notice when you practice that your mind may fall into a state of wanting to be somewhere else than where you are. Or maybe it's even more innocent of just wanting to get a bite to eat and so the mind starts drifting onto different food topics. Or before you even get to practice, your mind wants conditions to be different than they are so you don't even get to practice. This state of mind can either stop us from practicing or ignite restlessness or irritation.

Antidote: If you notice the state of mind before you practice, you might consider what you can practice instead of what you can't practice. For example, in a noisy place, the "Sky of Awareness" practice from The Now Effect would do quite nicely. If the mind is busy wanting to be somewhere else during the practice, see if you can be easy on yourself, simply continue to notice the straying thoughts and gently bring your attention back. If it continues to be a strong pull, maybe intentionally shift your practice to being aware of thoughts like "Movie In Your Mind" practice.

Ultimately, having regular mindfulness meditation seems so simple, but practice isn't always easy. We have our brains to contend with that throws up all these obstacles. If you just made it your intention to be on the lookout for these obstacles and apply these antidotes as best as you can, that would be an extremely beneficial practice. Be forgiving of yourself as you go and remember you can always begin again.

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PART 4

The 7 Essential Attitudes of Mindfulness Practice

The following attitudes are at the core of mindfulness practice and living. Learning to notice, cultivate, and apply these attitudes, moment-by-moment, day-by-day, is what improves our ability to face fear, anxiety, panic, and depression; decrease our suffering; and nurture our sense of peace and well-being. Although addressed separately for teaching purposes they are interconnected and practicing one leads to increased awareness and understanding of the others.

1. **Non judging:** mindfulness is compassionate, open-hearted, choiceless awareness. It is cultivated by witnessing your own experience, without judgment, as the present moment unfolds. Categorizing and judging experience is no more than a habit, but it locks you into automatic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that perpetuate problems rather than help. Often we aren't even aware that these patterns exist. Judging separates us from direct experience of unfolding our lives in each moment. And practicing mindfulness, it's important to recognize the judging quality of mind and identify the judgmental thinking as it arises. It is important to not judge! Simply notice when it is present. Remember — the goal is to simply notice, not to rid yourself of judgment thoughts. This is an unrealistic goal. By noticing that judgment is present, we have the opportunity to learn new ways to relate to it, choosing a response rather than reacting unconsciously.
2. **Patience:** patience is the ability to bear difficulty with calm and self-control. It requires connection with your core, faith, and courage. It also requires kindness and compassion for yourself as you bear the upset of a situation. Impatience often arises when ego, the self-centered part of self, rows against reality, wanting things to be different than they actually are. In contrast, the wise self recognizes the truth that things have a life cycle of their own, separate from your own wants. As you learn to accept this truth your patience grows. To build patience, you must learn to recognize impatience and the urge to rush through one moment to get to the next.
3. **Beginner's mind:** when you begin to observe the present moment, the thinking mind tends to believe it knows all about what is happening or tries to control it by desperately seeking more information. The activity of thinking forms a filter or barrier between you and direct experience of life — it is in

the unfolding of life moment-by-moment that holds the full richness of life — it is in the unfolding of life moment by moment that holds the full richness of life. To practice beginners' minds means to open to the experience of each moment as if meeting it for the first time. Remember and imagine your experience as a child — the first smell of a flower, the first drop of rain, the first taste of an orange. In truth, each moment in life is unique. You may have experienced the sunset a thousand times, but this particular sunset is different from the rest and will never be again. In practicing mindfulness, you ask to cultivate this quality of direct experience, receiving whatever arises as a unique and precious experience. Practicing a beginner's mind cultivates our ability to experience life in this way.

4. **Trust:** a basic part of learning to meditate is learning to trust yourself in your feelings. You learn to trust that you can see clearly what is actually happening to you. Practicing mindfulness deepens your weariness of, sensitivity to, and accuracy and discerning of what is here now, what is happening in your own body, and what is happening around you. You learn to trust your own knowledge, your own authority, and don't need someone else to tell you what you feel and need. In this process, you discover what it really means to be your own person and to live life with authenticity.
5. **Non striving:** the bulk of human activity is spent "doing" and trying to change things. This "habit" frequently shows up in meditation. The ego mind wants more of what it likes and wants to get rid of what it doesn't like, and when it decides that you aren't the way you "should" be, it even pressures you to change yourself! This pressure is felt as striving, or training to be different, go somewhere else, or do something else. Since mindfulness involves simply paying attention without judgment to whatever is happening, it is different from the more typical activity of doing — it is about "non doing", about learning to "be" instead of do. As you are practicing or living mindfulness and feel a sense of striving or trying to change things, simply notice that without judging yourself. Mindfulness is about truly relaxing into your experience in allowing whatever is happening to happen, bringing clear, compassionate awareness to all as it happens. The paradox of meditation is that the best way to achieve your goal is to let go of striving and, instead, focus carefully on seeing and accepting things as they are, moment-to-moment.
6. **Acceptance:** The process of acceptance begins with your willingness to see

things exactly as they are rather than the way you think they should be. You have to see things as they are and yourself as you truly are — in this moment if you wish to change, heal, or transform yourself or your life. Often to be able to accept what comes into awareness, you must pass through periods of intense feelings such as anger, fear, or grief. These feelings themselves require acceptance; acceptance does not mean you have to like everything or take a passive attitude. It does not mean you have to be satisfied with things as they are, or that you have to stop trying to change things for the better. Rather acceptance simply means willingness to see things as they are, deeply, truthfully, and completely. This attitude sets the stage for acting in the moment in the most potent and healthy way, no matter what is happening. You are more likely to know what to do when you have a clear picture of what is actually happening than when your vision is clouded by your mind's self-serving judgments and desires or its fear and prejudices.

7. **Letting Go:** Letting go, or non-attachment, is another key attitude of mindfulness. Much of the time, we are practicing the opposite attitude, clinging to the way we want things to be, without even knowing it. Often what you cling most strongly are ideas and views about yourself, and others in situations. These ideas that we cling to often shape our moment-to-moment experience in profound ways. When we start paying attention to our experience through meditation, we can discover which thoughts, feelings, and sensations we are trying to hold on to. And we will also notice other things that we desperately want to get rid of. Clinging is driven by our likes and dislikes in our judgments. It is important to just let your experience be what it is, moment-to-moment. This is actually a way of letting go. But not interfering, but by just letting things be, you have a better chance to let go.

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PART 5

The Body Scan Meditation



The body scan has proven to be extremely powerful and healing meditation. It forms the core of the lying down practices that people train in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). It involves systematically sweeping through the body with a mind, bringing an affectionate, open-hearted, interested attention to its various regions, customarily starting from the toes of the left foot and then moving through the entirety of the foot — to sole, the heel, the top of the foot — then up the left leg, including in turn the ankle, the shin and the calf, the knee and the kneecap, the thigh and its entirety, on the surface and deep, the groin and the left hip, then over to the toes of the right foot and then other regions of the foot, then up the right leg in the same manner as the left. From there, the focus moves into, successfully, and slowly, the entirety of the pelvic region, including the hips again, the buttocks and genitals, the lower back, the abdomen, and then the upper torso — the upper back, the chest and the ribs, the breast, the heart and lungs and the great vessels housed within the rib cage, the shoulder blades floating on the rib cage in the back, all the way up to the collarbones and

shoulders. From the shoulders, we move to the arms, often doing them together, starting from the tips of the fingers and the thumbs and moving successively through the fingers, the palms, the backs of the hands, the wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arms, armpits, and shoulders again. Then we move into the neck and throat, and finally, the face and the head.

When we practice the body scan, we systematically and intentionally move our attention through the body, attending to the various sensations in different regions. That we can attend to these body sensations at all is quite remarkable. That we can do it all at will, either impulsively or in the more disciplined systematic way, is even more so. Without moving a muscle, we can put our mind anywhere in the body that we choose and feel and be aware of whatever sensations are present in the moment.

Experientially, we might describe that we are doing during a body scan as journey in or opening to those sensations, allowing ourselves to become aware of what is already unfolding, much of which we usually tune out because it is so obvious, so mundane, so familiar that we hardly know it is there, I mean here. And of course, by the same token we could say that most of the time in our lives we hardly know we are there, I mean here, experiencing the body, in the body, of the body... The words actually fail the essence of the experience. When we speak about it, we already observe, language itself forces us to speak of a separate I who “has” a body. We wind up sounding hopelessly dualistic.

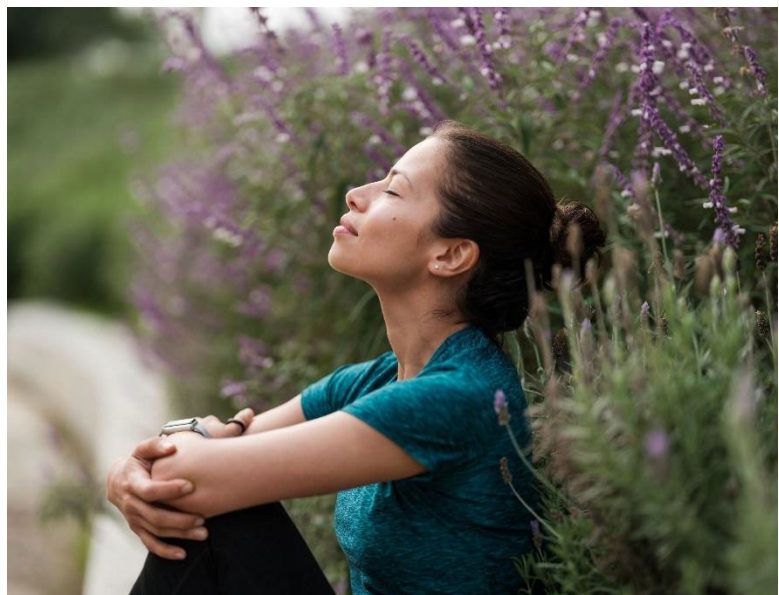
And yet, in a way there certainly is a separate I who “has” a body, or at least, there is a very strong appearance of that being the case, and we have spoken of this as being the level of conventional reality, the relative, the level of experience. In the domain of relative reality, there is a body and its sensation (object), and there is the perceiver of the sensation (subject). They appear separate and different.

Then there are moments of pure perceiving that arise sometimes in meditation practice, and sometimes at other very special moments in life. Yet such moments are potentially available to us all the time, since they are attributes of awareness itself. Perceiving unifies the apparent subject and apparent object in the experiencing itself. Subject and object dissolve into wearing this. Awareness is larger than sensation. It has a life of its own separate from the life of the body, yet intimately depending on it.

Awareness is deeply brief bereft, however, when it comes to not having a full body to work with due to disease or injury to the nervous system itself. The intact nervous system provides us with all of our extraordinary gateways into the feeling, sensing world. Yet. Like most everything else, we take these capacities so much for granted that we hardly notice that every exquisite moment of our life and relationship, both inwardly and outwardly, depends on them. Not only might we come more to our senses, we might realize that we only know through our senses, if you include the mind, or awareness itself as a sense that you could say, the ultimate sense ...

It is not uncommon while practicing the body scan for the sensations in the body to be felt more acutely, even for there to be more pain, a greater intensity of sensation in certain regions. At the same time, in the context of mindfulness practice, the sensations, whatever they are and however intense, are also being met more accurately too, with the left overlay in interpretation, judgment, and reaction, including a version and the impulse to run, to escape.

In the body scan, we are developing a greater intimacy with bare sensation, opening to the give and take embedded in the process between the sensations themselves and awareness of them. As a result it is not uncommon to be less disturbed by them, or and to hold them without triggering so much emotional reactivity and also so inflamed thinking about them. We sometimes speak of awareness and discernment differentiating and perhaps naturally “uncoupling” the sensory dimension of the experience of pain from the emotional and cognitive dimensions of pain. In the process, the intensity of the sensation themselves can sometimes subside. In any event, they may come to be seen as less onerous, less debilitating.



It seems as if awareness itself, holding the sensations without judging them or reacting to them, is healing our view of the body and allowing it to come to terms, at least to some degree, with conditions as they are in the present moment in ways that are no longer overwhelming erode our quality of life, even in the fact of pain or disease. The awareness of pain really is a different realm from being caught up in the pain and struggling with it, and setting foot in the realm, we discover some succor and respite. This itself is an experience of liberation, profound freedom in that moment, at least from the narrow way of holding the experience of pain when it is not seen as a bare sensation. This is not a cure by any means, but it is a learning and an opening, and an accepting, and a navigating the ups and downs of what previously was impenetrable and unworkable ...

Paraphrasing James Joyce In one of his short stories, in *The Dubliners*, “Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body.” That may be an address too many of us share. Taking the miracle of embodiment for granted is a horrific loss. It would be a profound healing of our lives to get back in touch with it. All it takes is practice in coming to our senses, all of them.

And ... a spirit of adventure ...

The body scan is not for everybody, and it is not always the meditation of choice even for those who love it. But it is extremely useful and good to know about and practice from time to time whatever your circumstance or condition. If you think of your body as a musical instrument, the body scan is a way of tuning it. If you think of it as a universe, the body scan is a way to come to know it. If you think of your body as a house, the body scan is a way to throw open all the windows and doors and let the fresh air of awareness sweep it clean.

You can also scan your body much more quickly, depending on your time constraints and the situation you find yourself in. You can do a one in-breath or one out- breath body scan, or a 1, 2, 5, 10, or 20 minute body scan. The level of precision and detail will of course vary depending on how quickly you move through your body, but each speed has its virtues, and ultimately, it is about being in touch with the whole of your being in your body in any and every way you can, outside of time all together.

You can practice body scans, long or short, lying in bed at night or in the morning. You can always practice sitting or even standing. There are countless creative ways to bring the body scan or any other “lying down” meditation into your life. If

you make use of any of them, it is highly likely that you will find that they will bring new life to you, and bring you to a new appreciation for your body and how much it can serve as a vehicle for embodying here and now what is deepest and best in yourself, including your dignity, your beauty, your vitality, and your mind when it is open and undisturbed.

Physical sensations you might notice with body scan

tingly	burning	pounding	throbbing	trembling
tight/loose	shooting	stinging	airy	cutting
soft/rough	prickly	pulling	burning	vibrating
stiff/flexible	numb	achy	calm/dry	airy/dense
shaky	itchy	pulsing	light/heavy	tense/relaxed
cool/warm	clammy	dry		

Emotional reactions you might notice

impatient	wanting to stop	neutral	enjoyment	
wanting to continue		release	joy	sadness
fear	grief	pride	disgust	surprise
anger	frustration	anticipation	shame	

Thoughts that may occur

review in the past	imagining the future	thinking about others
planning	evaluating and analyzing	circular thinking
wishing/hoping	comparing	labeling
cataloging	judging your experience	

Coming to Our Senses Copyright Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.

PART 6

Sitting Meditation

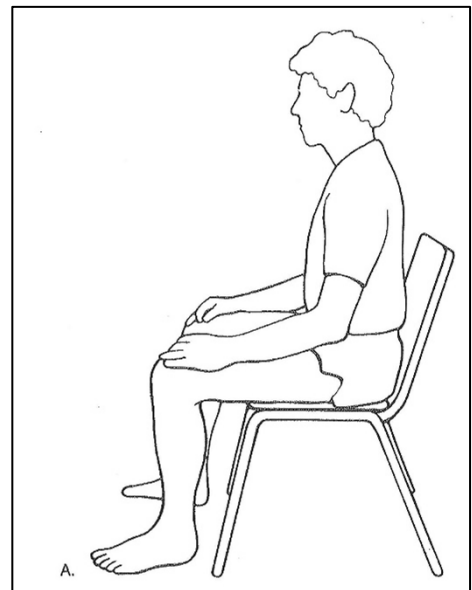
We call the heart of the formal meditation practice “sitting meditation” or simply “sitting.” As with breathing, sitting is not foreign to anyone. We all sit, nothing special about that. But mindful sitting is different from ordinary sitting in the same way that mindful breathing is different from ordinary breathing. The difference, of course, is your awareness.

To practice sitting we make a special time and place for non-doing. We consciously do a job and an alert and a relaxed body posture so that we can feel relatively comfortable without moving, and then we reside with calm acceptance in the present without trying to fill it with anything. You have already tried this in the various exercises in which you have watched your breathing.

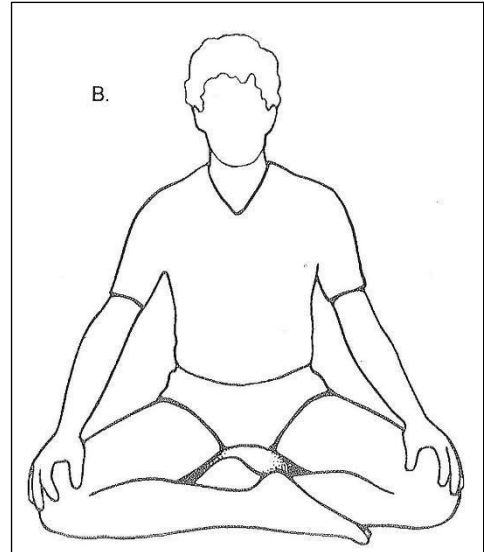
It helps a lot to adopt an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically. This allows the breath to flow most easily. It is also the physical counterpart of the inner attitude of self-reliance, self-acceptance, and alert attention that we are cultivating.

We usually practice sitting meditation either on a chair or on the floor. If you choose a chair, the ideal one has a straight back and allows your feet to be flat on the floor. We often recommend that, if possible, you stay away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting (Figure A). But if you have to, leaning against the back of the chair is also fine.

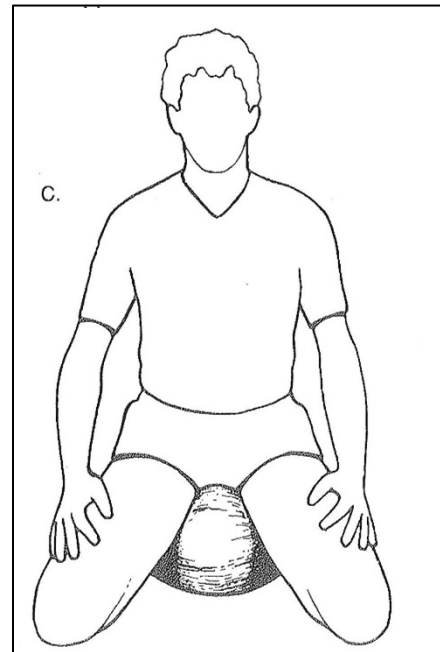
If you choose to sit on the floor, do so on a firm, thick cushion which raises your buttocks off the floor three to six inches (a pillow folded over once or twice does nicely; or you can purchase a meditation cushion, or zafu, specifically for sitting.)



There are a number of crossroads sitting postures and kneeling postures that some people use when they are sitting on the floor. The one I use most is the so-called “Burmese” posture (See Figure B), which involves drawing one heel close to the body and draping the other leg in front of it. Depending on the flexibility of your hips, knees and ankles, your knees may or may not be touching the floor. It is somewhat more comfortable when they are. Others use a kneeling posture, placing the cushion between the feet (see Figure C)



Whether you choose the floor or a chair, posture is very important in meditation practice. It can be an outward support in cultivating an inner attitude of dignity, patience, and self-appreciation. The main points to keep in mind about your posture are to try to keep your back, neck, and head aligned in the vertical, to relax the shoulders, and to do something comfortable with your hands. Usually place them on the knees, as in Figure B or rest them in the lap with the fingers of the left hand above the fingers of the right and the tips of the thumbs just touching each other.



When we assume the posture we have selected, we bring our attention to our breathing. We feel it come in, we feel it go out. We dwell in the present, moment-by-moment, Breath by breath. It sounds simple, and it is. Full awareness on the in-breath, full awareness on the out-breath. Letting the breath just happen, observing it, feeling all the sensations, gross and subtle, associated with it.

It is simple but it is not easy. You can probably sit in front of the TV or in a car on a trip for four hours without giving it a thought. But when you try sitting in your house with nothing to watch with your breath, your body, and your mind, with nothing to entertain you and no place to go, the first thing you will probably

notice is that at least part of you doesn't want to stay at this for very long. After perhaps a minute or two or three or four, either the body or the mind will have had enough and will demand something else, either to shift to some other posture or to do something else entirely. This is inevitable.

It is at this point that the work of self-observation gets particularly interesting and fruitful. Normally every time the mind moves, the body follows. If the mind is restless, the body is restless. If the mind wants a drink, the body goes to the kitchen sink or refrigerator. If the mind says, "this is boring," then before you know it, the body is up and looking around for the next thing to do to keep the mind happy. It also works the other way around. If the body feels the slightest discomfort, it will shift to be more comfortable or it will call on the mind to find something else for it to do, and again, you will be standing up literally before you know it.

If you genuinely commit to being more peaceful and relaxed, you might wonder why it is that your mind is so quick to be bored with being with itself and why your body is so restless and uncomfortable. You might wonder what is behind your impulse to feel each moment with something; what is behind you needing to be entertained whenever you have an empty moment, to jump up and get going, to get back to doing and being busy? What drives the body and mind to reject being still?

In practicing meditation we don't try to answer such questions. Rather we just observe the impulse to get up or the thoughts that come into the mind. And instead of jumping up and doing whatever the mind decides is next on the agenda, we gently but firmly bring our attention back to the belly and to the breathing and just continue to watch the breath, moment by moment. We may ponder why the mind is like this for a moment or two, but basically we are practicing accepting each moment as it is without reacting to how it is.

By doing so you are training your mind to be less reactive and more stable. You are making each moment count. You are taking each moment as it comes, not valuing anyone above any other. In this way you are cultivating your natural ability to concentrate your mind. By repeatedly bringing your attention back to the breath each time it wanders off, concentration builds and deepens, much as muscles developed by repetitively lifting weights. Working regularly with (not struggling against) the resistance of your own mind builds inner strength. At the same time you are also developing patience and practicing being non-judgmental.

You are not giving yourself a hard time because your mind left the breath. You simply and matter-of-factly return it to the breath, gently and firmly.

Meditation does not involve pushing us away or walling yourself off to quiet your mind. We are not trying to stop our thoughts as they cascade through the mind. We are simply making room for them, observing them as thoughts, and letting them be, using the breath as our anchor or “home base” for observing, for reminding us to stay focused and calm.

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PART 7

Walking Meditation



Like breathing meditation, walking meditation is a simple and universal practice for developing calm, connectedness, and awareness. It can be practiced regularly, before or after sitting meditation or anytime on its own, such as after a busy day at work or a lazy Sunday morning. The art of walking meditation is to learn to be aware as you walk, to use the natural movement of walking to cultivate mindfulness and wait for presents.

Select a quiet place where you can walk comfortably back and forth, indoors or out, about 10 to 30 paces in length. Begin by standing at one end of this “walking path” with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Let your hands rest easily, wherever they are comfortable. Close your eyes for a moment and center yourself and feel your body standing on the earth. Feel the pressure on the bottom of your feet and the other natural sensations of standing. Then open your eyes and let yourself be present and alert.

Begin to walk slowly. Let yourself walk with a sense of dignity. Pay attention to your body. With each step, feel the sensation of lifting your foot and leg off the earth. Be aware as you place each foot on the earth. Relax and let your walking be easy and natural. Feel each step mindfully as you walk. When you reach the end of your path, pause for a moment. Center yourself, carefully turn around, pause again so that you can be aware of the first step as you walk back. You can experiment with speed, walking at whatever pace keeps you most present.

Continue to walk back and forth for 10 or 20 minutes or longer. As with a breath in sitting, your mind will wander away many, many times. As soon as you notice this, acknowledge where it went softly: “wandering,” “thinking,” “hearing,” “planning.” Then, return to fill the next step. Like training the puppy, you will need to come back a thousand times. Whether you have been away for one second or for ten minutes, simply acknowledge where you have been and then come back to being alive here and now with the next step you take.

After some practice with walking meditation, you will learn to use it to collect yourself and to live a more wakeful life in your body. You can then extend your walking practice to an informal way when you go shopping, whenever you walk down the street or walk to and from your car. You can learn to enjoy walking for its own sake instead of the usual planning and thinking and, in this simple way, begin to be truly present, to bring your body, heart and mind together as you move through your life.

Jack Kornfield *A Path with Heart*

PART 8

Mindful Yoga/Mindful Movements



Many of us are reluctant to exercise because it involves discomfort or strain, or requires special equipment or others to work out with, or going to a special place to do it. If this has been the case for you, then mindful HATHA yoga may be just a practice you have been waiting for.

The word yoga means “yoke” in Sanskrit, and implies a harnessing together and unifying of body and mind. Yoga is a form of meditation, and when done regularly, is an excellent body/mind discipline for people who wish to move towards greater levels of health.

HATHA yoga consists of postures done mindfully and with awareness of breathing. They are easily learned and have dramatic effects to practice regularly. The ones we are doing are extremely gentle. Regular practice will increase your musculoskeletal flexibility, strength, and balance, as well as help you to enter states of deep relaxation and awareness. Many people experience a greater

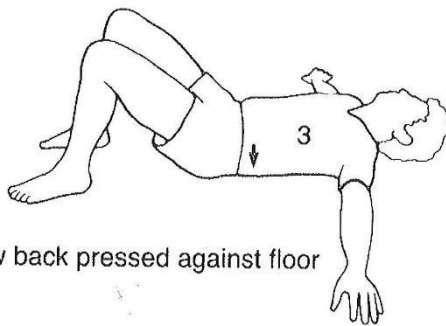
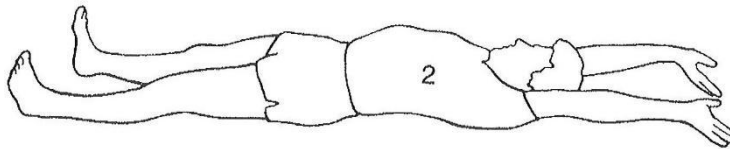
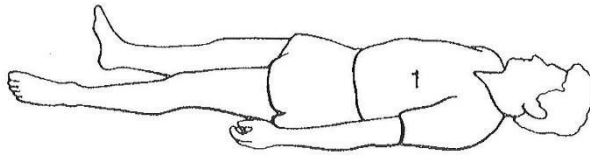
serenity about life in general, improve circulation, firmer figure, and less illness as a result.

In practicing yoga, you are advised to practice in the same way that you would do when meditating, namely maintaining moment-to-moment awareness, and not striving to get somewhere, just allowing yourself to be as you are, and letting go of any judgment of yourself. Move slowly and consciously. Mindful yoga involves exploring your limits but not pushing beyond them. Instead, you play with dwelling at the boundary and breath. This requires honoring your body and the messages it gives you about when to stop and to avoid doing a posture based on your particular condition.

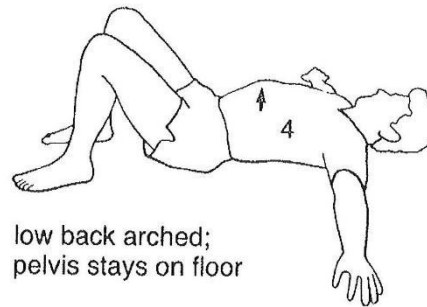
Yoga requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere. You can learn it from the stress reduction program manual sketches and then go on to invent your own postures, and get other ideas from yoga books or from classes. Experiment mindfully.

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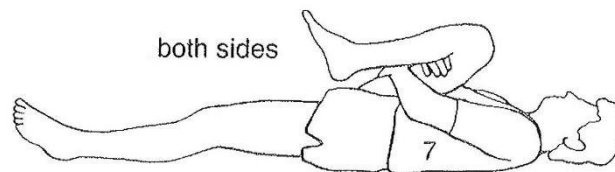
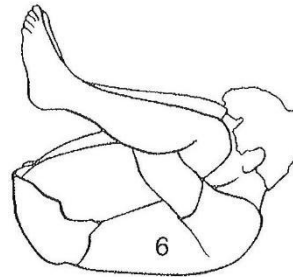
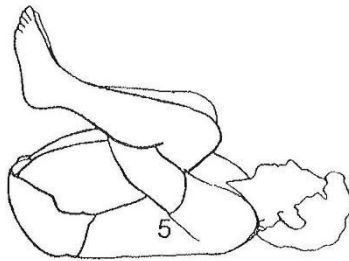
Sequence of Yoga Postures



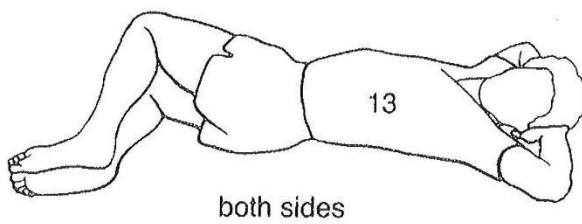
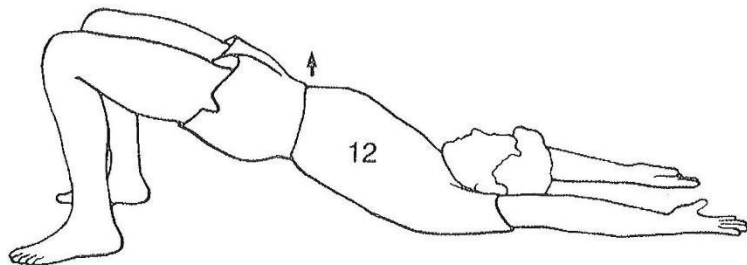
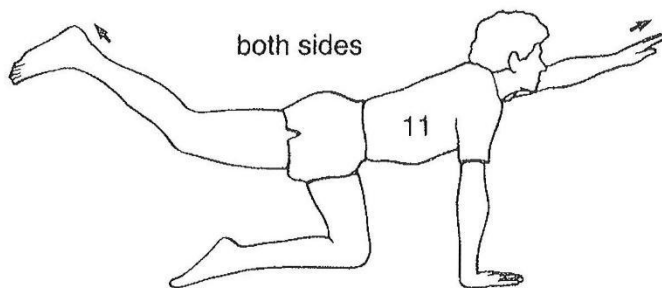
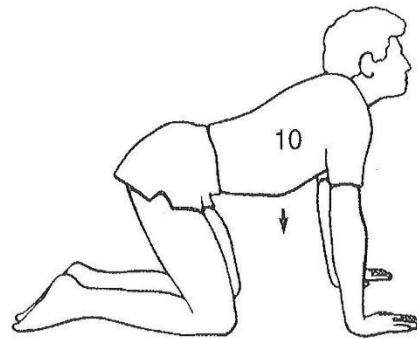
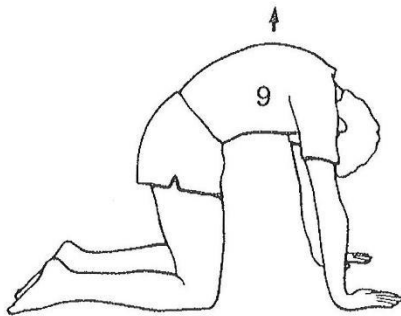
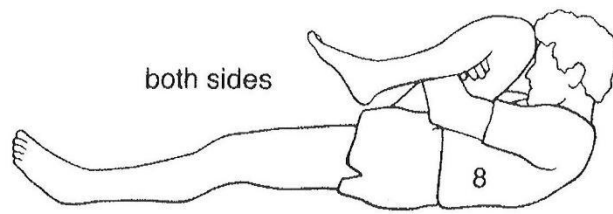
low back pressed against floor

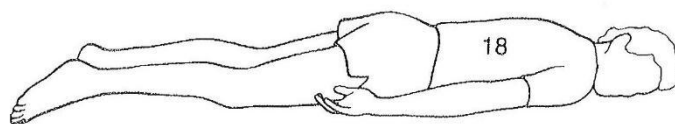
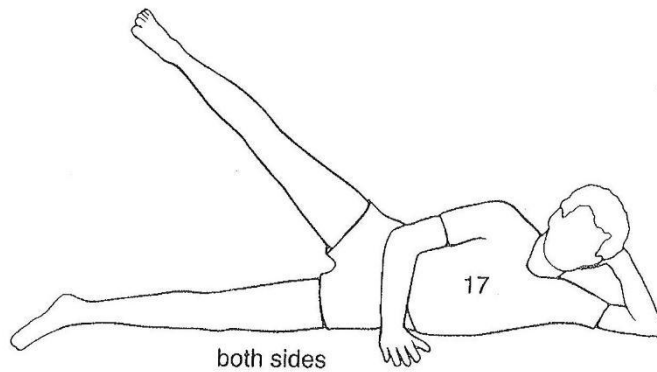
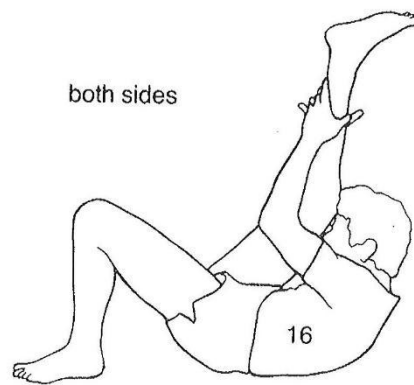
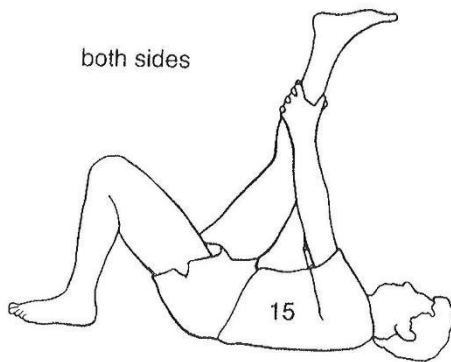
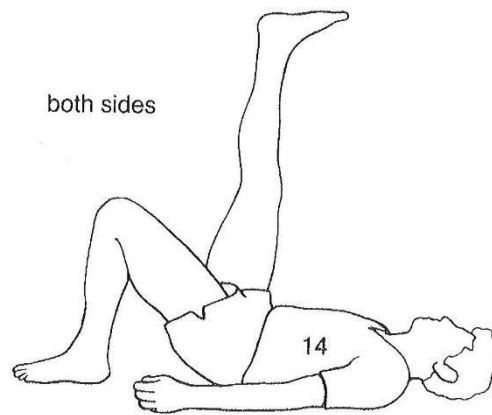


low back arched;
pelvis stays on floor



both sides





PART 9

Loving Kindness Meditation



Can you imagine getting a sense of yourself, cradling the sense of yourself in your awareness ...

Repeat these words silently to your own sense of self:

May I be safe

May I be happy

May I be healthy

May I live with ease

Maybe it seems artificial and stilted to say such things to yourself, for yourself. Maybe you're not feeling loving kindness at this moment — and that's okay.

Whatever you are feeling, you can hold the intention of loving kindness ... offering it from wherever you are ... however you are ...

So practice once more, noticing how you may be drawn toward this practice or away from it:

May I be safe

May I be happy

May I be healthy

May I live with ease

Now develop an image or a felt sense of your chosen one, someone that you feel close to, who is alive or has moved on, bring them to the forefront of your thinking and offer:

May you be safe

May you be happy

May you be healthy

May you live with ease

And now exploring the experience of moving loving kindness outward again, bringing to your heart and mind to whom you feel neutral towards — neither disliking nor liking them and offering these wishes:

May you be safe

May you be happy

May you be healthy

May you live with ease

Now moving to a person who you dislike or is difficult to deal with. Holding them in your awareness and sending love and kindness with these phrases ... or phrases of your own ...

May you be safe
May you be happy
May you be healthy
May you live with ease ... (long pause)

Now we will expand this out further ... gain a sense of your family and or local neighborhood and community and hold this, with a sense of yourself included and repeat:

May we be safe
May we be happy
May we be healthy
May we live with ease

Now gain a sense of all sentiment being in your world ... and as you have this sense repeat silently to yourself again:

May we be safe
May we be happy
May we be healthy
Maybe live with ease

Mindfulness Reflection

Before I did this mindfulness exercise
I felt:

The best part of this mindfulness
exercise was:

Before I did this mindfulness exercise
I felt:

In the future, I can use this mindfulness exercise when:

Notes:

Self-Awareness Journal

Monday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Tuesday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Wednesday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Thursday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Friday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Saturday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	
Sunday	
Today I paused and noticed ...	
I showed myself compassion by ...	
I cared for myself by ...	



Suggested Reading

Full Catastrophe Living

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Published By Delta; ISBN 0385303122

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Published by Hyperion; ISBN 0786880708

Coming to Our Senses Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Published by Hyperion; ISBN 0786867566

Peaceful Mind Using Meditation & Cognitive Behavioral Psychology to Overcome Depression

John R. McQuaid and Paula E. Carmona, Published by New Harbinger Publications; ISBN 1572243668

Calming Your Anxious Mind: How mindfulness and compassion can free you from anxiety, fear and panic

Jeff Brantley, Published by New Harbinger Publications; ISBN 1572243384

Here For Now Living Well with Cancer Through Mindfulness

Elana Rosenbaum, Published by Satya House Publications; ISBN 0972919112

Peak Mind: Find Your Focus, Own Your Attention, Invest 12 Minutes a Day

Amishi P. Jha, Ph.D., Published by Harper Collins; ISBN 9780062992147

