



**MTI**

# **SIT Mindfulness Training Manual**

## **The Fundamentals of Mindful Attention**

Six-Week Introductory Training in Mindfulness  
in 6 x 2 Hour Classes

**Mark Coleman and Martin Aylward**  
2020-2021



*Mindfulness means giving close, curious and caring attention to whatever arises; We are learning to meet life more deeply than we can imagine; to live more fully, more fluidly and more freely.*

— Martin Aylward



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# Curriculum

## Course Overview

### General Outline for a 2 Hour Class

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	Sit/Check-in
0:15	15	Intro to Theme/Guided Meditation
0:40	20	Q&A
0:50	10	Break
1:00	10	Teaching on Theme
1:15	15	Experimental Practice/DIAD/Exercise
1:30	15	Q&A
1:50	10	Homework
2:00	Close	



SIT Mindfulness Course  
Curriculum  
**Week 1 - 2 Overview**

**Week 1 - Introduction to and Overview of Mindfulness**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	15	Welcoming/General Introduction
0:15	15	Who is Here/Intentions
0:30	20	Overview of Mindfulness/History/Context
0:50	10	Questions/Comments
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Posture - 5 Minute Sitting - Questions
1:25	15	15 Minute Sitting - Mindfulness of Breath
1:40	15	Q&A
1:50	10	Meditation in Daily Life - Home Practice
2:00	Close	

**Week 2 - Mindfulness of Body**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	25	Mindfulness of Breath & Body (5 minute Intro, 20 minute Practice)
0:40	10	Questions/Comments
0:50	10	Eating Meditation with Feedback
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Talk on Mindfulness of Body
1:25	5	Q&A
1:30	15	Body Scan or Mindful Walking
1:45	10	Discussion
1:55	5	Home Practice (Walking, Eating, Continuing Practice)
2:00	Close	



SIT Mindfulness Course  
Curriculum  
**Week 3 – 4 Overview**

**Week 3 – Working with Pleasure/Pain & Challenges in Meditation**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	10	Talk on Working with Pleasure/Pain
0:25	25	Meditation on Working with Pleasure/Pain & Sounds
0:50	10	Questions/Feedback
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Talk on Common Challenges in Meditation
1:25	10	Questions/Feedback
1:35	10	Mindful Listening in DIADS about Challenges in Meditation
1:45	10	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Walking, Eating, Continuing Practice)
2:00	Close	

**Week 4 – Mindfulness of Emotion**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	25	Sitting – Mindfulness of Emotion (R.A.I.N)
0:40	10	Questions/Comments
0:50	10	Break
1:00	15	Talk – Working with Emotions with Understanding/Care
1:15	10	Questions/Feedback
1:25	15	Triad: Working with Emotion in Meditation /Life
1:40	15	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Mindfulness of Emotion/Triggers)
2:00	Close	



SIT Mindfulness Course  
Curriculum  
**Week 5 – 6 Overview**

**Week 5 – Mindfulness of Thought/Mental Processes**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	15	Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	15	Talk – Working with Thinking in Meditation
0:30	25	Mindfulness of Thought/Mental Processes
0:55	10	Questions/Feedback
1:05	10	Break
1:15	15	Talk – Working with Negative Thought Patterns: Self-judgment/Negativity Bias/Views
1:30	15	Mindful Listening Exercise – DIAD on Inner Critic/Negativity Bias
1:45	10	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Working with Thoughts/Views/Judgment)
2:00	Close	

**Week 6 – Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	10	Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:10	30	Review of all Instructions and Choiceless Awareness
0:40	10	Questions/Feedback
0:50	10	Break
1:00	10	Talk – Loving Kindness
1:10	15	Loving Kindness Meditation
1:25	15	Continuing Practice - Reflection
1:40	10	Mindful Listening Exercise – DIAD on Taking the Practice Into Your Life
1:50	5	Resources
1:55	5	Closing Circle
2:00	Close	



## Week 1

# Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

You can train your attention and focus with mindfulness practice

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	Welcoming/General Introduction
0:15	15	Who is Here/Intentions
0:30	20	Overview of Mindfulness/History/Context
0:50	10	Questions/Comments
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Posture - 5 Minute Sitting - Questions
1:25	15	15 Minute Sitting - Mindfulness of Breath
1:40	15	Q&A
1:50	10	Meditation in Daily Life - Home Practice
2:00	Close	

Try not to present too much information in the first week.

It's more important to reassure, ground them in the practice and have a few clear instructions, rather than try to have them to understand everything at once.



## Week 1

### Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

## Detailed Agenda

- 0:00** 15 Minutes **Welcome/General Introduction to the Course**
- Welcome
  - Introduce myself/background with practice/training etc.
  - Overview of the course
  - Ground rules/confidentiality/practical info regarding the venue
- 0:15** 15 Minutes **Who is Here/Intentions**
- Depending on the size and context of the group, lead a quick go round with the following prompts.
- Your name
  - Where you live
  - Experience with meditation/mindfulness
  - What you hope to get from the course
- If the group is very large or you suspect that a personal check-in would feel too uncomfortable then ask general questions like:
- Who meditates regularly?
  - How many people have experience with mindfulness?
  - What do you hope to get from the course/why you are here?
- 0:30** 20 Minutes **Overview of Mindfulness: The History and Context**
- Main talking points: You may pick 4-5 points from the list below.
- What is Mindfulness?**
- Historical Context**
- Origins in Buddhist practice
  - Asian traditions
- Contemporary Context**
- Secular mindfulness
  - Importance of neuroscience research
  - Contemporary expressions in psychology: MBCT, DBT, MBSR, ACT
  - Mindfulness in Society - Mindfulness in business, sports, government, education, prisons, health care, etc.
- Definitions**
- Clear Awareness — Bikkhu Bodhi (Buddhist translator)
  - Present moment recollection — Early Buddhist scholars
  - The awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally — Jon Kabat-Zinn



## Week 1

### Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

### Detailed Agenda (continued)

#### **Mindfulness as Training of Attention**

- Distinction between Mindfulness and concentration practice
- Focused attention and open awareness as facets of mindfulness
- Discipline of working with distractions
  - cultivation of meta-attention

#### **Undoing Common Misconceptions of Mindfulness**

- Not about cultivating a special state
- Not about getting certain experiences
- Not about controlling your mind
- Not passive
- Not about not thinking – normalize the wandering/distracted mind

#### **Facets of Mindfulness Practice**

- Importance of patience. As with any training, it takes time.  
A marathon not a sprint. Like learning to play an instrument.
- Importance of integrating kindness – developing a kind attention
- Cultivating a non-judgemental attitude  
(watch for self-critical thoughts)
- Developing “Beginner’s Mind”
- Patience
- Allowing and Letting Be.  
Not trying to change and manipulate experience
- Willingness to begin over and over
- Sharing what facets are important in your own mindfulness practice

**0:50** 10 Minutes

#### **Questions/Comments**

**1:00** 10 Minutes

#### **Break**

Encourage people to say hello to the people sitting next to them

**1:10** 15 Minutes

#### **Posture - 5 Minute Sitting - Questions**

Set up an introduction to posture as an expression of mindfulness of body

#### **Posture - Considerations/Principles:**

- Explain different styles of posture – floor, chair, bench, etc.
- Seat higher than knees
- Sit away from back of chair
- If bad back – lower back support



## Week 1

### Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

#### **5 Posture Principles**

##### **Ground**

- Feel Contact with cushion/chair, ground
- Feet flat on floor
- Feel lower half of body

##### **Uprightness**

- Upright spine
- Helps you stay alert and bright

##### **Openness**

- Roll shoulders up and back
- Open chest
- Hands in lap or on legs

##### **Ease/Gentleness**

- Softness in eyes
- Softness in jaw
- Invite relaxation in belly, shoulders, face muscles

##### **Stillness**

- Invite an orientation towards stillness (not stiff or rigid)

**If you need to move, move slowly, intentionally and mindfully. Mention that we will explore working with discomfort and pain in later weeks.**

**Then lead a five-minute general mindfulness of body meditation once you have established their meditation posture.**

Simply guide them to bring awareness of the body, posture, and touch points. Asking them to explore the body with cues like:

- Feel and sense the posture
- Notice how the body feels in this moment
- Notice in a general way how the body is breathing
- Observe where you feel and don't feel sensations

#### **5 minutes for questions/comments about posture/mindfulness of body**

- Emphasize message that the moment when you notice you are distracted IS a moment of mindfulness
- Reminder of the principle about not having any particular or special experience



## Week 1

### Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

- |             |            |   |
|-------------|------------|---|
| <b>1:25</b> | 15 Minutes | <p><b>Mindfulness of Breath Sitting</b></p> <p>General Mindfulness of Breath instructions (see script if necessary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin meditation by grounding attention to body posture</li><li>• Remind them that initially mindfulness is a training of attention</li><li>• Explore breath as primary object</li><li>• Allow breath to breathe itself – not yoga breath/not controlled breath</li><li>• Notice/rest attention where feel breath clearest</li><li>• Explore Beginner’s Mind in relationship to breath</li><li>• Orient student to language of feeling/sensing rather than watching breath</li><li>• Preference breath over other experience</li><li>• Recognizing and returning from distractions is part of the process</li><li>• Beginning again and again is natural</li><li>• 4-step process - Focus on your breath; notice you’ve become distracted; return attention to the breath; repeat steps 2 and 3 a billion times!</li><li>• Acknowledge other experience, sounds, etc. but keep preference on breath</li><li>• Emphasize Beginner’s Mind</li><li>• Cultivate curious attention</li></ul> <p>Try to integrate the key qualities of mindfulness - patience/kindness/letting be/letting go/non-judgment/acceptance etc.</p> |
| <b>1:40</b> | 10 Minutes | <p><b>Reflections and Questions</b></p> <p>Stress the normalcy of thinking/distractions/obstacles/difficulty focusing and the judging mind as well as other hindrances like sleepiness and restlessness and that we will be exploring these in later weeks</p>  |
| <b>1:50</b> | 10 Minutes | <p><b>Meditation and Daily Life - Home Practice</b></p> <p><b>Homework Assignment</b></p> <p><b>1. Daily Practice:</b> 10 minutes, using guided meditation resource if helpful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don’t try to “find time” every day. Build it into your day</li><li>• Try not to miss a day. Better to sit for a shorter time than miss a day</li></ul>  |



## Week 1

### Introduction and Overview of Mindfulness

### Detailed Agenda (continued)

**2. Mindfulness in Everyday Life:** Pick an activity to do mindfully everyday, e.g., brushing your teeth, washing dishes, showering, making coffee. Pay attention to your experience. How does your body feel? What are you thinking? What do you see? Hear? When you notice your attention has wandered, come back to your experience of the activity.

**2:00** End

**Optional Closing Poem**



## Week 2

# Mindfulness of Body

You can be present and embodied through mindfulness of body

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	25	Mindfulness of Breath & Body (5 minute Intro, 20 minute Practice)
0:40	10	Questions/Comments
0:50	10	Eating Meditation with Feedback
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Talk on Mindfulness of Body
1:25	5	Q&A
1:30	15	Body Scan or Mindful Walking
1:45	10	Discussion
1:55	5	Home Practice (Walking, Eating, Continuing Practice)
2:00	Close	



## Week 2

### Mindfulness of Body

# Detailed Agenda

<b>0:00</b>	15 Minutes	<b>5-Minute Sit, Questions/Feedback about Home Practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The meditation is simply an arriving/grounding/welcoming practice - orienting attention to breath and body</li><li>• Ask how practice went at home. Any reflections. Specific questions and challenges</li></ul>
<b>0:15</b>	25 Minutes	<b>Mindfulness of Breath and Body (5 minute Intro, 20 minute Practice)</b> <p>General orientation about importance of mindfulness of body.</p> <b>Explain mindfulness is an embodied/“in the body” meditation practice and that practice is shifting from concept to direct immediate experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminders of posture</li><li>• Importance of accepting/meeting body as it is</li><li>• Begin meditation by grounding attention to body posture</li><li>• Notice direct experience of sensations of sitting</li><li>• Shift to mindfulness of breath as primary object for a few minutes</li><li>• Then open attention to sensations of the body</li><li>• Feel, sense the variety of direct sensations - touching, pressure, heaviness, lightness, tingling, density, space, heat, coolness, itchiness</li><li>• Be mindful of sensations without trying to control, fix, change, etc.</li><li>• Noticing and allowing discomfort</li><li>• Explore Beginner’s Mind in relationship to the body - let go of idea/image</li><li>• Orient student to language of feeling/sensing rather than watching</li><li>• Remind about distractions and beginning again and again</li><li>• Acknowledge other experience, sounds etc. keep preference to body</li><li>• Being with body with care and kindness</li></ul>
<b>0:40</b>	10 Minutes	<b>Questions/Comments</b>
<b>0:50</b>	10 Minutes	<b>Eating Meditation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You can use raisins/M&amp;Ms/oranges</li><li>• Stress application of mindfulness to all moments/everyday activities</li><li>• Contextualize how much we are not present to eating/other activities</li><li>• Practice is the same, cultivating curiosity/connection to direct experience</li><li>• Can point out how mindfulness enhances capacity for joy/pleasure</li></ul>
<b>1:00</b>	10 Minutes	<b>Break</b>



Week 2  
Mindfulness of Body  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

- 1:10**    15 Minutes    **Talk on Mindfulness of Body**  
Choose 5 topics from the list below rather than speak to all of them.  
Possible talking points:
- Mindfulness of body as central to mindfulness practice
  - Most people not in their bodies – checked out/and in their heads.
  - Body is place where we can explore all experience/develop insight
  - Can we be aware of body in 4 postures/in all moments, experiences
  - Body is a source of information – emotion/intuition/sensing –  
For instance, tensing stomach before a meeting, tightening neck when something shocks us etc.
  - Body as ‘thing’, Vs. body as experience
  - Understand impermanent, unsatisfactory and selfless nature
  - Body image and its impact
  - Acceptance Vs. Judgment of the body
  - Requires we become okay with pleasant and unpleasant experience
  - Attitude/relationship to the body – desire/aversion/care/denial
  - Body as where emotions reside/are felt
  - Working with physical pain
  - Compassion for suffering/pain around the body
  - Difficulty of inhabiting the body due to unpleasant/traumatic experience
  - Mindfulness of body is a long-term practice
  - Becoming embodied gives a person a sense of groundedness/presence
- 1:25**    5 Minutes    **Q&A**
- 1:30**    15 Minutes    **Body Scan or Mindful Walking**
- Mindful Walking**
- Walking practice – Many beginners will find it easier to stay present while walking than sitting and some will find it harder/confusing as to where to focus
  - Stress the importance of experimenting with various practices and learning different qualities/skills from each
  - Even if a practice is difficult in the beginning, emphasize that sometimes it takes some time to become familiar with a new form/style of practice



## Week 2

### Mindfulness of Body

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

Walking meditation will depend on the space. You could walk around the room as a group in a circle or up and down in 'lanes' if there is room. Either way you can give instructions as people are walking. Alternatively you can have people walk outside if there is a space that is private and people can walk without feeling self-conscious.

### **Mindful Walking Instructions**

Emphasize walking and standing are excellent ways to integrate mindfulness into ordinary daily activity, and that they can be done at normal pace without anyone noticing they are 'meditating' - like at the office or on the street.

- Begin with guiding people into mindfulness of standing and a brief body scan
- Emphasize most of attention in walking practice is attuned to the body walking, feet stepping, legs moving rather than looking around
- Helpful to have eyes cast down
- Walk at pace that most supports mindfulness
- When attention wanders simply bring back to sensations of stepping
- Breath can be in the background, body sensations foreground
- Can use noting if helpful - "stepping, left, right" etc.
- Walking up and down allows a letting go of focusing on 'destination'
- Can make light - that it can look and feel strange to walk slower or mindfully
- Emphasize point - it's not about being serious, but being wakeful
- Encourage people to walk 'normally' though they can walk slowly if preferred

### **Alternative Practice – Mindful Body Scan**

It's fine to lead people in a body scan if that feels more appropriate to the group or there is nowhere to walk etc. Simply guide people's attention from the top of the head to the toes, down each arm, each leg etc. slowly, steadily.

It's helpful as the instructor that you are sensing/guiding your attention through your body as you guide the practice, so you can sense the timing of just how long is helpful/useful for each section of the body.

- Be careful not to go too quickly when guiding
- You may start and end with focusing on the breath



Week 2  
Mindfulness of Body  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

Give some pointers like:

- You may feel some sensation or no sensation in different areas
- Notice the touch of clothing/temperature/pressure/density etc.
- Be aware of the outer and inner experience of each part of the body
- Witness where there is an absence of sensation
- Sense areas of tension, tightness and openness
- Bring attention to the fluid nature of changing sensations
- Notice thoughts about what “should” or “shouldn’t” be happening
- Can you sense the body as an “experience” that we feel and sense
- Notice trying to change experience - can you just notice as it is
- Notice how body sensations happen by themselves - just like sound
- Noticing the tendency to try to control sensations of discomfort
- Remind people they are not looking to create any particular experience - just simply be with what is

**1:45** 10 Minutes

**Q&A**

This can be a very rich Q&A that explores the pros and cons for people of sitting versus walking. Some will prefer sitting over walking and vice versa. Stress the value of having a range of mindfulness of body practices to draw from, like walking, sitting, body-scan

**1:55** 5 Minutes

**Home Practice (Sitting, Walking, Eating, Practice)**

**Walking Meditation**

At least once a day, when you’re moving between two points (home to car, office to lunch, etc.) come fully into direct experience with physical sensations. Notice:

- Arms swaying through air
- Legs moving
- Feet connecting with the ground
- Belly sensations
- Hands
- Any other prominent physical sensations
- Notice when “narrative/thinking mind” starts
- Gently bring attention back to physical sensations



Week 2  
Mindfulness of Body  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

**Eating Meditation**

At least once in the coming week, eat part of your meal with full attention to physical sensations. If possible take a whole meal in silence or at least try 3 mindful bites. Try to observe:

- Smell, sight, and sound of food
- Sensations in your belly, mouth as you anticipate eating
- Feel of fork in your hand and movement of placing food on fork and in mouth
- The feel of each bite as you place it in your mouth and chew with awareness
- Swallowing sensation
- The urge to prepare the next mouthful before you've finished the first
- Notice the sensations in the whole body
- Notice when you get lost in thought and "eat mindlessly"
- Gently escort your attention back to the sensations of eating

**Sitting Practice**

- Continue with sitting meditation practice 10-15 minutes a day
- At least once, do a body scan meditation

2:00 Close

**Possible Poem/Reading**



## Week 3

# Mindfulness of Pleasure, Pain and the Challenges in Meditation

You can explore and reduce your reactivity to experience

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	10	Pleasure/Pain Talk
0:25	25	Meditation on Pleasure/Pain and Hearing
0:50	10	Questions/Feedback
1:00	10	Break
1:10	15	Talk on the 5 Obstacles to Meditation
1:25	10	Questions/Feedback
1:35	10	Mindful Listening in DIADS about Obstacles to Meditation
1:45	10	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Walking, Eating, Continuing Practice)
2:00	Close	



## Week 3

### Mindfulness of Pleasure/Pain/Hindrances

# Detailed Agenda

**0:00** 15 Minutes **5-Minute Sitting and Questions**

**0:15** 10 Minutes **Talk on Working with Pleasure & Pain**

Possible talking points:

Share this reading as it's a useful summary of how mindfulness practice can work in relation to pleasurable and painful stimuli:

*"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power and freedom to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness."* — Victor Frankl

Every experience has a corresponding feeling quality in the body that is either: Pleasurable • Painful (or Unpleasant) • Neutral.

#### **Experiential Practice**

- To invite a sense of playfulness and direct experience regarding the range of pleasurable and painful experience: For example, you can experiment ringing softly a nice sounding bell versus ringing it loudly, to evoke strong pleasurable and painful (or unpleasant) experiences
- Most of the time we're unaware of the feeling quality of experience
- We often react to the quality of experience unconsciously. We usually don't notice it, because our attention is not refined enough, or we're simply not paying attention
- The automatic responses to the three varieties of experience are as follows:
  - Pleasurable > Desire or Demand
  - Painful or Unpleasant > Aversion or Defend
  - Neutral > Spacing out or Distract
- You can speak to how the first 2 fundamental reactions to life experience are also part of the talk on the hindrances to meditation, which will be talked about later in the class.
- If we notice the quality of the experience, we can open up space before the reaction. We can fully inhabit the experience, name it, bring our attention to the physical experience of the body. By doing so, we have more potential to respond, rather than react to the stimulus
- Mindfulness helps us learn to notice the pleasurable or painful quality of experience, allowing choice in our response. This provides a level of freedom and non-reactivity in relationship to life



## Week 3

### Mindfulness of Pleasure/Pain/Hindrances

# Detailed Agenda (continued)

- 0:25**    25 Minutes    **Meditation on Pleasure, Pain and Sounds**
- Start with similar instructions from previous weeks on mindfulness of breath and mindfulness of body so there is a sense of the meditation building week to week, gradually including more aspects of experience like pleasure/pain.
- Then shift attention to Mindfulness of Sounds, to hearing as another object to pay attention to**
- Let go of images or ideas about the sound and be with the direct experience
  - Notice how mindful hearing cultivates a receptive quality of attention
  - Observe space and silence between sounds
  - This is a useful place to explore the varying changing quality of experience as there may be many pleasurable, painful, unpleasant or neutral sounds
- Guide people to sense or feel any experience of the pleasantness in the body**
- As you guide attention to posture, breath, body sensations, sounds, thoughts or emotions notice if there is any pleasurable or painful quality
  - Notice where that is felt in body/mind
  - **Important – notice your response/reaction/attitude/relationship towards the pleasurable/painful or neutral experience.**
  - Notice if pleasurable - is there simply liking/preference or grasping/holding on
  - If unpleasant is there resistance, reaction, hatred, fear, rejection
  - If neutral, is there boredom, disinterest, restlessness spacing out
  - Can they be observed with a non-reactive awareness
  - Notice their impermanent nature
- When nothing strong is calling the attention, you can always return to mindfulness of breath and body**
- 0:50**    10 Minutes    **Feedback and Questions**
- Contextualize that to be aware of pleasure/pain is subtle and that it can take some time for people to become aware of it
- 1:00**    10 Minutes    **Break**
- 1:10**    15 Minutes    **Talk on The 5 Common Obstacles in Meditation**  
(Or a talk on basic challenges in meditation).



Week 3  
Mindfulness of Pleasure/Pain/Hindrances  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

**What the common challenges are and how you deal with them?**

- Desire for pleasurable sensory experience
- Aversion/resistance
- Sleepiness/dullness
- Restlessness and worry
- Doubt/self-critical/judgemental thoughts

**Explore each challenges in meditation briefly: Select 1 or 2 examples for each obstacle**

- What it is
- How it is experienced generally and specifically in meditation/life
- What effect it has on meditation practice
- What causes it to arise/pass away
- How we may ordinarily react to it
- Useful antidotes to work with it
- With mindfulness, challenges in meditation can shift from being a problem to simply being the next object to be aware of. Thus we can discover freedom in relationship to the whatever challenges arise
- Your personal experience of working with the common meditation challenges
- Refer to sense desire and aversion as 2 fundamental orientations in human response to life
- Refer to restlessness and sloth as 2 primary energetic imbalances
- The challenge of doubt differs from a healthy, questioning mind
- You may want to stress a particular hindrance depending on what is happening in the group

**1:25** 10 Minutes

**Questions/Comments**

**1:35** 10 Minutes

**Mindful Listening: Theme - Exploring Challenges to Meditation**

**Introduce principle of mindful communication and in particular the importance of mindful listening and how rare and powerful that is**

- Remember that disclosing about one's meditation or experience could be uncomfortable for some people and always give an option that if they are not comfortable talking about the topic, they can talk about whatever else
- As this is the first mindful listening exercise, limit the time to 2-3 minutes per person talking as some people may feel uncomfortable in this format



Week 3  
Mindfulness of Pleasure/Pain/Hindrances  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

**Can give opt-out option for those that don't want to do exercise -  
i.e. journalling**

**Do the exercise in triads as it is less intense/intimidating than  
in pairs**

**In groups of 3, 3 minutes each to talk and listen in pairs. Partner A  
talks for 3 minutes, while Partners B & C listen. Then ring a bell and  
Partner B talks for 3 minutes. Then ring a bell and Partner C talks**

- **Speaker:** Answers/inquires into the following questions: What are your more common challenges in meditation and in life? What do you do when you notice them? What would be a more skilful way to work with them? How may mindfulness support working with them? What else supports you in working with challenges?
- **Listener:** Give your full attention to the person and what they are saying. Notice your tendency to tune out or jump into the conversation. You can demonstrate you are present, engaged and listening by your eye contact, nodding your head, body language etc., but try to avoid asking questions or re-directing the conversation. Simply listen without talking or interrupting

**1:45** 10 Minutes

**Questions/Comments**

Ask questions to the group about the exercise:

- How was it to talk without being interrupted?
- How did that allow you to inquire into the topic?
- How was it to listen without interrupting/not giving advice etc?

**1:55** 5 Minutes

**Home Practice – Exploring Pleasure/Pain**

- **Continue sitting practice:** Increase to 15-20 minutes a day. Pay attention to breath/body and the variety of pleasurable, painful or neutral experiences as well as to the challenges in meditation and in life
- **Add in additional practices** such as body scan or walking meditation

**2:00** Close

**Optional Reading**



*Mindfulness reveals the nature of our own mind, which is clear awareness, that is receptive, boundless and free.*

— Mark Coleman



## Week 4

# Mindfulness of Emotion

You can explore and develop more emotional intelligence

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	5 min. Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	25	Sitting – Mindfulness of Emotion (R.A.I.N)
0:40	10	Questions/Comments
0:50	10	Break
1:00	15	Talk – Working with Emotions with Understanding/Care
1:15	10	Questions/Feedback
1:25	15	Triad: Working with Emotion in Meditation /Life
1:40	15	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Mindfulness of Emotion/Triggers)
2:00	Close	



## Week 4

### Mindfulness of Emotion

# Detailed Agenda

- 0:00** 15 Minutes **Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice**
- 0:15** 25 Minutes **Sitting - Mindfulness of Emotion/R.A.I.N.**
- Introduce R.A.I.N. practice and a general explanation about how to work with emotion in mindfulness practice**
- Practice**
- Start with mindfulness of body and breath. Include awareness of hearing
  - Once grounded and settled, notice the coming and going of emotion
  - Notice where emotion/feelings are felt in the body
  - Don't go digging for emotion, simply notice what is present
  - Try to notice subtler states, calm, peace, ease, stillness, warmth, openness etc.
  - Apply R.A.I.N. principle
- R. Recognize.** Naming the emotion when present.
- A. Allow.** Accept and welcome the emotion with kind, curious attention
- I. Investigate.** Kindly, with interest. Shift from ideas and thoughts about the emotion to direct experience – i.e. how/where is emotion is felt in the body? What caused it to arise? Pass? What is your attitude/ reaction/response to the emotion, etc?
- N. Not personal.** Notice any self-identification with it - “this is my sadness”, “I’m a sad person”. Can you see how emotions arise out of conditions, impersonal, impermanent etc. N can also be Nourish with Kindness
- Bring kind, curious attention to the emotion particularly if difficult or painful
  - If the emotion is too strong, too intense, too hard to be with, move to somewhere that is neutral/not triggering
  - When there is no emotion present, shift attention back to breath and body
  - Throughout the meditation gently ask yourself and inquire: “What am I feeling now?”



Week 4  
Mindfulness of Emotion  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

**You can alternatively use the 3Cs as a guideline for working with emotion**

- **Contact:** Let go of simply thinking about the emotion and make direct contact with the physical sensations in the body that are triggers
- **Curiosity:** What's actually happening here? Investigate the sensations of the emotional experience
- **Care:** Holding it in awareness with kindness and gentleness

**0:40** 10 Minutes

**Q&A Regarding Working with Emotion Particularly**

**0:50** 10 Minutes

**Break**

**1:00** 15 Minutes

**Working with emotions with understanding and care**

**Choose 2-3 of these possible themes to include in your talk:**

- Working with emotions is an important part of mindfulness practice
- Mostly we think about/analyse our emotions rather than feel them
- Notice the tendency to try to resist, analyse or problem-solve an emotion
- Mindfulness orientation is to feel/sense/know emotions in the body
- Understand your attitude/reaction/relationship to emotion/ judgment – i.e. notice aversion, suppression, fear toward the emotions, etc.
- Understand conditioned nature of emotions – how they arise out of causes
- Mindfulness is the middle way between acting out and suppressing emotion
- Review R.A.I.N. principle
- Watch for tendency to disassociate from difficult emotion
- Notice avoidance of unpleasant emotion and the attachment to pleasant emotion
- When difficult emotions are present, try to feel and acknowledge their suffering nature – which can allow care/compassion to arise
- Importance of developing kindness/compassion with difficult emotions
- Mindfulness of our own emotion grows empathy and compassion for others
- See universal nature of emotion/human experience
- Mindfulness allows freedom in relationship to any emotion
- Understand impermanent nature of all emotion



Week 4  
Mindfulness of Emotion  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

**Teacher Note:** Depending on your student population, you may also choose to draw material from the section at the end of the guide that refers to working with more difficult emotion/triggers etc.

**1:15** 10 Minutes

**Q&A**

**1:25** 15 Minutes

**Mindful Listening: Exploring your Relationship to Emotion**

**Remind them about the principles of mindful communication and in particular the importance of mindful listening and how rare and powerful that is**

- Remember that disclosing about one's meditation or experience could be uncomfortable for some people and always give an option that if they are not comfortable talking about the topic, they can talk about whatever else they like

**In triads, 3 minutes each to talk while the others listen. Partner A talks for 3 minutes, while Partners B and C listen. Then ring a bell and switch roles**

- **Speaker:** Answers/inquires into the following questions: What are your more common emotions in meditation and in life? What do you do when you notice them? How do you work with them? Do you ignore, suppress, act out, get curious, meet with kindness and awareness, inquire into them etc? How may mindfulness support working with them? What else supports you in working with emotions?
- **Listener:** Give your full attention to the person and what they are saying Notice your tendency to tune out or jump into the conversation. You can demonstrate you are present, engaged and listening by your eye contact, nodding your head, body language etc., but try to avoid asking questions or re-directing the conversation. Simply listen without talking or interrupting

**1:40** 15 Minutes

**Questions/Comments**

- Ask how it was to talk without being interrupted. How did that allow you to inquire into the topic?
- How was it to listen without interrupting?
- Ask students questions about working with emotions and how they are challenged working with particular emotions



Week 4  
Mindfulness of Emotion  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

- |             |           |   |
|-------------|-----------|---|
| <b>1:55</b> | 5 Minutes | <b>Home Practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Continue sitting practice:</b> 20-25 minutes a day. Pay special attention to emotions and use the RAIN practice</li></ul> |
| <b>2:00</b> | Close     | <b>Optional Reading/Poem</b><br>(Suggestion: The Guest House by Rumi)   |



*Trust in the goodness of your practice,  
as the heart and the ground of  
teaching others. It is the way your  
own heart has been transformed  
which will be most impactful for  
those who learn from you.*

*— Martin Aylward*



## Week 5

# Mindfulness of Thought and Mental Processes

You can develop a wise relationship to thoughts and diminish self-judgment

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	15	Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:15	15	Talk – Working with Thinking in Meditation
0:30	25	Mindfulness of Thought/Mental Processes
0:55	10	Questions/Feedback
1:05	10	Break
1:15	15	Talk – Working with Negative Thought Patterns: Self-judgment/Negativity Bias/Views
1:30	15	Mindful Listening Exercise – DIAD on Inner Critic/Negativity Bias
1:45	10	Questions/Comments
1:55	5	Home Practice (Working with Thoughts/Views/Judgment)
2:00	Close	



## Week 5

### Mindfulness of Thought and Mental Processes

# Detailed Agenda

- 0:00** 15 Minutes **Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice**
- 0:15** 15 Minutes **Intro Talk on Working with Thinking in Meditation**
- Contextualize practice of working with thoughts**
- Thoughts are natural/useful processes. We need thinking, planning etc. in our life
  - The challenge is we are lost in thought at the expense of being in the present moment
  - The mind tends to ruminate on negative experience causing stress and pain
  - We can't stop thoughts, but we can develop a wiser relationship to our thoughts
  - Practice is not stopping thoughts but to be mindful when thinking happens
  - We think 15-65,000 thoughts a day
  - Thoughts not a problem – simply need to be aware of them, work with them skilfully
  - Mindfulness illuminates mental/thinking habits.
  - Mostly we are lost/consumed in thought in our life - in 'auto-pilot' mode
  - With mindfulness we can find clarity and understanding in relation to thinking
  - We can discover the impersonal nature of thought through practice
  - We can use thoughts skilfully:  
i.e. labelling, noting, recognizing experience
- 0:30** 25 Minutes **Mindfulness of Thought/Mental Processes Meditation**
- Start with grounding in body/awareness of body sensation
  - Rest in awareness of breath as anchor for attention
  - Open to awareness of sounds
  - Include awareness of emotions/mind states
  - Notice how emotions are felt in the body
  - Notice hindrances: clinging, aversion, tiredness, restless, doubt/criticism
  - Notice you can become aware of thoughts as another object in meditation
  - Notice difference between being lost in thought and being aware of thinking



## Week 5

### Mindfulness of Thought and Mental Processes

#### Detailed Agenda (continued)

- Observe your patterns of thought
  - Past, present, future thoughts
  - Associative/proliferation of thought
  - Types of thoughts: planning, rehearsing, judging, analysing, worrying etc.
- Use labelling/noting the types of thought if helpful
- Practice the **3 Rs: Recognize, Release, Return** i.e. Note the thought, let it go, come back to breath/body/sensory field
- See how thought of your mother is not your mother, just a thought
- Notice how thoughts often dissolve when awareness shines light on them
- Notice the relationship between thought and emotion, how each trigger the other
- Understand transient, impersonal nature of thoughts - you are not your thoughts
- No matter how lost, takes only a moment to return to awareness

**0:55** 10 Minutes

#### **Q&A**

##### **Some kinds of questions to ask after the meditation:**

- What got in the way of paying attention? What came up?  
Where did your mind go? How was it to be mindful of thought?
- We sat here and told our minds to focus. But what happened?  
Did we ask for all those thoughts to come up - or did they come and go all by themselves?
- Did our minds do what we told them to do? What came up?  
Ruminations of past/worry about future. Thoughts related to an idea of who we are - self-oriented thoughts?
- Did you notice commentary or critical thoughts about your practice?

##### **Additional comments about mindfulness of thought:**

- The thinking mind is a powerful tool that can help us. But it can also be a distraction from focus and being present. We ask the mind to settle on one thing - the breath in this case, but it might be a specific task in daily life. And what happens... thoughts arise that disturb our ability to stay focused
- By holding thoughts in awareness, we can recognize repeating patterns of thought and notice when they're helpful and when they're not



## Week 5

### Mindfulness of Thought and Mental Processes

#### Detailed Agenda (continued)

- This opens up a space to make better decisions about when to employ the analytical thinking mind, and when to let thought go and be with your direct experience
- We can cultivate positive habits of thinking - like gratitude, kindness and appreciation

**1:05** 10 Minutes

#### **Break**

**1:15** 15 Minutes

#### **Talk - Working with Judging Mind and Unhelpful Thought Patterns**

You can talk here in general about painful thought patterns in general or as laid out here, you can speak about The Inner Critic.

- One of the greatest obstacles to well-being and joy
- The voice in our head tells us “You are not enough! It is not okay to be human. It is not okay to be feeling the way you do.”
- Our inner critic manifests through our thoughts and has impact on our physical/emotional/energetic experience
- We let the critic go on and on because we agree with it. Even if something is true, it doesn’t mean we have to let the critic beat us up about it over and over
- One way to practice working with the critic-is to be mindful of its presence and learning to dismiss or ignore it

#### **Ways to counter the critic:**

- Noticing pervasiveness of judging of self and others
- Notice when we are talking to self with cruelty
- Offer indifferent statements like: “thank you for your opinion”, or “not now”
- Offering yourself some kindness
- Explore the emotion behind the critic: drop into physical experience
- Fierce compassion: “that’s enough” “I’m not going to go there”
- Humour - seeing the humour of the critic’s relentless negativity
- Writing down your top 10 judgments/challenging their truthfulness
- Talk about your own experience of working with your critic or helping others with theirs in or out of meditation
- For some people, their thoughts tend more towards inflation, self-aggrandizing, arrogance, rather than doubt or self-diminishment. It’s important to be aware of whichever way the mind’s tendency goes



Week 5  
Mindfulness of Thought and Mental Processes  
**Detailed Agenda** (continued)

<b>1:30</b>	15 Minutes	<b>DIAD on Inner Critic/Negativity Bias/Thinking in General</b> Groups of 2. People take turns for 3 minutes to practice mindful listening and talking. <b>Theme/Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Option 1 - What thoughts are challenging to work with in meditation/life?</li><li>• Option 2 - How do you notice the critic and how does it impact you?</li><li>• Option 3 - What would be a skilful way to work with your thoughts/what supports do you need to work with them in meditation/life?</li></ul>
<b>1:45</b>	10 Minutes	<b>Q&amp;A on Working with the Critic or Thinking in General</b>
<b>1:55</b>	5 Minutes	<b>Homework - Working with Thoughts/Views/Judgment</b> <b>Continue sitting practice: 10-20 minutes a day</b> Pay special attention to thoughts and the inner critic that arise during practice
<b>2:00</b>	Close	<b>Optional Reading</b>



*Mindfulness... helps develop a capacity to stand in the midst of challenging experience and develop the skill to bear witness to that truth. By staying in the present moment and not being driven by anticipatory thoughts of future pain, we have more resources to deal with any difficulty.*

— Mark Coleman



## Week 6

# Cultivating Kindness/ Taking the Practice Home

You can open awareness to all experience and develop a loving heart

### Overview

TIME	MINUTES	TOPIC
0:00	10	Sitting and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice
0:10	30	Review of all Instructions and Choiceless Awareness
0:40	10	Questions/Feedback
0:50	10	Break
1:00	10	Talk – Loving Kindness
1:10	15	Loving Kindness Meditation
1:25	15	Continuing Practice - Reflection
1:40	10	Mindful Listening Exercise – DIAD on Taking the Practice Into Your Life
1:50	5	Resources
1:55	5	Closing Circle
2:00	Close	



## Week 6

### Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home

## Detailed Agenda

**0:00** 10 Minutes **Short Sit and Questions/Feedback about Home Practice**

**0:10** 30 Minutes **Review of all Instructions/Open Awareness**

#### **Review of the course:**

- **W1:** You can train attention and focus with mindfulness practice
- **W2:** You can be present and embodied through mindfulness of the body
- **W3:** You can explore pleasure/pain and reduce reactivity to experience
- **W4:** You can explore emotions and develop more emotional intelligence
- **W5:** You can become more aware of thoughts and diminish self-judgment
- **W6:** You can open awareness to all experience and develop a loving heart

#### **Meditation - Open/Choiceless Awareness**

Open awareness means cultivating an attention that is as spacious and inclusive as the sky. You can learn to see new thoughts, sounds, sensations, emotions and other phenomena as clouds passing through the sky of awareness, rather than seeing them as distractions.

Open awareness allows you to notice breath, sounds, body sensations, pleasure/pain, mind states, emotions, thoughts, sights, tastes and smells all coming and going within the field of awareness while noticing the constant changing flow of experience.

Begin the meditation with hearing. With listening, one cultivates an open, spacious receptive quality of awareness that is conducive for open awareness.

- Notice sounds and the space and silence between sounds
- Let go of thinking about the source of the sound

Then guide people to various other aspects of their experience that we have already covered in class:

- Body Sensations/Breath/Pleasure/Pain/Emotions/Thoughts
- Hindrances/Obstacles
- Notice how they are all coming and going in awareness



## Week 6

### Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

Observe how everything can be included in awareness

- Occasionally have them notice the quality of awareness itself - this capacity to know clearly one's experience
- If this style of practice leads to being spaced out or thinking then one can always return to the simplicity of mindfulness of breath and body as a support for attention and grounding in the present, sensory moment

**0:40** 10 Minutes

**Q&A**

**0:50** 10 Minutes

**Break**

**1:00** 10 Minutes

**Loving Kindness (LK) Talk**

Possible talking points: Choose only 3-5 points to focus on.

- Talk about your experience of LK practice
- Define what loving kindness is
- Capacity for boundless care/to love without conditions
- LK can transform negative mind states in any moment
- Love is innate yet to cultivate love is a practice
- Loving kindness as an attitude we bring to each moment/person
- Important to infuse LK into mindfulness and vice versa
- LK and mindfulness share so many qualities - presence, acceptance, allowing etc.
- LK begins at home - how we meet each moment in ourselves with kindness
- Often hardest place to be kind is with ourselves
- LK is accepting our humanness
- LK practice may trigger all the ways we are not kind to ourselves
- Is a powerful counter point to the critic
- Proximate cause for LK to arise is seeing the goodness in self or others
- Near 'enemy' = love with strings/attachment
- Far enemy/obstacle = hatred/aversion
- Just as with mindfulness, we can be very far from kindness, but only takes a moment to return
- LK practice is portable - just saying one phrase can recall it - can do "stealth" LK practice
- LK is not about being nice, or liking people you don't, but to simply offer kindness to all



## Week 6

### Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

- LK can radically change negative/fearful reactivity to others
- Forgiveness practice can be a support for LK
- LK helps develop empathy, compassion and resilience
- For excellent research references on the value of LK go to: [www.emmaseppala.com/18-science-based-reasons-try-loving-kindness-meditation-today/](http://www.emmaseppala.com/18-science-based-reasons-try-loving-kindness-meditation-today/)

**1:10** 15 Minutes

#### **Loving Kindness (LK) Meditation**

This is a very simple, short practice designed to cultivate kindness and friendliness.

One way to practice or cultivate loving kindness is to repeat a series of phrases that express our deepest aspiration for the well being of ourselves and others while cultivating a sense of warmth or kindness in our hearts.

Explain that you will repeat 3-4 phrases that express kindness and that they can use these phrases or adapt the as necessary.

- Encourage them to rest attention in the meaning and sense of the phrases
- Come back to the phrase when attention wanders
- If negative or difficult emotional reactions happen you can always come back to the breath or self-compassion/kindness for oneself if it gets too difficult
- Remember we are not looking for specific feelings - just to generate the wish intention for others and ourselves to be happy and peaceful
- And remember - it's a practice - particularly with bringing love to ourselves which for many is the hardest part of the practice

LK practice is a purification practice in that it brings up all our obstacles to love.

- Remind them they don't have to like the person they are wishing kindness towards, that the practice is simply acknowledging our shared humanness and people's inherent desire to be happy
- Can encourage them to be creative with the practice - to do whatever works to allow them to connect with kindness
- You can instruct people to place hand on heart if it helps, or imagine themselves as a young child as a way to connect to themselves with care
- Begin by feeling breath in chest/heart area



## Week 6

### Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

- Starting with kindness towards ourselves and allow the longest time for this section
- Say the phrases a few times slowly
- Ask them to repeat the phrases to themselves, slowly, meaningfully

Then extend warmth/friendliness/phrases to:

- A loved one/dear friend
- People in the room
- Friends/family (whether you have an easy or difficult relationship)

Alternative expanding circles for example:

- Those we know
- Those we don't know
- Those we have difficulty with
- All peoples/creatures everywhere

If there is time take some comments/questions. Limit the discussion to 5 minutes if you wish to have enough time to talk about next steps/taking the practice home as outlined.

**1:25** 15 Minutes

#### **Continuing Practice Reflections**

Points on Continuing your Practice.

- Try to practice short moments of mindfulness, many times in the day
- Mindfulness is not trying to achieve a specific state, getting rid of thoughts, emotions, etc. but to be present to what is
- Set intention for a daily sitting practice
- Have patience with your practice
- Find a group of like-minded people to practice with
- Consider period of longer practice - day long/retreat
- You can always begin again in any moment no matter how far you get lost
- Stay inspired - inspiration supports you to practice - so know what inspires you - study, contact with teachers/teachings etc.

**1:40** 10 Minutes

#### **DIAD - Taking the Practice Into Your Life**

In pairs - each person talks for 2-3 minutes

- How do I plan to keep practice going in my life?
- How will I ensure my practice continues?
- What supports do I need to make that happen?



## Week 6

### Cultivating Kindness/Taking the Practice Home

## Detailed Agenda (continued)

**1:50** 5 Minutes

#### **Resources**

**Insight Timer** - [www.insighttimer.com](http://www.insighttimer.com)

**Whil** - [www.whil.com](http://www.whil.com)

Online meditation platform that features hundreds of guided 10-20 minute mindfulness meditations, including 80+ from Mark Coleman.

**Dharma Seed** - [www.dharmaseed.org](http://www.dharmaseed.org)

For talks and meditation guidance.

**Headspace** - [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)

#### **Cultivating a Mindful Life**

Day long and follow-up courses, one-to-one sessions and residential retreats.

**1:55** 5 Minutes

#### **Closing Circle**

For example you could go round and people could say one or two words about what they are taking away from the course.

**2:00** Close



Addendum  
**STOP Practice**



## Addendum

### Clinical Environments and Emotional Triggers

# STOP Practice

For those working in a clinical environment or who wish to talk about emotional triggers and practices to work with them, here is a 20-30 minute section on working with triggers/using the S.T.O.P. practice as a support.

- 10 Minutes

#### **Talk - Working with More Difficult Emotion/Triggers**

Introduction to understanding activation and flight/fight/freeze response.

#### **Emotional triggers - can lead to 'fight or flight or freeze' response**

- e.g. discussion with partner-triggers: hurt, embarrassment, anger, etc.
- e.g. criticism at work-triggers: anger, shame, etc.
- e.g. being in a physically threatening situation
- e.g. being late for a meeting and stuck in traffic
- e.g. losing money in investments, job loss, etc.
- e.g. overwhelming work load

#### **When we are triggered**

- It can be hard to respond in a skilful way - partly because our rational/thinking areas of the brain are less accessible when we are activated
- Can contribute to escalating conflict as we speak or act out of a reactive mind state
- Long term triggers/stress can be a cause of physical health issues
- Generally don't feel the emotion, we go straight to the narrative/story
- We tend to go to blame, collapse as a way of not feeling difficult emotion
- Mindfulness practice leads to greater emotional resilience/skilfulness by cultivating ability to recognize, allow, feel and be with difficult emotions and "ride the waves"
- Mindfulness builds emotional resilience: the ability to grow one's capacity to adapt to stressful situations or crises.
- More resilient people are able to adapt to adversity/stress more easily
- Less resilient people have a harder time with stress and difficulty and emotional charge



## Addendum

### Clinical Environments and Emotional Triggers

# STOP Practice (continued)

- 10 Minutes **Grounding Practices - S.T.O.P. and Pause, Reflect, Respond**

Introduction to understanding activation and flight/fight/freeze response.

  - Guided meditation walking people through S.T.O.P. practice
  - Have people call to mind a time when they were recently triggered, upset, reactive, fearful, angry, hurt, etc.
  - Guide them for one minute to really try to feel and re-experience what happened so that the feelings are present. (Make sure people don't use too traumatic or difficult an experience)

Then guide people to walk through these steps in the meditation:

  - **Stop:** Which is taking a pause
  - **Take** 3-5 slower breaths, feel relaxation on the exhale
  - **Observe** your experience - What is happening? Why the reactivity? What are the causes of being triggered? Notice thoughts, emotions, body sensations, stories, judgments, etc.
  - **Proceed:** Which may mean not doing or saying something or taking a 'time out'. Try to proceed in a way that will allow a positive outcome for all.

At the end of the meditation, direct the attention back to the breath and body and try to release thoughts around the triggered experience



*There is no wrong experience.  
No thought you shouldn't have,  
no feeling that shouldn't arise.  
When you meet experience like this,  
everything is welcome; your heart  
is wide open, and free.*

— Martin Aylward



## Considerations

# Teaching the SIT Course



## Considerations Teaching the SIT Course Physical Space

### **Creating An Appropriate Learning Environment for Your Students**

Before your first class, consider the following as they pertain to where you'll be teaching:

#### **Lighting**

Is there enough? Is it glaring fluorescent? Don't sit in silhouette in front of a bright window however nice the view is!

#### **Room temperature**

Are there fans or noisy AC? Is there AC if it gets too hot or adequate heating if cold? With windows open is there too much outside noise?

#### **Seating**

Are there Zafus? Chairs? Both? Is there space to lie down if needed?

#### **Presentation setup/needs**

Will you need a whiteboard and other supplies? Is the stage/speaking area cluttered? Is there a suitable backdrop behind teacher's seat? Are there problematic religious associations - crucifixes etc?

#### **Fragrances**

Many students have chemical sensitivities; will your class be fragrance-free? Will you notify them in advance about this?

#### **Physical location of the class**

Is the neighbourhood white/upper class? Can the class be easily accessed by public transport? Is there much parking nearby? Is the neighbourhood safe for people?

#### **Time of day**

Be aware of sleepy post-lunchtime classes, or classes that might coincide with rush-hour traffic or holidays.

#### **Size of the room relative to your class size**

Is the space too small or too large for the number of students you'll have?

#### **Bathrooms**

Are there adequate bathrooms for the number of students? Are gender-neutral bathrooms available?

#### **Facilities**

Are there tea-making facilities if you like to offer that? Is there a private room you can use to prepare/meet with people?



## Considerations Teaching the SIT Course Starting the Group

In order to set an appropriate tone for all classes going forward, consider covering some of the following areas with your students on day one:

### **Welcoming everyone**

Make it clear that this class is for people from all ethnicities/class/gender orientation.

### **Check-in**

i.e. Go around and have everyone say their name, where they are from and perhaps what inspired them to take the class.

### **Knowing who is there in group**

Get an understanding of the different levels of practice, life experience, cultural backgrounds, etc.

### **DIADS**

Explain what they are and why you'll use them – how they are both a support for mindful inquiry and creating community.

An initial diad can be a way to connect with one other person to feel comfortable being in an unfamiliar group.

### **Unintentional areas of omission**

Encouragement to people to bring forth issues that aren't being seen or addressed by the teacher (inc. race, disability access, class cost etc.).

### **Defining**

What Mindfulness is and isn't/what it can and can't do.

## Class Agreements and Management

### **Establishing the Class Container**

To create an appropriate container for the class, it requires you to establish these ground rules and agreements:

#### **Punctuality**

Ask people to come on time and stay to the end.

#### **Confidentiality**

You will keep their responses confidential and the rest of the class should agree to do so with one another as well.

#### **Keeping within the schedule**

You will need to be comfortable ending discussions to keep on schedule.

#### **Set the ground rules**

You are the teacher and that cross-talk/advice giving to others unless requested is not encouraged.

### **State the overview for the class**

When breaks happen, for how long?  
How will you re-group after the break?  
Explain bell ringing.

### **In between practice**

Will you provide homework suggestions or assignments? Instituting a buddy system early on can encourage practice.

### **Silence**

How much silence Vs. interaction in the class? Will there be silence during breaks?

### **Budgeting your time**

Being mindful of timekeeping to divide your time between meditation, instructions, talks, Q&A, inquiry, etc.



## Considerations Teaching the SIT Course **Teacher Identity Issues**

### **Taking the Seat of Teacher**

When taking the teaching seat, one should bring some awareness to the following areas:

**As teacher, are you attempting to please the crowd or seek approval?**

### **Teacher projections**

Be mindful that students will inevitably project onto you, regardless of whether you think you are worthy of it.

### **The seat**

What sort of seat will you take? Be aware of the different perceptions if teacher is on chair or cushion.

**How will you handle meditation experiences beyond your depth?**

### **Buddhist questions**

Is your course strictly mindfulness? Or are you comfortable responding to questions specific to Buddhism?

### **Topicality**

Keeping your teachings fresh; will you incorporate current affairs?

### **Know your teacher bias**

Is your teaching more cognitive, poetic/evocative, pragmatic, idealistic, ordinary, conversational, inspiring, friendly, etc?

## **Challenging Students**

### **What is the Appropriate Response?**

Consider the following types of challenges presented by students:

#### **Cynics/critical students**

How best to handle a student whose cynicism threatens to derail the class?

#### **People who don't talk at all**

How best to understand them and welcome their contribution?

#### **Naming and normalizing resistance, boredom, doubt (hindrances)**

#### **Trauma that arises for students**

Are you prepared to help de-escalate, ground and create a safe space for them?

### **Students who don't return to class**

#### **Students who leave during a class**

#### **Diversity/inclusivity/cultural sensitivity**

Find simple ways to introduce inclusivity and sensitivity: gendered bathrooms, quotes from diverse sources etc.

#### **Different meditation objects**

Considerations for those for whom breath isn't a good object.



## Considerations Teaching the SIT Course **Miscellaneous**

### **Money issues/price points**

How much will you charge and are scholarships available?

### **Movement**

To include movement or not?

### **Pre-screening forms**

Will you use them?

### **Post course evaluations**

Remember to administer them, ideally in class?

### **We highly encourage you to administer the Pre-Post Research Questionnaire**

### **Assistants**

Do you have someone to help clean up/set up room etc?

### **Will you record the meditations/talks?**

### **Will you distribute to students?**



*The core intention of mindfulness is to use the clarity of awareness to help ourselves and others find genuine freedom from suffering and to live with a kind responsiveness to life.*

— Mark Coleman



SIT Course

# 3-Page Outline



## SIT Mindfulness Course

### 3-Page Outline

# Week 1 - 2

## 1: Overview and Breath

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<b>Breath</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sounds</li> <li>• Posture</li> <li>• Gentleness of attention</li> </ul>	<b>What is Mindfulness?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History, context, overview</li> <li>• Concentration/mindful attention: undoing misconceptions</li> <li>• Meditation as Training</li> <li>• Willingness to begin again and again</li> <li>• Naturalness of wandering mind</li> <li>• Kind attention/self judgement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness of Breath</li> <li>• Mindfulness with one everyday activity</li> <li>• Noting their reflections</li> <li>• Daily short sit</li> </ul>

Not too much info in first week. More important to reassure, ground them in the practice and have a few clear instructions, than to try and have them understand everything at once!

## 2: Bodily Experience

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<b>Body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain, discomfort</li> <li>• Meditation Postures</li> <li>• Mindful Eating exc.</li> <li>• Mindful Walking</li> </ul>	<b>Mindfulness of the Body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posture: 4 points and qualities</li> <li>• Working with discomfort/ pain-gentle holding</li> <li>• Body as 'thing', body as experience</li> <li>• 3 characteristics of experience</li> <li>• Body image: Self compassion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness of Breath/Body</li> <li>• Intention to relax</li> <li>• Mindful eating - formal practice of taking a silent, mindful meal</li> <li>• Daily short sit</li> </ul>

Bodily awareness is the foundation of all mindfulness practice. These first two weeks are mostly about supporting this foundation, grounding people in the practice.



SIT Mindfulness Course  
 3-Page Outline  
**Week 3 - 4**

**3: Affective Experience: Working with Pleasure/Pain and Obstacles**

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<b>Pleasure/Pain:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breath</li> <li>• Body</li> <li>• Affect</li> <li>• Meditation with pleasant and unpleasant bell sounds</li> </ul>	<b>Affective Quality of Experience:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not inherent, not permanent etc.</li> <li>• Mindfulness of Pleasure and Pain</li> <li>• Working with reactivity: from reaction to response</li> </ul> <b>Working with Meditation Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 “Meditation Challenges”</li> </ul>	<b>Mindfulness of Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where and how do they arise in your life?</li> </ul> <b>Reactivity/Response</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you meet the various flavours of experience?</li> <li>• Daily sit</li> </ul>

This aspect of experience is hard for people to grasp. Helpful for Q&A after meditation to make clear the Mindfulness of the affective quality of experience. Best to use examples of pleasure/pain.

**4: Mental-Emotional Experience**

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<b>Emotions and Mind States</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditation on states, naming of states at end of meditation</li> </ul>	<b>Work with Difficult Emotions:</b> <b>Skilful Means:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of state from story</li> <li>• Embodiment and Grounding</li> <li>• Contact, Curiosity, Care</li> <li>• R.A.I.N.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness of Emotions/ States of mind</li> <li>• Mindful of emotional reactivity</li> <li>• Daily sit</li> </ul>

Mindfulness of Mind has 3 important aims: Cultivating wholesome states, abandoning unwholesome states, dis-identifying from (non-clinging to) all states.



SIT Mindfulness Course  
 3-Page Outline  
**Week 5 - 6**

**5: Thoughts/Mental-Experience**

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<b>Thoughts:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proliferation, concepts, judging and comparing.</li> <li>• RRRR: Rest, Recognize, Release, Return</li> </ul>	<b>Mindfulness of Mind</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts, views, proliferation</li> <li>• 3 types of thought: Junk, Obsessive and Judgemental</li> <li>• Noting</li> <li>• Content/Process</li> <li>• Skilfully directing the mind</li> </ul>	<b>Mindfulness of Thoughts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letting go of content</li> <li>• Seeing and allowing the fluid nature of thought.</li> <li>• Cultivating the wholesome.</li> <li>• Daily sit</li> </ul>

Despite whatever you may have already said, people tend to view thoughts as the enemy. You are helping people to free themselves from the two traps of thought: believing in them as true, or fighting against them as false.

**6: Open Awareness, Loving Kindness, Course Review**

MEDITATION OBJECT	TEACHING THEME	HOME PRACTICE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Awareness</li> <li>• <b>Loving Kindness</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Loving Kindness</b></li> <li>• Class Review</li> <li>• Formal and informal daily practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily life practice: formal and informal</li> <li>• Gentleness, Patience</li> <li>• Daily sit</li> </ul>



SIT Course

# Support Documents



## SIT Mindfulness Course Research Consent to Participate

### **Efficacy of Six-week Introductory Training (SIT) in Mindfulness**

**Investigator** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Description**

The purpose of this study is to measure the efficacy of the SIT Mindfulness course for managing stress and increasing emotional awareness. Mindfulness practices have been shown to be useful in these areas. The current study will measure SIT students' stress and emotional awareness before, during and after the six-week course.

### **Risks and Benefits**

Mindfulness practices have been shown to be beneficial in managing the symptoms of stress, improving attention and memory, and supporting the experience of positive emotions. Mindfulness practices may result in minor discomfort from closing eyes, slow physical movements, and focusing on breath/body sensations. Also, talking about stressors may evoke physical and emotional discomfort.

### **Time Commitment and Payment**

All research for this study will take place within the SIT course. There is no additional time commitment and no payment for participating in the study.

### **Confidentiality**

Your survey responses will be collated by randomly assigned numerical IDs, not by your name. I do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information. This informed consent will not be kept with any of the documents completed for this project. No names will be used in the reporting of results.

### **Right to Withdraw**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at that time without consequence.

### **Statement of Consent**

By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, Efficacy of the Six-week Introductory Training in Mindfulness.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## SIT Mindfulness Course

### Research Scales

# Day-to-Day Experiences

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience.

Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

Treat each item separately from every other item.

- 1 - Almost Always**
- 2 - Very Frequently**
- 3 - Somewhat Frequently**
- 4 - Somewhat Infrequently**
- 5 - Very Infrequently**
- 6 - Almost Never**

1 - 6

1. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later	
2. I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else	
3. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present	
4. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way	
5. I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention	
6. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time	
7. It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing	
8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them	
9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there	
10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing	
11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time	
12. I drive to places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there	
13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past	
14. I find myself doing things without paying attention	
15. I snack without being aware of what I'm eating	



## SIT Mindfulness Course

### Research Scales

# Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

- 0 - Never**
- 1 - Almost Never**
- 2 - Sometimes**
- 3 - Fairly Often**
- 4 - Very Often**

0 - 4

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the irritations in your life?	
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	



## SIT Mindfulness Course

### Research Scales

# Emotional Regulation Scale

We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional life, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave.

Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways.

- 1 - Strongly Agree**
- 2 - Agree**
- 3 - Partially Agree**
- 4 - Neutral**
- 5 - Partially Disagree**
- 6 - Disagree**
- 7 - Strongly Disagree**

1 - 7

1. When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about	
2. I keep my emotions to myself	
3. When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about	
4. When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them	
5. When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm	
6. I control my emotions by not expressing them	
7. When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation	
8. I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in	
9. When I'm feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them	
10. When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation	



## SIT Mindfulness Course

### Research Scales

# Distress Tolerance Scale

Think of times that you feel distressed or upset. Select the item from the menu that best describes your beliefs about feeling distressed or upset.

- 1 - Strongly Agree
- 2 - Mildly Agree
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Mildly Disagree
- 5 - Strongly Disagree

1 - 5

1. Feeling distressed or upset is unbearable to me	
2. When I feel distressed or upset, all I can think about is how bad I feel	
3. I can't handle feeling distressed or upset	
4. My feelings of distress are so intense that they completely take over	
5. There's nothing worse than feeling distressed or upset	
6. I can tolerate being distressed or upset as well as most people	
7. My feelings of distress or being upset are not acceptable	
8. I'll do anything to avoid feeling distressed or upset	
9. Other people seem to be able to tolerate feeling distressed or upset better than I can	
10. Being distressed or upset is always a major ordeal for me	
11. I am ashamed of myself when I feel distressed or upset	
12. My feelings of distress or being upset scare me	
13. I'll do anything to stop feeling distressed or upset	
14. When I feel distressed or upset, I must do something about it immediately	
15. When I feel distressed or upset, I cannot help but concentrate on how bad the distress actually feels	



SIT Mindfulness Course  
The Fundamentals of Mindful Attention  
**Notes**



SIT Mindfulness Course  
The Fundamentals of Mindful Attention  
**Notes**



SIT Mindfulness Course  
The Fundamentals of Mindful Attention  
**Notes**



*We do not find the end of mindfulness.  
Consciousness and experience  
are limitless. Mindfulness practice  
is growing our understanding to  
accommodate the infinite.*

*— Martin Aylward*

