

# **Mindfulness**

## **An Introduction**

### **Manual for the**

### **Home Study Course**

### **in Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy**

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# Mindfulness: An Introduction

## Course Objectives

After completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and describe the concept of Mindfulness
- Differentiate between Doing Mode and Being Mode
- Discuss Differentiation and how it relates to Mindfulness
- Discuss Individuation and how it relates to Mindfulness
- Discuss emotional regulation and how it relates to Mindfulness
- Discuss and describe Emotional Mind, Rational Mind, and Wise Mind
- Discuss the process of Externalization and how it relates to Mindfulness
- Discuss and describe Positive and Negative Thought Streams
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Observing
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Describing
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Fully Participating
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Being Non-Judgmental
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Focusing on One Thing at a Time
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of Being Effective
- Describe and discuss the Mindful Skill of the Power of Intention
- Describe and discuss the dialectic of Acceptance vs. Change
- Describe and discuss Mindful Acceptance
- Describe and discuss *Letting Go*
- Be able to conduct a basic Mindful Meditation
- Discuss how Mindfulness may be used with CBT
- Discuss several Mindfulness-Based forms of therapy

# **SECTION ONE**

## **SKILLS OF MINDFULNESS**

## **SECTION 1: Mindfulness Skills**

In this section, we will discuss some of the techniques of Mindfulness and how to apply these techniques in a therapeutic setting. There are several exercises in this section that can be used with patients. You will be asked to participate in these exercises so that you will be familiar with them when using them in a clinical setting. There is an *Appendix* at the end of this book containing handouts and worksheets used in these exercises so that you may save them for future use.

## **SECTION 2: Mindful Meditation**

In this section, you will be asked to fully participate in two Mindful Meditation exercises. These are contained in recordings for the course on the Mindful Ecotherapy Center website at [mindfulecotherapy.org](http://mindfulecotherapy.org). There are also accompanying videos that you may view on the website at <https://mindfulecotherapy.org/videos/>.

You may use these for with your own patients as long as original video files are kept intact. By participating in these exercises, you will gain firsthand experience in the techniques of mindful meditation. This experience will help you to coach your patients as you teach them meditation skills. It will also help you to grow in your own practice of mindfulness, allowing you to be present in the moment when in session with patients.

## **SECTION 3: Using Mindfulness with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

This section will look at some of the basic techniques of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), an overview of four mindfulness-based forms of cognitive behavioral therapy, and how to integrate Mindfulness skills into CBT in a clinical setting.

## **Notes on the Format of this Program**

When you purchase this course through the Mindful Ecotherapy Center's website at [www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org), the *downloads* page for the course includes two mindful meditations in mp3 format. These may also be used with your patients as long as you do not alter them in any way, and do not charge for them.

This course is available as one of the four modules required for the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Facilitator Certification Course, or as a stand-alone Intro to Mindfulness course. You may obtain course credit for either of these at the Mindful Ecotherapy Center's website at [mindfulecotherapy.org](http://mindfulecotherapy.org).

Courses archive of the Mindful Ecotherapy Center:  
<https://mindfulecotherapy.org/course-archive/>

## 01.01 What is Mindfulness?

*"Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive and present with those around you and with what you are doing. We bring our body and mind into harmony while we wash the dishes, drive the car or take our morning cup of tea."*

--Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Buddhist Monk and Founder of the An Quang Buddhist Institute

Think about the things that have caused you anxiety, stress or depression in the past. Now ask yourself, "Was it the things themselves that caused the anxiety, stress and depression, or was it what I believed about those things?"

Can you think of anything that you've ever been worried about that wasn't a product of your thoughts and feelings? Isn't it true that the worries come from the thoughts and feelings themselves, and not from the situations in which you find yourself?

If it is true that anxiety and depression are rooted in our thoughts, then we should be able to change our thoughts and eliminate, or at least minimize, anxiety and depression. Mindfulness is a way to change our thoughts. If you can change your thoughts, you can change your world.

The last two decades have seen an explosion in interest in the utility of Mindfulness for treating mental disorders. Consequently, there has been an interest in devising a clinical definition for the term "mindfulness."

Kabat-Zinn (2003) refers to mindfulness as "...paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment."

Segal et al., (2004) describe Mindfulness as a state of being "fully present and attentive to the content of moment-by-moment experience."

According to Baer (2003), "In general, while the specific focus of mindfulness may vary, individuals are instructed to be aware of thoughts but to be removed from the content of these thoughts."



This course will explore Mindfulness and how to practice it with patients in a therapeutic setting. The course is divided into three sections: Mindfulness Skills, Mindful Meditations, and Using Mindfulness with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

## 01.02 Doing Mode vs. Being Mode

### Automatization

Learning to drive an automobile can be an overwhelming task at first. You have to focus on keeping the vehicle between the lines on the highway while watching for other cars, traffic signals and road signs. In addition to all of this, you must constantly glance at the speedometer to make sure that you are driving at a safe speed. You cannot look at the speedometer for too long because you must also concentrate on what may be happening on the highway. When learning to drive, you probably recited the “rules of the road” to yourself over and over while driving (“Hands at two and ten,” “Watch out for animals and children running into the road,” etc.).

As you gained knowledge and experience of driving, it became more and more of an automatic process. It may have become so automatic that now from time to time you make a routine drive without remembering anything about it. If you have ever let your mind wander and have missed an exit or a turn, then you are fully familiar with the process of automatization.

The process of automatization occurs in many areas of our lives. Just as the process of driving eventually becomes automatic, and can occur without our conscious awareness, so can thought and feeling processes become automatized. If you have ever had a strong emotional reaction to a situation without knowing why, it is possible that one of your automatized emotional processes was activated (Moulds & Bryant, 2004).

Mindfulness is just the opposite of this automatic pilot experience. It is a way of paying close attention to your immediate experiences without getting lost in thought or shifting into automatic patterns of thinking or behaving. It is a shift from doing mode into being mode.



### Doing Mode

Think about your morning routine. When you were in the shower this morning, were you actually in the shower, or was your mind racing down the highway to your day-to-day errands? When you were there in the shower, were you feeling the warmth of the water on your skin, smelling the fragrance of the soap, and hearing the sound of the water, or was your mind elsewhere?

When we are preoccupied with thoughts of the past or the future, or with thoughts of getting things done, we are in *doing mode*. Doing mode can also be expressed as *thinking mode*, because in order to get things done, we generally have to think about those things first.

Thinking mode takes us away from experiencing the world directly with our senses. When we leave thinking mode and focus our awareness directly on the information provided by our senses, we have entered *sensing mode*. Mindful awareness teaches us to focus on the world experienced directly by our senses: Touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. Experiencing life in sensing mode introduces us to a richer world. It's impossible to be bored or apathetic if you treat each experience as if it is happening to you for the first time. Approaching each new situation without any assumptions or expectations is referred to as *beginner's mind*, or sometimes as *child's mind*.

### Being Mode

Williams (2008) presents research that indicates the benefits of mindful states of being. Mindfulness is associated with decreases in levels of rumination (a process of becoming trapped in negative thought cycles), avoidance (refusing to accept the reality of a given situation), perfectionism (attempts to control a situation), and maladaptive self-guides (attempting solutions

that maintain the problem). Taken together, this reduction in negative thought and behavior patterns form what is known as *being mode*.

By focusing on the present moment, we leave what is referred to as *thinking mode* and enter into *sensing mode*. In sensing mode, we simply allow ourselves to become fully aware of what is going on around us and within us, without attempting to control or manipulate these events and sensations. Being mode reduces ruminations by allowing us to become aware of our thoughts and feelings as internal processes that we can choose to participate in, or choose to simply observe. In being mode we learn that we are not our thoughts.

In Western modes of thought, we are taught that our thoughts and feelings are our identities. Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," but does that mean that if you stop thinking, you cease to exist?

Being mode allows us to detach from our cognitive and emotional processes and observe them, or stop them, if we so choose.

Being mode reduces avoidance by allowing us to be in the present moment. If you are trying to avoid an unpleasant emotional state, you set up a cycle of denial. This denial creates anxiety and stress, which leads to more unpleasant emotional states to be avoided, which starts the avoidance cycle all over again. Being mode allows us to participate in the unpleasant situation without internalizing it; without allowing the unpleasantness to become a part of our identity.

Perfectionism can be seen as a control mechanism. It is a displacement technique. If we feel out of control of certain areas of our lives, and we feel powerless to change those areas, we may displace our attention on the areas that we can control. By engaging in compulsive, perfectionist behaviors we assert our control over tangible areas as a substitute for areas over which we may feel we have no control. The idea of "perfection" becomes an obsessive means of anxiety management.

Being mode allows us to realize that perfection is a subjective ideal. For example, if I asked you to describe your "perfect" day, you are likely to give me a totally different answer to that question than I would give if I were asked the same question. Since our answers to the question, "What is your idea of the perfect day?" would not be identical, it can be seen that there is no objective definition to the word "perfect." Being mode helps one to realize that perfection is a self-defined concept. In Being Mode we learn that every moment is perfect in and of itself, if we allow it to be.

Finally, being mode allows us to disengage from our own cognitive and emotional processes for a time. By doing so, we can become objective observers of our own inner states, without feeling that we must participate in them. Being mode is a type of metacognition, or "thinking about thinking." By observing the thoughts and feelings that have led to maladaptive consequences, we gain the ability to change those thought and feeling processes to lead to more productive conclusions.



## 01.03 Introduction to Mindfulness

### Wise Mind

One of the skills we develop in the practice of mindfulness is the skill of *acceptance*. Acceptance allows us to experience emotions without feeling obligated to react to them. This is done by noting the emotion, and then letting go of the negative thought processes that the emotion generates.

We can benefit from mindfulness by learning to accept the flood of emotions that sometimes blocks rational thought. The goal of acceptance isn't to become a totally rational person, devoid of emotion. Instead, the goal is to practice *Wise Mind*. Wise Mind is the balance of emotional mind and rational mind, in perfect harmony. From Wise Mind we learn that when we feel strong emotions we don't have to *do* anything about them. We can just *be* in the moment with them.

To illustrate this concept, let's suppose that a destitute woman has been arrested for stealing a loaf of bread with which to feed her hungry children. If we approach this situation from Rational Mind, we are only using logic and reason. There is no emotional content to our approach to the situation in Rational Mind. In this situation, Rational Mind would say that she broke the law, and there are penalties for breaking the law, therefore she should be punished.

Wise Mind, on the other hand, would allow logic and reason to be tempered with emotion. In this case, Wise Mind would allow some sense of compassion for the mother and her plight. While the woman in this scenario may have broken the law, she did so because she had love for her children and did not wish to see them go hungry. Wise Mind would recognize this and allow for some leniency.

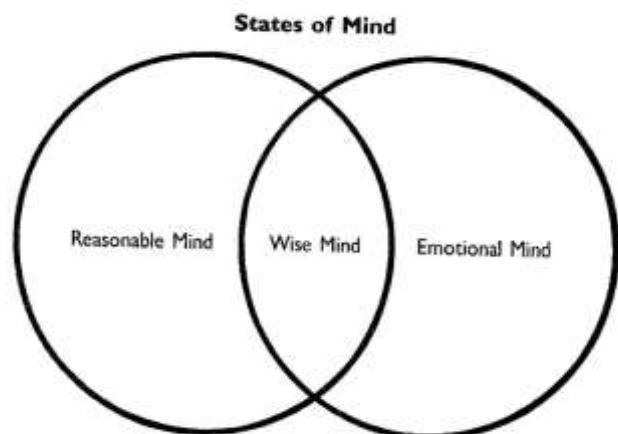
On the other hand, what does Emotional Mind look like?

I'm sure we all know of someone who is subject to wild mood swings. Such a person is ruled by emotions that often run out of control. Imagine that such a person is cut off in traffic. This person becomes very angry and chases down the offender, horn blaring and lights flashing. Perhaps this person even tries to run the offender off of the road. In such a case, this person is being ruled by Emotional Mind. If this person could learn to live in Wise Mind, then he would realize that while the person who had cut him off in traffic had done something dangerous, it may not have been intentional. It could be that this person was distracted. Even if the person had done it intentionally, there is no need to increase the danger to himself by provoking further confrontation in an episode of road rage. In this case, Wise Mind would accept the fact that such events are inevitable on a busy highway. Emotional Mind would then be tempered with Rational Mind, achieving the balance that is the goal of Wise Mind.

According to Follette, et al (2006), "Wise mind is understood as a balance (or dialectic) between emotion mind and reasonable mind, where both emotion and reason are considered before taking action in life."

This concept is often illustrated as in the picture to the right, where Wise Mind is the overlapping area between Rational Mind and Emotional Mind:

In the clinical practice of Mindfulness, patients are taught the concepts of Rational Mind, Emotional Mind, and Wise Mind, and how to differentiate among



these states. Each state has its own usefulness; for example, Rational Mind might be good for solving math problems like balancing a checkbook, while Emotional Mind might be good for a romantic interlude. But there are also situations, such as those outlined above in which one mode of mind might not be as productive as another. When using Mindfulness in clinical practice, it is helpful to teach patients the concepts of Rational Mind, Emotional Mind, and Wise Mind, then have them list examples of each in order to gain practice in differentiating among these states.

## Differentiation

One of the characteristics of a healthy family is *differentiation*.

One of the ways differentiation can be defined is the ability to separate thinking from feeling about a given relationship or situation. When a person lacks the ability to separate their emotions from their thoughts, that person is said to be *undifferentiated*.



To be undifferentiated means to be flooded with feelings and powerful emotions. Such a person rarely think rationally. Additionally, such people may feel responsible for other peoples' feelings, and that other people should be responsible for their feelings. They lack the ability to tell where their feelings end and other peoples' feelings begin.

The process of differentiation involves learning to free yourself from emotional dependence and codependence on your family and/or romantic relationships. Differentiation involves taking responsibility for your own emotional well-being, and allowing others to be responsible for their own emotional well-being.

A fully differentiated person can remain emotionally attached to the family without feeling responsible for the feelings of other family members.

## Mindfulness

One of the skills we develop in the practice of mindfulness is the skill of *acceptance*.

Acceptance allows us to experience emotions without feeling obligated to react to them. This is done by noting the emotion, and then letting go of the thought processes that the emotion generates.

An undifferentiated person can benefit from mindfulness by learning to accept the flood of emotions that blocks rational thought. The goal of acceptance in differentiation isn't to become a totally rational person, devoid of emotion. Instead, the goal is to practice Wise Mind. Wise mind is the balance of emotional mind and rational mind, in perfect harmony.

## ACTIVITY

### Worksheet 01.03 Differentiation and Mindfulness

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>

# Worksheet 01.03 Differentiation and Mindfulness

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4

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emotional Mind

Emotional Mind occurs when people are driven by emotion. It is usually a result of the fight or flight response being triggered but it can also be a response to overwhelming emotional states. In the space below, list some ways that you or others might engage in Emotional Mind:

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## Rational Mind

Rational Mind occurs when people are driven by reason. It is a logical, solution-focused approach to problem-solving that can sometimes lack compassion or warmth.

In the space below, list some ways that you or others might engage in Rational Mind:

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## Wise Mind

Wise Mind occurs when Emotional Mind and Rational Mind are in perfect balance. It is a state of being that is devoid of worries about the past or the future. It is a shift from doing mode to being mode, at one with the present moment.

In the space below, list some ways that you or others might engage in Emotional Mind:

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**pg. 2 of 4**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Differentiation

Differentiation is the ability to separate thinking from feeling in a given relationship or situation. When a person lacks the ability to separate their emotions from their thoughts, that person is said to be undifferentiated. The process of differentiation involves learning to free yourself from emotional dependence and codependence on your family and/or romantic relationships as well. Differentiation involves taking responsibility for your own emotional well-being, and allowing others to be responsible for their own emotional well-being. A fully differentiated person can remain emotionally attached to the family without feeling responsible for the feelings of other family members.

In the space below, list some occasions in which you were able to exercise differentiation. That is, list some times when you have been able to set appropriate boundaries with others to avoid being responsible for their emotional states, or some times when you have managed to avoid the temptation of holding others responsible for your own emotional states.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## pg. 3 of 4

## Mindfulness

Instead, mindfulness allows us to experience emotions in *being mode*.

You have probably already had times in your own life where you have allowed yourself to experience what you were feeling without trying to do anything about it. If so, list a few of these experiences in the space below.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



## 01.04 Observing

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is a blending of Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques. It was developed in 2002 by Segal, Williams and Teasdale for the treatment of depression. It was specifically developed to prevent recurrence of depressive symptoms after a successful therapeutic intervention. MBCT is composed of eight sessions, or lessons. During the first session, participants are taught to differentiate between Doing Mode and Being Mode. They are also taught the mindful skill of *observing*, as a way of moving from doing mode to being mode.



Observing begins by learning to pay attention to an object. Any object will do. In fact, the more mundane the object is, the better for practicing observing skills. The idea of observing is to be entirely present in the moment with the object being observed, using all of the senses. If you can engage senses ordinarily not associated with the predominant characteristics of the object, then so much the better. For example, most people know what an orange looks like, and tastes like, but have you ever considered what an orange sounds like? If you were blindfolded and someone held an orange up to your ear and squeezed it, would there be a distinct sound that would identify the orange to you? The purpose of observing in this way is to see things in a way we have never seen them before.

The first step in observing is to eliminate as many assumptions as possible about what we are observing. We all make assumptions every day about the world around us, and many of these assumptions help us to navigate and survive in the world around us. When a traffic light turns green, you automatically assume that the person coming the other way will stop. If that assumption is incorrect, we put ourselves in great danger. But if we did not make that assumption, we would never be able to go anywhere. So our assumptions are useful to a point. But what if our assumptions are incorrect or unhelpful?

Suppose you are at work one day and your coworker, Bob, frowns at you. You could assume that you have done something to upset Bob. If that is your assumption, you will probably interact differently with Bob than you would if you had assumed that perhaps Bob is just having a bad day and his facial expression has nothing to do with you. If you assume that Bob is upset with you, and you act accordingly, what is likely to happen if you discover your assumption was incorrect? Will you act differently with Bob based upon your assumptions about his intentions? Will Bob act differently with you based on his assumptions about your intentions?

When practicing the skill of observing, the observations should be made without drawing any conclusions regarding their content. Observing should be done without making any assumptions.

One way of engaging in observing is to picture yourself an artist, about to draw the object that you are observing. It may be an object you have looked at a thousand times, but if you look at it through the eyes of an artist, suddenly you will see it in a new way. You will begin to notice how light and shadow fall on the object, and how colors transition into each other. You will notice the depth of the object, and its perspective. Now explore the object with the rest of your senses. Pick it up. How heavy is it? How does it feel as your skin makes contact with it? Is it hot or cold, soft or hard? Smell it. Does it have a distinct aroma? What does it sound like? What does it taste like? Observe the object as if you have never seen it before, with beginner's mind, free of assumptions about the object.

When you have gained some practice with observing objects, you may move on to observing your own internal states. What are you feeling at this very moment? What is your emotional state? Remember, the goal is to simply observe this internal state, without drawing any conclusions or making any assumptions about it. Practice the skill of observing with both your thoughts and your emotions. The more skill you gain with observing, the more you come to realize that emotions and thoughts are just mental processes. They are not who you are. They are not your identity. They are just things your brain does from time to time.

Kingston et al (2007) looked at the effectiveness of using Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in the treatment of residual depression. They found that those who continued to practice MBCT had a continual decline in the recurrence of symptoms of depression. One significant departure from these results was in the area of *rumination*. While rumination scores decreased in the test population as well, there was a statistically significant correlation between higher rumination scores and rates of relapse. In other words, those who were more prone to ruminate were more prone to relapse. Rumination could be defined as “coming to conclusions about observations of my own internal state,” as rumination is associated with worrying about a particular problem or observation. Since the goal of observing is to note your internal state without drawing conclusions about it, or without making assumptions about it, observing tends to reduce the tendency to ruminate.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.04 Observing**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The mindful skill of *observing* involves attuning yourself to your experiences in the present moment by paying attention to the information your senses are giving you. Sensory experiences occur in the present moment. You cannot see, hear, touch, taste, or smell anything in the past or future. You can only engage in sensory experiences in the *now* of existence. You do this by observing the information your senses are giving you. When you observe the information coming from your senses you bring your conscious awareness into the present moment, without thoughts or feelings about the past or future.

It's not that you're telling yourself not to think about the past or the future, because telling yourself not to think about it is thinking about it. The more you tell yourself not to think about it, the more you're thinking about it.

Instead, you're using the information that your senses are giving you to shift your conscious awareness away from thoughts about the past and the future and towards thoughts about the present moment.

The first step to observing is to focus on one thing at a time. For example, close your eyes for a moment and observe what you might be hearing. Were you aware of these sounds before this exercise called your attention to them?

Now look around you. What do you see in the immediate environment? If you were an artist, and you had to draw the things you see around you, how would you see things differently? What would you notice about the shapes and colors around you? What about their proportions relative to each other? What about how the light and the shadow fall on the various objects that you see?

Now notice your sense of smell. Are there any pleasant aromas in the air around you? What about unpleasant ones? What memories do these aromas evoke?

Direct your awareness now to your sense of touch. What do you notice about your body as you read this? If sitting, how does your body make contact with the chair? If standing, or lying down, what do you notice about how your body interacts with the environment? Is the temperature too hot, too cold, or just right? Is there any tension in your body? Are there any pleasurable sensations? And pain? Any comfort?

Finally, direct your attention to your sense of taste. Unless you are eating or drinking something it may be hard to experience your sense of taste in the current moment; however, you might experiment by taking a few deep breaths. As the air passes over your tongue can you detect any taste to it, however faint? Are you able to taste the changes in the weather? Don't worry if you have trouble tasting the air at first; it's a difficult skill to learn, but it does indicate the level of awareness and sensitivity that can be achieved through observing.

Experiment for a few moments with observing through your senses in this manner. When you feel you are ready, go on to complete the exercises on the next page.

## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

pg. 2 of 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Focusing on One Thing at a Time

Negative thoughts tend to come in bunches. Usually when you have one negative thought or feeling, it leads to another, and to another, and so on until you're soon wrapped up in a tangled ball of negative thoughts and feelings. This process is referred to as *ruminating*. It is also sometimes called *snowballing* because of the way it works. If you picture a snowball starting at the top of a hill, gaining speed, momentum and size as it rolls down, you will probably have a pretty accurate picture of what snowballing or ruminating feels like to the person experiencing it.

Focusing on one thing at a time is just the opposite of this ruminating or snowballing experience. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, but if you focus on the thousand miles you'll be too overwhelmed to take the first step. The key is to instead focus on the first step, and only on the first step, until it is accomplished. Then focus on the next step, and the next, and so on. Eventually you will find that the thousand miles are over. This is because small change leads to bigger change.

If you find yourself snowballing, the way out of it is to focus on one thing at a time. The first step is to ask yourself, "What is the smallest thing I can do right now to make a difference?" When you've answered that question, go on and do that one thing. Don't worry about anything else until that one thing is accomplished. When it is done, then go on and ask yourself, "What is the next smallest thing I can do that will make a difference?" Then do that thing, and so on until your "thousand mile" journey is done. In the case of feelings or negative thoughts, it may not be necessary to do anything. In fact, sometimes there may be nothing you *can* do. If that is the case, you may leave doing mode and enter being mode, just noticing the thought or the feeling in the moment. You don't have to follow the thought to the next thought. Just focus on the thought before you.

For this exercise we're going to practice observing in a natural setting.

First, go outside and find a relatively calm outdoor spot where you will be undisturbed for the duration of the exercise.

To begin focusing on one thing at a time, close your eyes take a few deep breaths in this outdoor setting. Continue breathing until you feel calm and centered. When you are ready, open your eyes and focus on the first thing that catches your attention. Practice observing by answering the questions below.

What is the first thing you noticed?

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## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In observing this thing, is there anything about it you have never noticed before?

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What are the visual characteristics of the thing you noticed? What does it look like? What color is it? What shape? Describe it here:

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What are the auditory characteristics of the thing you noticed? Does it make any sounds? If so, describe them here:

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Are there any aromas associated with the thing you noticed? If so, describe them here:

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## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

pg. 4 of 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any aromas associated with the thing you noticed? If so, describe them here:

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Is it possible to touch the thing you noticed? If so, do so now. If not, just imagine what it might feel like to hold this object, and describe these sensations here:

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Is the object edible? If it is, are there any tastes you might associate with it? If so, describe them here. If not, take a deep breath and see if you notice any taste to the air, and describe it:

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Does observing this object in this manner change your experience of it? If so, how?

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## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

pg. 5 of 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have some experience with observing things outside of yourself, let's go on to observing things inside of yourself. Continue to sit quietly in your peaceful outdoor setting. Take a few deep breaths and notice the first thought that comes to mind. What is that thought?

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Just notice this thought, and this thought alone. If this thought tries to lead you on to more thoughts, just gently return your attention to this thought.

Step back and watch what your mind is doing. Thoughts and feelings are not who you are; they are just processes of the brain. When observing your thoughts in this manner you develop the awareness that you are not your thoughts. You are not your feelings. If another thought comes into your mind during this process, just notice it.

It may help to picture your thoughts and feelings like a river. Sometimes negative thoughts and feelings float to the top, and sometimes negative thoughts and feelings float to the bottom. If you find yourself in a part of the river where the negative thoughts and feelings are on the surface, your goal isn't to dam up the river. You're not trying to block the flow of thoughts and feelings. You couldn't even if you wanted to. If you tried to stop your thoughts by building a dam on the river, they'd eventually rise up behind the dam until the dam burst and flooded your consciousness.

Instead, if you find yourself floating in negative thoughts, you don't have to let them wash you downstream. You can make a conscious choice to get out of the river for a moment, and allow those thoughts and feelings to float downstream on their own. You don't have to stay in the river and drown. Instead you can choose to sit on the riverbank and watch them flow by.

Do this now by choosing one thought or feeling to observe. Allow yourself to experience it for as long as you'd like. When you feel you are ready, go on to the next page and answer the questions.

## Worksheet 01.04 Observing

pg. 6 of 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What was the experience of observing your thoughts and feelings like for you? Did you find it easy or difficult?

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How similar or different was this to the way you usually experience your thoughts and feelings? Why?

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Were you able to avoid the temptation to follow your thoughts and feelings into “snowballing” mode? Were you able to focus on one thing at a time? What might have made it easier for you?

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## 01.05 Describing

*“Whatever you are doing, ask yourself, ‘What’s the state of my mind?’”*

Baer et al (2006) described five factors associated with mindfulness. These factors are: observe, describe, act with awareness, non-judge and non-react. These five factors can be measured by several instruments, and have been shown to be good predictors of psychological symptoms and/or psychological resilience. While these five factors are interrelated, they are also distinct and separate domains. For example, the skill of observing is separate from the skill of describing, but one cannot describe without first observing, therefore these skills overlap to some degree. Taken together, these five factors, or skills, constitute a state of *mindful awareness*.

*Describing* may be defined as focusing on the details of an event or activity, sensing the components of that activity, and then defining the experience.

The skill of describing first involves observing the smallest details of an object, event or activity. When we are in a state of mindful awareness, we approach each daily activity as if we are experiencing it for the first time. To practice the art of describing, approach each new experience by examining as many dimensions of it as you can. You can probably readily identify with the fact that the color of an apple is red, or perhaps yellow or green, but have you ever thought about what an apple sounds like? Is there a distinct quality of an apple that would make it identifiable only by sound? What would a blind person's experience of an apple be? When you think of apples, do you have any emotional reaction to them? Do you have any positive memories about apples? What about negative memories? By identifying and labeling these feelings and thoughts about apples, we become more aware of our internal experiences relating to apples.



When we gain experience with this technique, we can apply it to other areas of our lives as well. For example, by looking at your negative thought processes, and identifying and labeling them as such, you are better able to recognize them simply as processes, and not as part of who you are as a person.

A child's experience of the world is vastly different from an adult's experience of the same world. To a child, the world is new each day. Children approach the world each day with a sense of wonder. As we get older and learn about things, we learn what to expect by learning how things usually work. This is usually a good thing. For example, if you learn that dogs may bite, you will probably approach a new dog with caution, as a matter of safety. But what if it's a friendly dog?

Our assumptions can work to protect us, but sometimes our assumptions can work against us as well. If you approach all dogs as dogs that might bite, you're naturally going to avoid dogs more. You may even miss an opportunity to play and roll in the grass with a friendly dog because your assumption may be "all dogs bite."

What about people and relationships? If you've been hurt in a relationship, your assumptions might include "all people bite." Such an assumption will color the way you approach new people. If you assume that all people are unfriendly, how is a new person likely to react to you? By learning the art of describing, we can focus more on the whole person (or dog!) and see that each individual has both positive and negative qualities. We can choose which qualities to focus on based on the assumptions we make in our interactions with them.

While it is probably impossible to achieve a state where we are totally free of any assumptions, the more assumptions we make, the more we increase the risk of making an incorrect assumption. Therefore one of the goals of mindfulness is to achieve what is known as

*childlike mind* or *beginner's mind*. In this state we start each day with a blank slate, and allow the day to write on it what it will.

From an attitude of beginner's mind, we can then more fully use the skill of describing, by seeing things in a new way, as if for the first time. The more we use the skill of describing, the more open we become to seeing things in new ways. Once we learn to see things in a new way, new solutions to old problems may present themselves.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.05 Describing**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

To submit a question online, visit the class discussion board at:  
<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>



## Worksheet 01.05 Describing

pg. 1 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Describing is the experience of putting into words the things that you observe. You can describe things external to you (the environment in which you find yourself) or you can describe things internal to you (your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and beliefs).

When you are observing and describing your thoughts, feelings, behaviors and beliefs you may find it helpful to label them and put them into categories. Some of these categories might include:

- Anxious thoughts
- Worry thoughts
- Planning thoughts
- Critical thoughts
- Judging thoughts
- Happy thoughts
- Sad thoughts
- Fearful thoughts
- Angry thoughts
- Ruminating thoughts

There are no right or wrong category labels as long as the labels are useful to you.

The reason that we put labels on thoughts and feelings is so that we might learn to distinguish thoughts and feelings from facts. Thoughts and feelings *are not facts*. They are merely processes of the mind.

Here's an example to illustrate:

Suppose I have an important test coming up, and I think to myself, "I'm going to fail that test." This thought is not a fact, because I haven't taken the test yet so there is no way I could know whether or not I am going to fail the test.

It is perfectly natural that I might worry about failing the test, but if I believe it to be true that "I'm going to fail that test," I've just substantially increased the likelihood that my thought will come true. If I go into the test thinking I'm going to fail, I'm going to give up on myself and not put my best foot forward. In doing so, I have a much greater chance of failing.

If, on the other hand, I have the thought, "I'm going to fail," and I am able to recognize it as just a thought and not a fact, then I will still be able to make my best effort to pass the test.

Not also that if I do have the thought, "I'm going to fail," I'm not going to tell myself not to think about it, because every time I tell myself not to think about failing, I'm thinking about failing. Instead I'm going to tell myself that it's perfectly natural to worry about failing, but the thought, "I'm going to fail" is not a fact; it's just a thought.

To successfully recognize the difference between thoughts and facts, I will need to describe only what I observe, without adding to it or making interpretations.

For example, suppose I'm walking down the hall at work and someone frowns at me. Further suppose I have the thought, "I wonder what I did to make this person mad?"

The fact in the situation is that the other person frowned at me; however I have no reason to suspect that the reason that person frowned at me was because she was mad at me. Maybe she was having a bad day. Maybe she had a fight with her partner last night. Maybe her shoes are too tight. There are dozens of reasons why this person might have frowned, and only one possible reason is, "This person is mad at me."

If I assume that my conclusion is correct, and then I act on that conclusion, I may be causing a lot of trouble for nothing.

By simply describing the situation to myself in the present moment I can avoid adding interpretations that may not be true.

To gain practice describing, complete the worksheet on the next page.

## Worksheet 01.05 Describing

pg. 2 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Go outside on a sunny day and find a tree or other plant. Observe it in detail. If you cannot go outside, you may use a house plant or any other object that you have handy. Imagine you are an artist about to draw what you have observed. After doing this for a few moments, in the space below, describe in detail what you saw.

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Now that you have gained some experience in describing what you observed, we are going to practice describing thoughts and feelings. To do this, first take a few deep calming and cleansing breaths. Now notice the first thought or feeling that comes to mind and focus on it. Avoid the temptation to go on to the next thought or feeling until you have observed and described your experience with the current thought or feeling in the present moment. After doing this for a few moments, describe what you saw in the space below.

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## Worksheet 01.05 Describing

pg. 3 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now attach a label to the thought or feeling you just observed and described. Is it a happy thought? A sad thought? A planning thought? A worry thought? Some other type of thought? Why did you choose this label for this thought? Explain below.

NOTE: Avoid the temptation to add or subtract from what you observed and described about the thought. Don't try to interpret the thought; just stick to the facts.

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Did observing and describing your thoughts and feelings in this manner change the way you experience your thoughts and feelings? If so, how? If not, why not?

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## 01.06 Fully Participating

*Fully participating* can be described as a state in which we are in the present moment, devoid of thoughts or anxiety about the past or the future. Fully participating is most closely associated with Baer's "act with awareness" factor of the Five Factor Model of Mindfulness. To participate fully in any activity is to be aware in every moment, and to act out of that state of awareness, with purpose and intention.

*Mindful awareness* allows you to experience every aspect of an activity. We have a tendency, when in thinking mode, to see things and activities as either "all bad" or "all good." This is not necessarily an accurate depiction of reality. In reality, there is a little good in most bad things, and a little bad in most good things.

In Mark Twain's book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom gets his friends to help him whitewash a fence by convincing them that fence painting is one of the most fun and enjoyable activities in the world. There is an element of truth in Tom's deception. Most activities aren't inherently good or bad. We've taught ourselves to think of them in such terms, but we can also teach ourselves a different way. Think about an unpleasant activity that you have to engage in on a regular basis, such as washing the dishes or taking out the trash. Can you think of any



pleasant aspects of these activities? For example, the last time I hand-washed dishes, I found myself fascinated by the bubbles in the sink. I watched the way the light played across them, generating myriads of rainbows that danced and moved across the surface of the bubbles. I was so entertained by this, that I was done with the dishes before I knew it.

There are enjoyable aspects to every experience, if we train ourselves to look for them. Even if we find ourselves caught in an activity in which we can find no pleasure at all, at least we have the pleasure of thinking about how good we'll feel when the activity is over.

Mindful Awareness teaches us the art of acceptance. Emotional reactions to our circumstances are natural, but that doesn't mean that we have to respond to these emotions. The mindful skill of acceptance teaches us that we can experience these emotions without engaging in cycles of behavior that lead us to negative consequences. Acceptance teaches us that we are not our thoughts, and that we are not our emotions. At any time we can choose which thoughts and emotions we wish to respond to.

From this viewpoint there is no such thing as a "bad" or "wrong" feeling. All feelings are equally valid. What may be problematic is how we choose to respond to feelings through our thoughts and behaviors. Such actions lead to consequences. Sometimes those consequences have positive effects, and sometimes they lead to negative effects.

If, at any time, we should engage in thoughts and behaviors that lead to negative consequences, this does not mean that we have become "bad" persons. This simply means that we are human beings, and as humans we are entitled to make mistakes. Each mistake is an opportunity for growth and learning. Forgiveness is a skill and an art. The place to start with learning the art of forgiveness is in learning first to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes.

Patients with chronic pain issues can benefit from the art of fully participating by realizing that the pain is not something alien, but a part of their daily experience. Instead of fighting the pain, they learn to accept it. A result of this acceptance is that their perception of the pain

lessens because they are no longer fighting it. By fully participating in each moment, chronic pain sufferers get back a part of their lives that the pain had taken away (Isenberg, 2009).

Likewise, people experiencing emotional pain can learn to respond rather than to react. Mindfulness isn't about avoiding unpleasant experiences. Instead, it's about choosing a different and less problematic response to those unpleasant experiences.

Fully participating can also help patients with chronic anxiety problems, stress or depression. By learning to accept the depression or anxiety, patients learn not to fight the problem. By not fighting the anxiety or depression, we avoid setting up the self-perpetuating cycle of avoidance and anxiety enhancement. If a patient learns not to try to avoid depression and anxiety, and instead accepts it openly, then there is nothing to fight against, and the downward spiral stops before it begins.

Fully participating can also be very useful to therapists. Grepmaier, et al (2007) found that therapists who practiced Zen meditation themselves actually had better success rates with their patients than therapists who did not practice meditation. One explanation for this is that those who practice mindful meditation have developed their capacity to fully participate in the present moment. By being able to fully participate and to be present in what the patient may be telling them in a given session, they are better able to offer solutions. Additionally, the more the therapist is able to participate in a given session, the more validated the client feels. If you've ever experienced a therapist who kept glancing at the clock during a session, you know what an invalidating experience with a therapist can be like. By learning to fully participate in each session, a therapist or counselor strengthens the patient/clinician bond and enhances the chance of success for an intervention.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.06 Fully Participating**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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# Worksheet 01.06 Fully Participating

pg. 1 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

When we are fully participating in an activity, we are aware and in the present moment. This means that we are not “living in our heads” by ruminating over past or future issues. Instead, we are actively conscious and aware of the current present activity. If we are eating, we are focusing our attention on eating, not the tv or the newspaper. If we are having a conversation, we are giving our full attention to the other person and not texting or playing on the tablet. If we are dancing, we are dancing like nobody else is watching, fully aware without self-consciousness.

For this exercise, you will need a small item of food like a raisin, a grape, a cherry, or a piece of chocolate. It should be small enough to fit into the palm of your hand. When you have such a food item, complete the activity worksheet below.

## STEP ONE

Hold the food item in your hand. Observe it and describe it to yourself. How many colors do you see? What is its shape? How do the light and the shadow fall on it? Do the views of the food item change if you rotate it around in your hand? Observe and describe it using the spaces below.

Describe the food item's color. How many colors do you see? What are they?

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Describe the food item's texture. Is it smooth or rough? Variegated or uniform? Or some other texture?

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Describe the food item's weight. Is it light or heavy? Dense or porous? How does it feel in your hand? If your eyes were closed, could you identify it solely by its weight and texture?

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## Worksheet 01.06 Fully Participating

pg. 2 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### STEP TWO

Now place the food item on your tongue, biting it once and only once to release the flavor. Allow the flavor slowly dissipate across your tongue. Where on your tongue can you first taste it? The four basic taste buds are sweet, sour, salt and bitter. Can you taste each of these sensations? Which did you taste first? Which did you taste last? Observe and describe its taste using the space below.

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### STEP THREE

Now continue to chew the food item slowly, savoring the experience. Nothing exists in the world but this food item, and all of your attention is directed solely on the experience of eating and enjoying it. Pay close attention to your sense of smell as you continue to chew. Can you notice any aroma as you eat the food item? If so, describe it. Imagine you had no sense of smell (it may help to briefly pinch your nostrils as you chew). Would that change the experience of enjoying the food? If so, how?

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## Worksheet 01.06 Fully Participating

**pg. 3 of 3**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## STEP FOUR

Now savor the food item as if it is the last piece of food on earth. There is nothing to do right now but to enjoy this piece of food. Continue to fully participate in the eating until the food is completely gone. Notice the aftertaste that remains on your tongue, and note any lingering aromas now that the food item is gone. Pay particular attention to your appetite. Did focusing your attention this way leave you more satisfied with less food? Did the exercise above change your experience of the food in any way? If so, you've learned the art of fully participating. Describe your experience below

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## 01.07 Focusing on One Thing at a Time

I love strawberries. I can nibble on them all day long. There have been times when I have been engaged in other activities while eating strawberries. I may be sitting at the computer, typing away, blissfully chewing strawberries. As I munch away, with my attention on the computer and not on the strawberries, I am sometimes surprised and disappointed when I reach into the bowl in a mindless fashion only to realize that I have eaten the last one. On those occasions when I've eaten the last strawberry without realizing that it was the last one, the first thought that came to mind was, "If I had known that I was eating the last one, I would have enjoyed it more!"

What is it about knowing that I'm about to eat the last strawberry that makes eating it more enjoyable? That particular strawberry isn't going to taste any different from the rest of the ones in the bowl. What makes the experience of the last strawberry different and more enjoyable is the fact that I have focused all of my attention on enjoying it, because it is the last one.

What if we could learn to make every strawberry the last one?

Singer/songwriter Ray Charles once said, "Live every day as if it will be your last, because one of these days, you're going to be right."

What if you knew that today would be your last day on earth? What would you do differently? How would you respond to those around you? What would you say to your loved ones? Would you treat them any differently if you knew that this might be the last time you would ever see them? What would be different about your "to do" list? Would your priorities change if you knew that this was your last day?

Looking at your life from this perspective tends to help you focus on what's really important. If you could really live up to the idea that today may be your last day on earth, it would probably cause you to slow down and enjoy each experience that comes your way. Each day could be the last strawberry.

The ability to do this is what practitioners of mindfulness call *mindful awareness*. Mindful awareness is the skill of focusing on one thing at a time. It is the ability to make each strawberry the last strawberry. It is also the ability to enjoy each day of our lives as if it were the last one. Mindful awareness teaches us that the way to live every day as if it will be your last, is to focus on the moment, savoring every bit of every experience the world has to offer.

(Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4) identifies three major components of mindfulness. These are:

1. "On purpose" or intention,
2. "Paying attention" or attention,
3. "In a particular way" or attitude (mindfulness qualities)

These components may be summed up as *focusing on one thing at a time*.

By intentionally paying attention in a particular way (i.e., mindfully), we are able to focus only on the experience that is before us, without judgments or expectations. We are also able to approach the situation without assumptions by focusing only on the experience itself.

According to Shapiro, et al (2006), "In the context of mindfulness practice, paying attention involves observing the operations of one's moment-to moment, internal and external experience. This is what Husserl refers to as a "return to things themselves," that is, suspending all the ways of interpreting experience and attending to experience itself, as it presents itself in the here and now. In this way, one learns to attend to the contents of consciousness, moment by moment."

By focusing on one thing at a time, we also place ourselves in the present moment, and take ourselves out of thoughts about the past or the future. In this way, we avoid the temptation to interpret the experience based on what has gone before or what may come in the future. The experience simply is what it is, with no interpretation required.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.07 Being One-Mindful**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for home study credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to submit this worksheet to get credit for the course.

To submit this worksheet online, visit the class discussion board at:

<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>

# Worksheet 01.07 Being One-Mindful

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Being *one-mindful* simply means focusing on one thing at a time. It is the skill of fully participating put into action in daily life. There are three characteristics of being one-mindful:

1. Acting on purpose or with intention
2. Paying attention in the present moment
3. Focusing on one thing at a time in a particular way with a mindful attitude

Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

This means that great things always start from humble beginnings. When seeking out our own goals and intentions for our lives, it is sometimes easy to get overwhelmed by the number of things we have to do. Lao Tzu teaches us that if we focus on the thousand miles we'll be so intimidated by the journey that we may never make the first step. But if we focus on the first step, and only on the first step, we can devote all of our attention to that step. Then we can go on to the next step, and to the next, by focusing on one thing at a time in the present moment. When we approach things in this way, with deliberate attention and intention, we are able to accomplish great things because we are acting on each task that is before us as it presents itself.

The way to do this is to start by asking, "What is the smallest thing I can do today that will make a difference?" Once we have defined that one small thing we are free to focus all of our attention on that task, and only on that task, until it is completed. Only then do we return our attention to the next step on the journey. And then the next, and so on until we are done. When doing things in this manner we will eventually find that we have completed the journey of a thousand miles.

## PRACTICE BEING ONE-MINDFUL

To the skill of focusing on one thing at a time, first think of a goal you'd like to accomplish in your own life. It could be a small goal, like adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet, or a larger goal, like being successful in your career. Pick the first goal that comes to mind and write it in the space below.

**GOAL:**

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## Worksheet 01.07 Being One-Mindful

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have a goal, practice being one-mindful (focusing on one thing at a time) by answering the following questions about your chosen goal:

What is your intention in setting this goal? What do you hope to accomplish by it?

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Right now, in this present moment, what is the first, smallest step you could make towards accomplishing this goal?

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Right now, in this present moment, what would help you to be able to focus on one thing at a time with a mindful attitude until this goal is accomplished? Be as specific as possible, using your observing and describing skills.

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Now that you have created a plan for the first step in your goal, implement it and observe the results. Then go on and repeat this process again for the next step towards your goal, and the next, until your goal is accomplished. Does this process help you to focus on one thing at a time?

Does focusing on one thing at a time in this manner reduce your stress and make fully participating in your life easier?

## 01.08 Being Non-Judgmental

We make judgments every day. Judging is observing a fact about the world around us and the people in it and then adding an evaluation or interpretation of “good” or “bad” to it. A lot of our suffering in life comes from these judgments.

As Shakespeare’s Hamlet said, “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” “Good” and “bad” are relative terms that are ultimately self-defined. Suppose a manager at your place of employment gets fired and you get promoted to manager. Is that a good thing, or a bad thing? If you asked the manager who was fired, they might say it was a bad thing while you might personally think it was a good thing. But what if the management position was long hours with low pay and few rewards or recognition? In that case the former manager might say that it was a good thing that they got fired, and you might say that it is a bad thing that you now have to do this thankless job.

That’s the problem with judgments. They don’t always relate to the real world. Not only that, but judgments can often cause problem emotions by creating endless cycles of stress, depression and anxiety. One judging thought leads to another, and then another, and so on until we find ourselves ruminating over our judgments instead of focusing on the present moment and enjoying life. When we allow ourselves to get caught up in such judgmental ruminations we have fallen into the *mind trap*. A mind trap occurs when we live inside our own heads by focusing on the past or the future instead of the *now*.

Most judgments are about the past or the future. Few of them have to do with the present moment, so one way to avoid the temptation to judge is to focus only on the here and now. To do this it is important to know the difference between *judging* and *describing*.

Suppose I’m walking down the hallway at work one day and Jane frowns in my direction. Here’s examples of judging vs. describing:

### JUDGING

“Jane just frowned at me. I wonder what I did to make her angry?”

### DESCRIBING

“Jane just frowned at me.”

Here’s another example:

### JUDGING

“Carl just told a lie. Carl is a bad person for being dishonest.”

### DESCRIBING

“Carl just told a lie and there will be consequences for his actions.”

In both of the examples above, judging involves observing a situation and adding an evaluation to it. In Jane’s case, I’ve noticed her frowning and added an interpretation that Jane is frowning because I must have done something to make her angry. Judgments are not facts, so unless Jane tells me that I did something to make her angry, such a judgment is not based on any supporting evidence. It could be that Jane has a headache, or she is having a bad day, or maybe her shoes are too tight. There could be dozens of other reasons that Jane happened to frown when I passed by her. The fact of the situation is that Jane frowned. The rest is my own opinion.

In the second example, we're confusing judgments with consequences. Judging Carl as a "bad person" for telling a lie is a different matter than stating that there will be consequences for lying. While it is true that there are always consequences for dishonesty, does a single lapse in judgment on Carl's part suddenly make him a "bad" person? Can we reduce the entirety of Carl's existence to one summary judgment on his character? If we do, how accurate and fair would such a judgment be?



Being non-judgmental means moving beyond our evaluations of "good" or "bad." It means seeing things for what they are. Being non-judgmental is a conscious decision to focus only on the facts of any given situation, without adding or subtracting by making assumptions and interpretations based on our own ideas of how things should be. By setting aside our ideas of what "must" or "must not" happen, or what we "should" or "should not" do, or what "could" or "could not" be, we are able to live a non-judgmental existence. When we can make the statement, "It is what it is," and mean it, we have learned how to be non-judgmental.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.08 Being Non-Judgmental**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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## Worksheet 01.08 Being Non-Judgmental

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts and feelings are not facts; they are merely processes of the brain. A lot of the stress we experience in life comes from observing and describing things, then placing judgments of “bad” or “good” on them. Being non-judgmental means being able to see things as they are, and not as we think they ought to be.

The first step to reducing judgments is to be able to recognize when we’re making them in the first place. When you are able to recognize your judgments, ask yourself, “Is it a priority for me to reduce judgments, or not?”

One way to determine whether reducing judgments is a priority is to look at the pros and cons of judging. To do this, ask yourself, “What will lead to more suffering and stress, judging or not judging in this situation?” The more you do this the more you will be able to replace judgments with consequences. You will also gain practice in knowing the difference between judgments and facts.

A list of statements follows below. Practice learning the difference between judgments and facts by placing a checkmark by each statement that is a judgment.

- ☐ “This is too hard, I can’t do this!”
- ☐ “Jane said something untrue.”
- ☐ “Carl is a bad person because he forgot to pick me up at the airport.”
- ☐ “I’ve tried mindful meditation. I can’t do it.”
- ☐ “Today at work Bob frowned at me when I passed him in the hallway.”
- ☐ “Bob frowned at me so he must be mad at me.”
- ☐ “I don’t have time for all this mindfulness stuff.”
- ☐ “I can’t help it; that’s just the way I am.”
- ☐ “He has long hair.”
- ☐ “He should get a haircut.”
- ☐ “The couch is red.”
- ☐ “The couch is ugly.”
- ☐ “I got a bad evaluation at work; the boss must hate me.”
- ☐ “She does her job well.”
- ☐ “She’s better than me.”
- ☐ “Everybody should love me.”
- ☐ “I’m able to meet my goals.”
- ☐ “Sometimes negative consequences happen.”
- ☐ “Nothing bad should ever happen to me.”
- ☐ “If I work hard enough I can make everybody like me.”

## 01.09 Being Effective: The Power of Intention

In Japan, there is a ritual known as the Tea Ceremony. The Tea Ceremony is an exercise in mindfulness that focuses your intention entirely on the task of preparing a cup of tea for an honored guest. One of the ideas of the Tea Ceremony is that even such a mundane task as preparing a cup of tea can be turned into an art form by focusing all of our attention on each step in the process, and doing so deliberately and with purpose.

As you continue to hone your ability to focus only on one thing at a time, this skill can be extended to problem-solving. When you become mindfully aware of a problem with the idea of solving it, you have focused your intention on that problem, as the Zen tea master focuses all of her attention on the skill of making a cup of tea.

It has been said that you can talk about a problem all day, but in the end, talking about a problem does nothing to help solve it. Only by focusing your intention on solutions will the problem get solved.

In mindfulness we speak of the *power of intention*. This means that we choose every act deliberately and purposefully, focusing our awareness on each task with intention. When using the power of intention, we never wander about aimlessly, driven by the winds of whim and fortune. Every act is deliberate. Every act is “on purpose.” Every thought, feeling and behavior is there to support this deliberate and purposeful goal. This is the power of intention.



Once there was a sculptor who was famous for his carvings of animals. Of all the animals he carved, his elephants were the most lifelike and inspiring. One day an art student came to him and asked him the secret to creating such beautiful elephants.

“The answer,” the artist replied, “Is simple. You just get a block of marble and chip away anything that doesn’t look like an elephant.”

When difficulties arise in life, it’s usually because we’ve set out to carve an elephant, but we suddenly find ourselves carving a bear or a donkey or some other animal instead. When this happens, we’ve gotten caught up in the details of living, and we have lost sight of our original goal, the elephant.

You may talk about the problem for as long you wish, but simply talking about the problem doesn’t do anything to actually solve the problem. If your intention is to have a happy, healthy life and happy, healthy relationships, then anything that doesn’t promote these ideals is irrelevant. It’s just marble to be carved away. If you find yourself constantly discussing problems, and never reaching resolution, ask yourself, “What is my intention?” or perhaps, “Is this the elephant I’m trying to carve, or is it just excess marble?”

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed by Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002) as a method of treating clinical depression and for preventing relapse. There are eight sessions in the usual MBCT intervention:

1. Automatic pilot and mindfulness
2. Dealing with barriers and pleasant events
3. Mindfulness of the breath
4. Staying present
5. Allowing and letting be
6. Thoughts are not facts
7. How can I best take care of myself?
8. Using what has been learned to deal with future moods



In the first session, students are taught how to switch from “automatic pilot mode” or habitual mode, to intentional mode. Intentional mode involves moving from a ruminative mode to a mindful mode. *Rumination* in this sense refers to the tendency to engage in automatic patterns of thought, feeling and experience that lead to a recurrence of depressive symptoms. These automatic patterns are driven by memory; i.e., they are learned responses to certain stimuli. By harnessing the power of intention, the practitioner of MBCT moves from this automatic ruminative state to an intentional, purposeful mindful state. Intentionality involves metacognition (thinking about thinking). By becoming a conscious observer of these automatic states, the student learns that these automatic thought processes are simply thoughts. They are not destiny, nor are they identity. By acting intentionally to step outside of oneself and simply observe and describe these automatic thoughts and feelings, practitioners learn that they have control over these internal states.

By using the power of intention to move from thinking mode to sensing mode, the student learns to view unwanted or difficult thoughts and feelings as passing mental events, and not as permanent characteristics. If the student can intentionally “ride out the wave” of depression or anxiety, then he/she will learn that “this too shall pass.”

The two most important questions of effective, intentional living are:

1. What am I trying to accomplish with my life?
2. Are what I’m thinking, feeling, believing and doing supporting this intention?

The key to intentional living is to do more of what works, and less of what doesn’t work.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.09 The Power of Intention**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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## Worksheet 01.09 The Power of Intention

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*"How you start your day is how you live your day."*  
- Louise Hay

A key aspect of mindfulness is the ability to live intentionally, with purpose. In doing so we are mindful of our actions and our intentions. The way to achieve our goals in life is to ask ourselves if what we are doing, thinking, feeling, saying and believing is supporting our goals. For example, when a married couple comes to me for counseling, the first thing I ask them is, "What is your intention in coming here??"

The answer to this is most often, “We want to have a happy marriage.”

I then ask them what they are doing to support that. If they tell me that they go home and argue with each other, I then ask them how this behavior is helping to support that intention.

Living intentionally means living in such a way that your actions support your goals. The easiest way to do this is to set your intention each day by establishing your goals on a daily basis. The exercises below will help you to live an intentional life, full of purpose.

## LIVING INTENTIONALLY: DAILY AFFIRMATION

To begin living intentionally, it's a good idea to start your day with an affirmation of intention. Here's the one I use at the start of my day:

*"Today I will make a conscious effort to live without assumption or judgment, allowing the universe to show me whatever it has in store for me today. I will endeavor to know more at the end of the day today than I knew yesterday. I will act in a compassionate and kind way whenever possible striving to do no harm to others and to help whenever I can."*

Your own affirmation can be similar, or something completely different. Practice your daily affirmation by writing a sample one below.

[illegible]

## Worksheet 01.09 The Power of Intention

pg. 2 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### LIVING INTENTIONALLY: AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

At our house we practice the “attitude of gratitude.” This means we make a conscious effort to say “thank you” to each member of the family at least once per day for something. It doesn’t matter if it’s something we’ve already thanked each other for a thousand times before; each time we hear it, it brings a smile.

Another aspect of the attitude of gratitude is that it can be used to reduce negativity in our lives. Every time I catch myself making some sort of negative judgment I immediately say two

things I’m grateful for. That way I have at least twice as many positive and grateful statements in my life as negative and judgmental statements.

It’s easy to focus on the things we don’t have in life, but in doing so we often forget to be grateful for the things we do have. By making this attitude of gratitude a part of your daily practice, you become more fully aware of life in the present moment. When you are living with such awareness it becomes much easier to live intentionally.

**Gratitude  
is the best  
Attitude**

Think of at least ten things you are grateful for in your own life, and list them below. Whenever you are feeling down and feel that your intention is starting to fade, it may help to review this list.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet 01.09 The Power of Intention

pg. 3 of 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## LIVING INTENTIONALLY: SETTING YOUR INTENTION

When you have said your daily affirmation and practiced the attitude of gratitude, you may set your intention for the day by completing the statements below. Make this a part of your daily routine and you will have taken the first step towards living a life of intention.

**Today I want to feel...**

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**Today I want to think...**

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**Today I want to experience...**

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**Today I want to believe that...**

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**My goal for today is...**

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## 01.10 Acceptance vs. Change

*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."*

--The Serenity Prayer of Reinhold Niebuhr

Many of us are familiar with the Serenity Prayer. It deals with the dialectic of acceptance vs. change. The key to this dialectic is the knowledge that the things we cannot change are things we must accept. Mindfulness comes from having the wisdom to know the difference. We can illustrate this concept this way:

**ACCEPTANCE >>>>>>>>>WISDOM<<<<<<<<<CHANGE**

One of the skills we develop in the practice of mindfulness is the skill of acceptance. Acceptance allows us to experience emotions and thoughts without feeling obligated to react to them. This is done by noting the emotion or thought, and then letting go of the thought and feeling processes that the emotion generates.

Mindful awareness teaches us the art of acceptance. Emotional reactions to our circumstances are natural, but that doesn't mean that we have to respond to these emotions. The mindful skill of acceptance teaches us that we can experience these emotions without engaging in cycles of behavior, thought or feeling that lead us to negative consequences. Acceptance teaches us that we are not our thoughts, and that we are not our emotions. At any time we can choose which thoughts and emotions we wish to respond to, and which to let go of.

From this perspective there is no such thing as a "wrong" feeling or a "bad" thought. Thoughts and feelings are just processes of the brain. What may be problematic is how we choose to respond to those thoughts or feelings. Sometimes we can choose to do nothing and simply be with the feeling. When problems arise, they most often come when we try to do something to "fix" feelings or thoughts we don't want to experience.

*"Never underestimate your power to change yourself; never overestimate your power to change others."*

--H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Some things in life that cause us stress, anxiety and depression are things we can change. Others are things we cannot change, but must learn to accept. As Niebuhr reminds us, true wisdom lies in knowing the difference between the two. In being mode, we come to recognize the fact that true happiness can only come from within. There's good news and bad news with this realization. The *bad* news is that nobody can change your life circumstances but you. The *good* news is that *nobody can change your life circumstances but you*.

Mindful acceptance includes, among other things, the idea that you can only change yourself. If your problems involve other people, then you can only accept that they are who they are. You cannot change anyone but yourself.

The art of mindful acceptance can best be described as the art of *letting go*. Once you have done everything in your power to solve a problem, you have done all you can, so at that point worry and stress is counterproductive. Note that letting go of the

*this too shall pass*

stress and anxiety doesn't necessarily mean letting go of the problem itself. For example, suppose you have a car payment coming up, and you don't have the money to pay it. This would naturally cause you anxiety. If, after brainstorming for solutions, you find that you still don't have the money to pay the car payment, then at that point you've done all you can do. So at that point, you let go of the anxiety associated with the problem. That doesn't mean that you let go of car payments altogether. You'll make the payment when you can. In this instance, "letting go" just means that you won't worry about not being able to make the payment. The energy you might have used worrying about the situation could be put to better use in trying to come up with solutions.

Let's try another example, this one a bit tougher. Imagine you're in a relationship. You feel that your partner doesn't spend enough time with you. You offer suggestions on activities you can do together, only to be met with a blank stare or excuses about why your partner doesn't have the time to participate in an activity with you. Once you've done everything you can do to persuade your partner to spend more time with you, if you still aren't getting the results you want, it's time to practice letting go. This doesn't necessarily mean that you let go of your partner. It just means that you let go of the anxiety associated with the problem. Once you let go of that anxiety, you may find that your partner will actually want to spend more time with you, because you are less stressed-out. But even if this is not the case, you've let go of the stress associated with a potentially emotionally distant partner.

Mindful acceptance is looking at the thoughts and feelings that cause you anxiety, worry, or stress. As you examine these thoughts, ask yourself which of these thoughts concern things you have the power to change. Make a conscious decision to focus your energy only on those things in your life that you have the power to change. If you focus on those things that you cannot change, you are not using your energy to change the things that you can.

Decide right now that you will not feed your negative thoughts by giving in to them. Realize that it is natural to have negative thoughts, but having those thoughts does not mean that they have to control your life. Learn trust your own inner wisdom. While negative thoughts may come, you do not have to let them rule your life.

Another key to mindful acceptance is to understand that anxiety has a useful purpose. It is nature's way of letting us know that there is something wrong. Your anxiety protects you from harm, but sometimes it may do its job too well. Ask your anxiety if it is trying to protect you from something that you cannot change. Picture yourself thanking your anxiety for protecting you, and say to your anxiety, "I am now using my own inner wisdom to make positive choices in my life."

Mindful acceptance teaches us that each mistake is an opportunity for growth. Each mistake contains a lesson. If you never made a mistake, you would never have an opportunity to learn and grow. With mindful acceptance, you learn to accept your mistakes as signs that you are becoming a stronger and wiser individual.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) was developed as a method of introducing the techniques of mindfulness into psychotherapy. ACT is based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT), which is a theoretical framework developed by Steven Hayes of the University of Nevada. RFT is a way of looking at how language influences behavior, and how behavior influences languages. A corollary to RTF is that a large part of our reality, our world of experience, is constructed by the language we use, and the ways in which we relate that language to the real world. This would mean that a lot of the things that cause us anxiety, stress, depression, and other unpleasant thoughts and feelings, are the result of how we use language to interpret our world.

While Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) concentrates on teaching people how to better control their thoughts and feelings, ACT focuses on teaching people how to acknowledge and

accept their own internal dialog without feeling overwhelmed by those thoughts and feelings. It teaches the student/practitioner to be in the moment with those feelings and thoughts, without having to identify with them. This applies to unwanted thoughts and feelings as well. By seeing these as processes of the mind, acceptance increases.

One of the goals of ACT is to get in touch with what Buddhists call *true self*. True self is that internal observer who is watching these processes without becoming engaged in them. True self helps in the process of externalization. Externalization is the process of seeing the problem as separate from the identity and sense of self. By establishing this boundary between true self and thoughts/feelings as processes, the practitioner is better able to identify and clarify his/her own personal values, and to commit to them. This then brings more meaning to the life of the individual.

One of the core concepts of ACT is that psychological processes can often be self-destructive. Experiential avoidance is the practice of deliberately trying to avoid negative thoughts or feelings by telling yourself not to think about it or not to feel it. The problem with this is that telling yourself not to think about it is thinking about it. Experiential avoidance can lead to suffering. If a person has social anxiety, and avoids contact with other humans, this can lead to a lack of social support, important relationships, and friendships. This isolation, in turn, leads to suffering. If a victim of trauma or PTSD avoids places and behaviors that remind her of the place where the trauma occurred, her life choices have been limited. This limitation can also lead to suffering. In short, experiential avoidance leads to less freedom.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) uses the **FEAR** acronym to explain and identify such problems with experiential avoidance and cognitive entanglement. FEAR is as follows:

1. **F**usion with your thoughts
2. **E**valuation of experience
3. **A**voidance of your experience
4. **R**eason giving for your behavior

The antidote to the **FEAR** response is the **ACT** response, which is:

1. **A**cept your reactions and be present
2. **C**hoose a valued direction
3. **T**ake action

The goal of ACT is to develop psychological flexibility. This is achieved through the implementation of six core principles of ACT:

1. Cognitive defusion: Learning to perceive thoughts, images, emotions, and memories as what they are, not what they appear to be.
2. Acceptance: Allowing them to come and go without struggling with them.
3. Contact with the present moment: Awareness of the here and now, experienced with openness, interest, and receptiveness.
4. Observing the self: Accessing a transcendent sense of self, a continuity of consciousness which is changing.
5. Values: Discovering what is most important to one's true self.
6. Committed action: Setting goals according to values and carrying them out responsibly.

Since its development, ACT has been evaluated in nearly 100 different studies. All of these studies show that it is a highly effective method of achieving stress and anxiety reduction for a wide variety of disorders.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.10 FEAR to ACT**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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# Worksheet 01.10 FEAR to ACT

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) uses the **FEAR** acronym to explain and identify problems with experiential avoidance and cognitive entanglement. **FEAR** is as follows:

1. **F**usion with your thoughts
2. **E**valuation of experience
3. **A**voidance of your experience
4. **R**eason giving for your behavior

To practice moving from **FEAR** answer the questions that follow.

## **Fusion**

In the past, in what ways have you fused with your thoughts that might have led to anxiety or depression? That is to say, in what ways have you chosen to believe thoughts and feelings that didn't turn out to be true?

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## **Evaluation**

In the past, in what ways have you judged your feelings or thoughts as "good" or "bad," and how might these evaluations have led you to suffering?

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## **Avoidance**

In the past, in what ways might you have avoided thought or feeling by telling yourself, "Don't think about it" or "pretend I don't feel it?"

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# Worksheet 01.10 FEAR to ACT

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reason-giving

In the past, what reasons or excuses have you given for trying to avoid what you are thinking or feeling? How might those reasons have led to suffering?

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The antidote to the **FEAR** response is the **ACT** response, which is:

1. **A**ccept your reactions and be present
2. **C**hoose a valued direction
3. **T**ake action

To practice moving to **ACT** answer the questions that follow.

## Accept

In the present, what can you do to help you accept your thoughts and feelings without feeling you have to act on them?

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## Choose

In the present, what valued direction can you choose? How can you think in ways that support your values in life?

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## Take Action

In the present, what valued actions can you choose? How can you act in ways that support your values in life?

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## 01.11 Radical Acceptance

Radical acceptance means that you learn to accept yourself and others without judgment. It is a skill that can be learned in an afternoon, yet take a lifetime to master, especially in Western cultures where we are conditioned to strive for certain ideals of perfection. We are told by the media that if we don't drive the right car, wear the right clothes, eat the right foods, vote for the right political candidate and wear the right perfume, we will not be accepted by others. This conditioning must be overcome in order to achieve radical acceptance.

The first step in radical acceptance is to meditate on the assumptions we have created for ourselves. Examples of these might be, "I'm not handsome enough," or, "I'm not smart enough," or, "Nobody likes me." Radical acceptance recognizes such thoughts and feelings without making value judgments about them, and without trying to deny or affirm them. For example, the thought, "Nobody likes me," is not true, but the goal of radical acceptance is to simply note the fact that this thought is present in the observer's psyche, and not to make a truth value judgment about the contents of the statement. It can be accepted as a thought process while not having to be incorporated into the observer's sense of identity.

"Nobody likes me" is a judging statement as well, but when noting this we don't want to get involved in saying to ourselves, "Oh no, I've just made a judging statement! I'm wrong for doing that!" The reason we don't make such statements is that such statements themselves are judging statements, and we don't want to judge our judging. If we do, we'll continue on into endless spirals of judgment.

Instead, radical acceptance means that we always focus on trying to see the world as it is. From this perspective, we are less concerned about whether or not the thought or feeling is true as we are about whether or not it is helpful. Is it effective to have these thoughts or feelings? If not, can I let them go?

### Case Study: Juliet

Juliet had a series of relationships. Every time one of these ends, she goes into a downward spiral of emotional self-abuse, telling herself that she's not good enough to have a relationship, asking herself why she's such a "loser," and panicking at the thought of being alone yet again. This panic causes her to leap right into yet another relationship and repeat the same mistakes over and over again. Implicit in all these thought and feeling cycles is the theme, "What's wrong with me?"



By learning to radically accept herself just as she is, Juliet could come to realize that "This is the way I deal with emotions." Eventually she may even be able to accept herself with unconditional love, and see this quirk as just a thing she does, and not as a character flaw. When caught in these cycles, Juliet could remind herself that thoughts are not facts by asking herself, "Is it true that there is something wrong with me? Is it helpful or effective to think that there is something wrong with me?"

The irony is that by learning to accept these thoughts and feelings as a part of herself, it may lead to the realization that there is nothing wrong with her. Even if she never comes to that realization, she will be able to accept such thoughts as just a thing she does from time to time. It is perfectly natural to wonder "Is there something wrong with me;" however, such a question is just a thought, and not a fact.

Radical acceptance is the ability to see clearly the thoughts and feelings that are going on within us, as they occur, and to be able to accept them with love and openness as thoughts and feelings and not facts.

When Juliet began to practice mindful meditation, she came to understand that the panic produced by losing a relationship was caused by her desire to find the “perfect” man for her. By finding this idealized individual, she hoped to prove her own self-worth. In her mind, if she could find the perfect man, he would help her to become the perfect woman. As Juliet came to recognize that her idea of perfection was just an arbitrary standard she had imposed on herself, she was able to accept and even love herself, even with all of her self-perceived flaws. This diminished need to be “perfect” allowed her to actually move towards loving herself just as she was. This renewed self-confidence allowed her to enter into a relationship that later led to a happy and successful marriage.

Juliet credits the success of her relationship on the fact that, “I learned to be responsible for my own happiness and well-being. In my previous relationships, I had put the responsibility for my happiness on my partner(s), and this impossible situation eventually drove them away. Once I learned to accept responsibility for my own happiness, I found someone with whom to share that happiness.”

Radical acceptance is about minimizing experiential avoidance as much as possible. By meeting life head-on instead of trying to avoid certain aspects of it (such as unpleasant thoughts and emotions), we are able to live life more fully. According to Hoffman & Asmundson (2008), “Patients are encouraged to embrace unwanted thoughts and feelings – such as anxiety, pain, and guilt – as an alternative to experiential avoidance. The goal is to end the struggle with unwanted thoughts and feelings without attempting to change or eliminate them.”

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.11 Experiential Avoidance**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

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# Worksheet 01.11 Experiential Avoidance

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Think about some of the thoughts and feelings you've tried to get rid of in the past, then answer the following questions:

The thoughts I'd most like to get rid of are:

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The feelings I'd most like to get rid of are:

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The behaviors I'd most like to get rid of are:

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The memories I'd most like to get rid of are:

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# Worksheet 01.11 Experiential Avoidance

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you've created your list, look at the list of strategies below for avoiding experiences. Place a check mark by each strategy you've ever used in an effort to get rid of the thoughts, feelings, behaviors and memories that you listed on the previous page.

- ☐ Worrying about it
- ☐ Trying not to think about it
- ☐ Trying to distract myself
- ☐ Staying busy
- ☐ Finding other things to do
- ☐ Dwelling on the past
- ☐ Catastrophizing about the future
- ☐ Fantasizing about escaping the situation (e.g. quitting your job, leaving your spouse, etc.)
- ☐ Imagining revenge
- ☐ Imagining suicide
- ☐ Thinking "Life's not fair"
- ☐ Thinking "I must" or "I must not"
- ☐ Thinking "I should have" or "I would have" or "I could have"
- ☐ Second-guessing past decisions
- ☐ Anticipating future problems
- ☐ Blaming myself
- ☐ Shaming myself
- ☐ Guilt-tripping myself
- ☐ Blaming others
- ☐ Shaming others
- ☐ Guilt-tripping others
- ☐ Blaming the world
- ☐ Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.)
- ☐ Overeating, or not eating, as a method of stress relief
- ☐ Addictive behaviors (gambling, worrying, being depressed, "woe is me" pity parties)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Now ask yourself:

1. Did any of these strategies work in the long run?
2. Did any of these strategies actually make the things worse instead of better?
3. If you were able to live in the "now" of existence, instead of in the mind trap, how many of the things you were trying to get rid of would still be a problem?

Think of one thing from the list that you would like to get rid of. Go outside to your own sacred space, ground and center, and just allow yourself to experience the thing you were trying to get rid of. Open yourself completely to the experience in the present moment, without assumptions about the past or expectations about the future. Just be in the now with the thing you were trying to get rid of.

Did this change your experience? By accepting it instead of trying to avoid it, do you look at it in a different way? What did being in your sacred space add to the experience, if anything?

## 01.12 Letting Go

Mindful awareness, comprised of observing, describing, non-judging, and radical acceptance, allows us to objectively observe our negative or difficult thoughts and feelings. Once we have noted these, we next cultivate the ability to let them go.

It is human nature to think and feel. We tend to think that if we let go of thoughts and feelings, we become nothing. Rene' Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." But does that mean that if we stop thinking, we cease to exist? The first step in learning to let go is to realize that we are not our thoughts, nor are we our feelings. Our identity is something separate from our thought processes or emotions. It is the True Self that lies beyond the realm of thought and imagination.

Once we realize that thought and feeling are not who we are, and that self is something different from thoughts and feelings, we no longer need to struggle to cling to thoughts and feelings as a way of preserving identity.

One of the problems with automatized thought and feeling processes is that they may have become so automatic, that we are no longer consciously aware of them. Mindful awareness allows us to slow down and examine these processes once again by paying attention to the details of how they are formed. By observing these processes mindfully, we bring them back into our conscious awareness. When we are consciously aware of them, we can let them go.

Note that letting go does not necessarily mean that you let go of the thought or the feeling itself. The goal is to let go of the anxiety or distress caused by the thought or feeling. If you are troubled by a negative feeling, first ask yourself, "Could I let this go?"

The answer to this question is always, "yes." We can let go of anything. Since thoughts and feelings are nothing but processes, and the true self is in control of these processes, we can always make the decision to ignore or stop these processes.

The second question to ask yourself, when troubled by negative emotions, is, "Am I *willing* to let it go?"

The purpose of asking yourself this is to determine exactly why you feel the need to cling to it. Alfred Adler said that "all behavior is purposeful." By this, he meant that people don't do things without a reason. So there is always a reason for clinging to a negative thought or emotion. When asking yourself, "Am I willing to let this go?" the idea is to become aware of the function holding on to it would serve. If you can become aware of this reason, then you may find that it is easier to let it go. Always keep in mind that there is no rush to do this, nor is there any right or wrong way to do it. It simply is what it is.

The third and final question to ask yourself when preparing to let something go, is, "When will I be ready to let this go?"

We often cling to things because we are waiting on some event to occur before we let it go. John Lennon of the Beatles said, "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." Are you waiting on an event or situation to occur before you feel comfortable with letting go? If so, when is this event likely to happen, and what would it take for this event to happen? It could be that you are not mentally and emotionally prepared to let go just yet. If that is the case, then that's okay too. The purpose of asking the "when" question is to help you clarify the circumstances needed in order to let go.

An important point to remember when letting go is that letting go of the stress and anxiety associated with certain thoughts and feeling is not the same as letting go of the thoughts and feelings themselves. Suppose you've lost a loved one. This would probably produce a feeling of sadness and grief. Such a feeling is perfectly normal under the circumstances. But suppose this grief is so overwhelming that you cannot function. You can't go to work, you can't interact with your friends and family; all you can do is sit in your room in misery. In this case, letting go



would mean letting go of the anxiety that leads to the debilitation, while still being able to acknowledge the sadness and sense of loss.

So the goal is not to push away or ignore difficult emotions. All emotions are reactions to circumstances that we've experienced, and they are all therefore valid. The idea of letting go is to learn to experience these emotions in a way that does not lead to undue suffering or dysfunction. By externalizing these emotional processes; i.e., by identifying them as processes of the mind, and not as characteristics of our identity, we gain some space. By gaining this emotional distance, we are better able to see these processes and their causes more clearly. When we see them clearly, we can then decide if they are things we can change, or if they are things we need to accept. By subjecting our thoughts and feelings to this sort of mindful scrutiny, we are not engaging in avoidance behaviors. By not avoiding them, we learn to cope with them.

Frewen et al (2008) describe the process of letting go as a way of observing negative thoughts and emotions as they occur, without feeling the need to have to react to them. Their research demonstrated that people who report a higher level of mindfulness have less occurrence of negative automatic thoughts (rumination). This does not indicate that people with higher levels of mindfulness never have negative thoughts; it simply means that they are more proficient at dealing with these negative thought patterns when they occur. Since more mindful individuals are more practiced at letting things go, they may not be bothered as much by negative thoughts.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.12 Letting Go Worksheet and Diary Card**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for home study credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to submit this worksheet to get credit for the course.

To submit this worksheet online, visit the class discussion board at:

<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>



## Letting Go Diary Card

The Letting Go Diary Card is a way for students of mindfulness to practice letting go, and to chart their progress as they gain these skills. The questions below on the Letting Go Worksheet outline the process of letting go, and help to clarify exactly what it is that needs to be let go. The process for using the questions and the Letting Go Diary Card is as follows:

1. Note the circumstance in which you needed to practice letting go on the card in the space provided.
2. Note, on a scale of 1 to 10, how successful you are at letting go before reading the questions and practicing a mindful meditation.
3. Read and answer the questions below on the Letting Go Worksheet, then practice a brief mindful meditation.
4. Now rate your success, on a scale of 1 to 10, at letting go after answering the questions and doing the meditation.

There are seven spaces on the Diary Card: one for each day of the week. It may help to do at least one exercise a day for several weeks so that you may chart your progress with Letting Go. Just remember not to get caught up in trying to do things the “right” way. There is no right or wrong way to do the Letting Go Diary Card. It is simply a tool to help you gain experience with letting go.

## Worksheet 01.12.01 Letting Go

This *Letting Go Worksheet* is used in conjunction with the *Letting Go Diary Card*. Before using the Diary Card, it is often helpful to know exactly what it is that you need to let go of.

Imagine that you are trying to get to a friend's house, and you've never been there before. You ask your friend where his house is, and he responds, "In the United States." Obviously, that's not enough information to be able to find his house. He'd have to get more specific.

Letting go is like that. The more specific you can be about what it is you need to let go of, the more successful you will be. In fact, simply completing this exercise below may be enough to enable you to let go of the problem. Just remember to be as specific as possible when answering these six questions. If you are completing this workbook for the Mindfulness: An Introduction course through the Mindful Ecotherapy Center at [www.mindfulecotherapy.com](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.com) there is no need to write down your answers to this worksheet. You'd only need to complete the Letting Go Diary Card that follows. Complete at least one week's worth of exercises on the Diary Card.

### 1. Who is involved in the problem?

- a. Is the problem about another individual, or is it about me?
- b. If it's about another individual, is there something I can do to change the problem (remember, you can't change other people's behavior, you can only change your own)?
- c. If the problem is about me, is it something I can change?
- d. If it's something I can't change, is it something I can accept?
- e. If I can't accept it about myself, why not?

### 2. What is the nature of the problem?

- a. Specifically, what worries me about this event/situation?
- b. Is it something that is within my power to change?
- c. If it's in my power to change, what steps do I need to take in order to change it?
- d. If it's beyond my power to change, what steps do I need to take in order to accept it?
- e. What's the worst thing that can happen in this situation?

### 3. When is this problem likely to happen?

- a. Am I worried about something that happened in the past?
- b. If it's in the past, the past is over and done with. Why am I worrying about it now?
- c. Is it something that may happen in the future?
- d. If it may happen in the future, have I done all I can to prevent it from happening?
- e. If I've done all I can to prevent it, why am I still concerned about it (be specific)?

### 4. Where is the problem likely to happen?

- a. Is this problem associated with a certain place?
- b. Is this a place that I can avoid going to?
- c. If it's not a place I can avoid going to, is there something I can change about the situation?
- d. If there's nothing I can change about the situation, what would I need to change about myself in order to accept the situation?

## 5. How likely is this problem to occur?

- a. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no anxiety at all” and 10 = “maximum anxiety,” how worried am I about the problem?
- b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no chance at all” and 10 = “will definitely happen,” how likely is it that this problem will happen?
- c. If the rating from “a” is greater than the rating from “b,” am I needlessly worrying about a situation that isn’t likely to happen?

## 6. Why is this a problem?

- a. Being as specific as possible, why does this problem worry you?
- b. What would need to change in order for you to worry less about the problem?
- c. Is the answer in “b” something you have the power to change?
- d. If not, what would have to change in your thinking in order for you to be able to accept the problem?

Once you have answered all the questions above, write the specific nature of the problem in the column labeled “CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH YOU NEED TO PRACTICE ‘LETTING GO’ on the *Letting Go Diary Card* below. When describing the problem on the Diary Card, remember to be as specific as possible. For example, instead of writing, “I’m worried about money problems,” write something like, “I’m worried about making the house payment,” etc. in the space. Try to keep the problem focused on things you have the power to change. If it’s something you don’t have the power to change, try to focus on what you would have to change about your thinking in order for you to accept the problem ‘as is.’

After writing the specific nature of the problem on the Diary Card, rate your success on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no trouble at all letting go of this problem,” and 10 = “I simply cannot let go of this problem, no matter what.”

After rating your success, practice the mindful breathing exercise below. Try mindful breathing for at least ten minutes, but if that is not possible, do as much as you can. The amount of time isn’t as important as the exercise itself. After practicing mindful breathing, rate your “letting go” score again, using the same scale as above. Did the number change?

As you become more adept with different mindfulness techniques, you may want to experiment with them to see which ones help you the most in “letting go.” Keep your Diary Cards in a notebook so you can chart your progress as your skills grow.

If you ever get stuck, keep this worksheet handy so you may refer to it again as needed.

## Worksheet 01.12.02 Mindful Breathing

The Mindful Breathing Exercise may be used any time you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed, stressed out, or depressed and in need of “letting go.”

It is three simple steps, outlined below. You don’t have to do it for exactly ten minutes. You just do it for as long as is necessary. The answer to the question, “How long does it take?” is “as long as it takes.”

### STEP ONE

Focus on your breathing. Place one hand on your chest, and another over your navel. When breathing in and out, the hand over your navel should move up and down, while the hand over your chest should not move. Make the exhalation longer than the inhalation, and breathe deeply into your abdomen, from the diaphragm. Feel all the sensations of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Can you feel each individual muscle in your abdomen as you breathe in and out? Can you feel your nostrils flare with each breath? Can you sense the air being warmed by your body as you breathe?

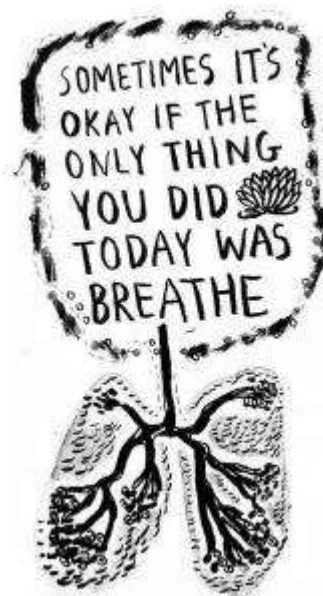
### STEP TWO

Leave Doing Mode and enter Being Mode. In Being Mode, you are not trying to go anywhere or do anything. You are simply ‘being.’ Note that if you engage in Mindful Breathing with the goal of ‘trying to relax’ or ‘trying to calm down,’ that ‘trying’ is ‘doing,’ and you are not doing. Your goal is to ‘be,’ not to ‘do.’

### STEP THREE

Leave Thinking Mode and enter Sensing Mode. This doesn’t mean that you’re ‘trying’ to stop thinking. Remember, ‘trying’ is ‘doing!’ You’re just refocusing your attention and concentration from your thinking to your senses. You are paying attention to what your senses are telling you. What are you seeing right now? What do you hear? Are there any scents where you are? Tastes? How does your body interact with this environment?

That’s it! Just use these three simple steps whenever you need a break from thinking or feeling or when your emotions overwhelm you. If it seems difficult to do at first, that’s okay. It’s a skill like any other. It becomes easier with practice. If it were easy the first time, you’d already be doing it!



## Worksheet 01.12.03 Letting Go Diary Card

pg. 1 of 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this journal is to chart your progress with practicing the art of “letting go.” Keep these diary cards as a way of marking your progress. Over time, you should see steady improvement in your “letting go” skills.

### To use this chart:

1. Record the date, then the circumstance in which you felt the need to “let go.”
2. Write down your estimate of how well you could let go before practicing mindfulness. Rate your success on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “not very well at all” to 10=“I was able to completely let go.”
3. Practice a mindfulness meditation exercise for 5-10 minutes or do the Letting Go Worksheet
4. Record your estimate of letting go again, on a scale of 1 to 10, after completing the meditation/doing the worksheet.
5. Compare the results. If you are completing this for course credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.com](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.com)), return this completed Diary Card with the rest of your worksheet materials.

DATE	CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH YOU NEEDED TO PRACTICE LETTING GO	SUCCESS BEFORE	SUCCESS AFTER	NOTE ANY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS OR INSIGHTS ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

## 01.13 Crystal Ball Thinking

We are very good at anticipating the thoughts, actions, and feelings of others (or at least we like to *think* we are). Theoretically, this has survival value. If you're around a dangerous person, it's probably a good idea to anticipate what they might do that could threaten your wellbeing. So we're good at it. The problem comes in when we anticipate what another person is feeling, and we get it wrong. How often have you guessed at what another person might be thinking or feeling? How often have you guessed incorrectly, and how did that person react?

In my private practice, the past gets brought up quite often between arguing couples. The justification for this sort of behavior is that when a partner has done something wrong in the past, the other partner automatically assumes that this behavior will continue in the future, based on past performance. The problem from the other partner's viewpoint is that, until someone invents a time machine, he or she cannot go back in time and correct past mistakes. So if the other partner continues to bring up the past, this individual will be constantly battling the ghosts of previous behaviors.

Likewise, a lot of arguments among family members come about because one family member guesses at what another family member is feeling at a given moment. Consider this conversation:

Jane: "What are you mad about?"

Joe: "I'm not mad about anything."

Jane: "Yes you are, I can tell. So what is it?"

Joe: "I told you, I'm not mad about anything."

Jane: "Come on, I know you. I can tell when you're mad!"

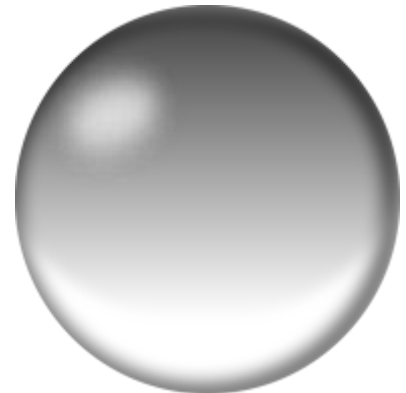
Joe: "I'M NOT MAD!"

In the above scenario, Jane's interpretation of Joe's emotional state became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although Joe wasn't angry at the start of the conversation, by the end of it he most definitely was! This is because we don't like to be told how we feel. Doing so invalidates our own right to self-determination at a fundamental level.

The easiest way to tell what a person is thinking or feeling at a given time is to simply ask them, and not to try to guess what their motivations or emotions might be. If you feel tempted to anticipate what a person is thinking or feeling, you are engaging in what I call *Crystal Ball Thinking*.

Unless you have a crystal ball, you cannot possibly know what another person's thoughts or feelings may be. Of course, if you ask them, they can always be deceptive in their answers, but if they are, then that's their responsibility, not yours. All you are responsible for is the information they give you, and how you choose to respond to that information.

The way to avoid Crystal Ball Thinking is to remember the skills of mindfulness. In being mode, there is no past, there is no future. There is only this present moment. If you are truly connected to the present moment, then you avoid the temptation to blame others for their past mistakes, or to try to anticipate what their future mistakes might be. You also learn to accept whatever the person may be feeling or thinking in the present moment as their responsibility, and not yours. The only responsibility you have is to change yourself to accommodate your own sense of wellbeing. If this involves changing how you respond to difficult people, the choice is still yours. You get to decide whether such a change is worth it or not. In that case, "acceptance" might mean that you've accepted that this person is not going to change, so it might be time to move on.



## **Rumination and Avoidance**

Rippere (1977) defined *rumination* as: “enduring, repetitive, self-focused thinking which is a frequent reaction to depressed mood.”

Such rumination is often associated with worries about events that occurred in the past or anxiety about events that may or may not happen in the future. Rumination has been positively correlated with an increase in symptoms of depression. Learning to decrease instances of rumination has been correlated with a reduction in symptoms of depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, et al, 2008). From a clinical standpoint, rumination could be seen as an obsession about the future. Persons who have a stronger tendency to ruminate also have a stronger tendency to worry about the future. They believe that their situation is hopeless; that they have no reason to expect that the future will be any different than the present or the past. By teaching them to recognize this as crystal ball thinking, they are more able to live in the moment and minimize the tendency to ruminate.

One of the keys to ending ruminating behavior may seem paradoxical at first. If a person is trapped in a cycle of rumination, such a cycle usually consists of a list of things that the person is worried about. Telling such an individual to avoid rumination is merely adding one more thing to the list of things that they already have anxiety about. Instead of focusing so much on breaking the cycle of anxiety, they should instead focus on accepting the ruminative cycle as a process of the brain. One way I've heard it put before is that, “Your brain is going to do what your brain is going to do, but you don't have to let it push you around.”

Rumination is also closely related to avoidance behavior. Hayes, et al (1996) conceptualize experiential avoidance behaviors as: “...unhealthy efforts to escape and avoid emotions, thoughts, memories, and other private experiences.”

Obviously if memories are being avoided, then those memories are necessarily about events that happened in the past. Once again, if crystal ball thinking is kept to a minimum, then regrets, ruminations and avoidance about those past events, and the thoughts and feelings associated with them, should diminish.

## **The Three Ps**

One way to minimize crystal ball thinking, and to therefore minimize rumination and avoidance, is to become conscious of thought patterns that conform to the Three Ps: permanent, personal, & pervasive.

Permanent thought patterns are patterns that assume that things cannot change. For example, “That’s the way it has always been in the past, and there is no reason to think that it will be any different in the future.” Note the use of the word, *always*. In order to disprove this statement, all that is necessary is to produce a single instance in which things were not “always this way.” Note also that the key to avoiding crystal ball thinking here is to validate the feeling behind the thought process without validating the conclusion. For example, if a client says to you, “This is the way I've always been. I can't help it,” you could validate their feeling while pointing out the contradiction in the following manner: “I understand that you feel that way, and sometimes it may feel to you that things will never change, but remember the other day when you did \_\_\_\_ ? That demonstrates that you aren't always this way, and that you are capable of doing things in a different way.”

Personal thought patterns are patterns in which an individual takes responsibility for things that may not be his fault. For example, suppose you are riding in a car with your friend Paul, who is driving. As you approach an intersection, the light turns red. Paul launches into a diatribe. “I swear, every traffic light in this town is out to get me! Every single one of these lights turns red when I get to the intersection!”

Paul has personalized the traffic lights. Traffic signals are not sentient beings. They don't know Paul's car from any other vehicle on the road. They are not acting out of some sense of malice towards Paul, yet Paul has taken it upon himself to perceive all the traffic signals in town as 'out to get me.' This relates to another aspect of crystal ball thinking: assuming the motives and/or motivations of others. In this extreme case, Paul has assumed that an inanimate object has a vendetta. If you substitute a human being for the traffic light, you can see how easy it is to assume motivations in other people that may not be there. In the conversation above between Joe and Jane, Jane has assumed a feeling in Joe that was not present...at least not at the beginning of their conversation. By mindfully living in the present moment, we avoid the 'crystal ball' temptation of trying to predict the emotional states of others. We also learn that we are not responsible for those states.

Pervasive thought patterns are patterns that lead us to believe that what is true in one situation is true in all situations. For example, suppose Jill has married a man who turned out to be a real loser. He can't keep a job, stays out all night, and generally has no regard whatsoever for what it means to be in a committed relationship. Jill finally has enough, and divorces this man. After the divorce, she often loudly pronounces to all of her friends that, "All men are losers. Why would I ever want another relationship?" There's an old saying that most Statistics 101 students are familiar with: One sample makes for sloppy statistics. In other words, Jill has drawn a conclusion about all men based on a sample of one admittedly poor specimen.

This idea of pervasiveness can carry over into individual, internal thought patterns as well. For example: "I really screwed that up; that's not surprising though, I screw everything up."

By becoming aware of thought patterns that are permanent, personal, and pervasive, we become aware of our tendencies toward crystal ball thinking. Things to look for when watching for such thought patterns are words like *always* and *never*. The goal is to move from absolute terms to relative terms by finding exceptions to such thought patterns. For example, to refute a statement such as, "I always screw things up," all that it is necessary to do is to find a single instance in where you didn't 'screw things up.'

By minimizing crystal ball thinking, we learn to minimize experiential avoidance and rumination. When we minimize avoidance and rumination, we move to mindfulness and radical acceptance.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.13 The Three Ps**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. Due to the personal nature of the questions on this sheet, it is not necessary to submit this worksheet in order to get home study credit for the course.



# Worksheet 01.13 The Three Ps

pg. 1 of 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In the spaces provided in the left column below, list some examples of your own Permanent, Personal and Pervasive self-talk. These are things you tell yourself about yourself. In the spaces in the right column, modify your statements so that they are no longer Permanent, Personal and Pervasive. Use the examples provided as guidelines.

Permanent Statements I Use	
"I always mess things up"	"Sometimes I mess things up, but overall I do my best in most situations."
Personal Statements I Use	
"Ralph looks mad. I must have done something to make him angry"	"Maybe Ralph's just having a bad day, and his mood has nothing to do with me."
Pervasive Statements I Use	
"Everything I do ends in disaster"	"Sometimes I feel that things always end in disaster, but occasionally things work out as well"

## 01.14 True Self

Think back for a moment to a time in your life when you knew exactly who you were, and what you wanted to be. It may have been a time in your childhood, or a time later on in your life. Or it may be that you've never thought about exactly who you were and who you wanted to be. That's okay too. Perhaps you've just never learned to acknowledge your own motivations. If this is the case, close your eyes and think for a moment about who you would be if there were no barriers keeping you from living up to your own potential. Remember that this is your own idea of who you are, and not someone else's. If you have one of those voices in your head telling you what you "should" be (usually from a dominating or domineering parent), set that voice aside and listen for the smaller, quieter voice that is you and only you.

Hold that vision firmly in your mind. Be present with it, without any expectations or assumptions. The vision you have right now in your mind is called your *True Self*. Your True Self is that part of you that recognizes when you've done something in character or out of character for you. It is the part of you that is the Internal Observer; the part that holds your highest aspirations and your highest dreams for yourself. The Humanist Psychotherapist Carl Rogers called it your *Ideal Self*.

### Radical Acceptance of Your True Self

You can never love another until you truly love yourself. The first step in learning to love yourself is to truly accept who you are. The first step in learning to accept who you are is to accept yourself with all your perceived flaws and imperfections, but also with all your good qualities. Being mindful means being willing to give yourself permission to make mistakes once in a while. It's been said, "When you lose, don't lose the lesson." The idea here is that each mistake can be an opportunity for learning and growth. The deeper lesson there is that there are no mistakes unless you choose to label them as such.

One way to look at your True Self is to accept that your True Self is the person inside of you that loves and feels loved by others, and feels loved by you. When problems arise in our lives, it is usually because we have lost sight of our True Selves, so it is important to know who we really are and what we really want.

The way this often plays out in relationships, is that we sometimes become so involved with the other person that we give up our True Selves in the process. Think back on any negative relationships you may have had in the past. Did you give up a part of your True Self in an effort to sustain that relationship?

Healthy relationships do not require that we sacrifice who we really are for the sake of another. We can compromise with our partners or other loved ones, but that compromise should never come at the cost of a part of ourselves, especially if we are living in True Self. One way to prevent this from happening is to ask yourself, "Am I doing this because this is what I want to do, or am I doing it because I'm afraid I'll lose this person if I don't?" The answer you give to that question will tell you if you are sacrificing your True Self for the sake of a relationship.

### Carl Rogers and the True Self

Carl Rogers' Person Centered Therapy postulates the existence of an Ideal Self. According to Rogers' theory of problem development, dysfunctions occur when an individual's perceived self and ideal self are in conflict. For example, if a person's ideal concept of self is as



a confident, successful person, but that person's perception of self is as a shy, introverted failure, the goal of therapy would be to move the idealized concept of self and the perceived concept of self into closer harmony with each other.

As noted earlier, the True Self is that internal observer we engage when we step outside of negative thought or feeling cycles and observe them from a distance. The True Self is also who we would be if we could shed all assumptions and expectations. Some have called this True Self the *Inner Child*. A goal of Mindfulness is to achieve *beginner's mind*, which is often called *child's mind* or *childlike mind*. The relationship here between beginner's mind and the True Self is hopefully obvious. The quality of a child's mind that is necessary to the practice of mindfulness is the quality of openness, and freedom from assumptions about the way things work. Likewise, True Self is the self that is not ruled by ego. It does not make any assumptions about self or others, or about the way the world works. True Self has no agenda. It simply is.

If we equate Rogers' Ideal Self with the True Self of mindfulness, we see that any perceived imperfections we find within ourselves are not flaws of character; instead, they are flaws of perception. When we learn to see those flaws as processes and not things, we come to realize that those processes have no bearing on who we actually are. Negative thoughts and feelings are separate from the True Self.

This concludes the *Mindfulness Skills* section of the workbook. The next section is *the Mindful Meditation* section.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 01.14 Living in True Self**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

To submit a question online, visit the class discussion board at:

<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>

## Worksheet 01.14 Living in True Self

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The humanist psychotherapist Carl Rogers spoke of the ideas of *Self-Image* and *Ideal Self*. This *Self-Image*, sometimes referred to as the *Perceived Self*, is the way we perceive ourselves to be. The *Ideal Self* is the image we have of how we would *like* to be. *True Self* is this *Ideal Self*. It is who we would choose to be if we were living up to our own highest expectations of ourselves. Identifying what your own *True Self* looks like is the first step in creating a road map to get there.

To create this outline of your own *True Self*, answer the questions below. Your answers are creating an autobiography of how you'd like to be. This autobiography is the substance of your *True Self*.

What do you care about? What gives your life passion and meaning?

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Who are you trying to become? What is the nature of your *True Self*?

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Your *Perceived Self* is how you see yourself now; your *True Self* is the person you wish to become. *True Self* is your own highest aspirations for yourself. On a scale of 0 to 10, how close do you feel you are to living fully in your *True Self*? Indicate by circling a number on the line below:

**PERCEIVED SELF --0—1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10—TRUE SELF**

## Worksheet 01.14 Living in True Self

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If the number you circled on the line on the previous page is anything less than ten, what sort of thoughts and behaviors would you have to change in order to move yourself closer to living in your own True Self?

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How could these different ways of believing and behaving create a more compassionate and positive reality in your life?

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Suppose you could change your thoughts and feelings so that you could live 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in your True Self. What would be different about you?

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# **SECTION TWO**

## **MINDFUL MEDITATIONS**

## **02.00 Mindful Meditations**

If you purchased this book on the Mindful Ecotherapy Center's website there were two audio files that came with the book's download. They were the *Basic Mindful Meditation* and the *Mindful Body Scan Meditation*. If you did not purchase the course you may download the audio files from the website at <http://mindfulecotherapy.com/meditation-recordings/>

If you are taking this course as part of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Facilitator Certification courses, the meditation recordings are included in the course materials on the website.

The activities in this section of the book are to listen to each of these recordings and to complete the accompanying worksheets on the next pages.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 02.01 Reflections on the Basic Mindful Meditation**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

To submit a question online, visit the class discussion board at:

<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Worksheet 02.02 Reflections on the Mindful Body Scan Meditation**

Go on to the next page to complete the activity worksheet. If you are taking this course for credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to certify that you have completed all the worksheets in this workbook prior to taking the post-test.

To submit a question online, visit the class discussion board at:

<http://mindful-ecotherapy.freeforums.net/thread/2/worksheets-mindfulness-introduction>

## Worksheet 02.01 Basic Mindful Meditation

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Before engaging in the Basic Mindful Meditation exercise, rate yourself on all the dimensions listed below by circling the appropriate number in the appropriate space. After completing this worksheet, listen to the Basic Mindful Meditation audio recording that came with this course. You may also download this mp3 by visiting <http://mindfulecotherapy.com/meditation-recordings/>

When you have completed the Basic Mindful Meditation by listening to the recording and following its suggestions, complete the worksheet on the next page, and compare your results. Did your numbers change?

### STRESS

TOTALLY STRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

### DEPRESSION

TOTALLY DEPRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CALM

### HAPPINESS

TOTALLY UNHAPPY---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY HAPPY

### DISCOMFORT

TOTALLY UNCOMFORTABLE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY COMFORTABLE

### CONCENTRATION

TOTALLY DISTRACTED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CONCENTRATING

### CLARITY

TOTALLY FUZZY ---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CLEAR

### BODY TENSION

TOTALLY TENSE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED



## Worksheet 02.01 Basic Mindful Meditation

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have completed the Basic Mindful Meditation exercise, rate yourself on all the dimensions listed below by circling the appropriate number in the appropriate space.  
Did any of your numbers change?

### STRESS

TOTALLY STRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

### DEPRESSION

TOTALLY DEPRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CALM

### HAPPINESS

TOTALLY UNHAPPY---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY HAPPY

### DISCOMFORT

TOTALLY UNCOMFORTABLE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY COMFORTABLE

### CONCENTRATION

TOTALLY DISTRACTED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CONCENTRATING

### CLARITY

TOTALLY FUZZY ---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CLEAR

### BODY TENSION

TOTALLY TENSE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

## Worksheet 02.02 Mindful Body Scan Meditation

pg. 1 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Before engaging in the Mindful Body Scan Meditation exercise, rate yourself on all the dimensions listed below by circling the appropriate number in the appropriate space. After completing this worksheet, listen to the Mindful Body Scan Meditation audio recording that came with this course.

You may also download this mp3 by visiting <http://mindfulecotherapy.com/meditation-recordings/>

When you have completed the Mindful Body Scan Meditation by listening to the recording and following its suggestions, complete the worksheet on the next page, and compare your results. Did your numbers change?

### STRESS

TOTALLY STRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

### DEPRESSION

TOTALLY DEPRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CALM

### HAPPINESS

TOTALLY UNHAPPY---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY HAPPY

### DISCOMFORT

TOTALLY UNCOMFORTABLE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY COMFORTABLE

### CONCENTRATION

TOTALLY DISTRACTED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CONCENTRATING

### CLARITY

TOTALLY FUZZY ---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CLEAR

### BODY TENSION

TOTALLY TENSE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

## Worksheet 02.02 Mindful Body Scan Meditation

pg. 2 of 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have completed the Mindful Body Scan Meditation exercise, rate yourself on all the dimensions listed below by circling the appropriate number in the appropriate space. Did any of your numbers change?

### STRESS

TOTALLY STRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

### DEPRESSION

TOTALLY DEPRESSED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CALM

### HAPPINESS

TOTALLY UNHAPPY---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY HAPPY

### DISCOMFORT

TOTALLY UNCOMFORTABLE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY COMFORTABLE

### CONCENTRATION

TOTALLY DISTRACTED---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CONCENTRATING

### CLARITY

TOTALLY FUZZY ---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY CLEAR

### BODY TENSION

TOTALLY TENSE---0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 TOTALLY RELAXED

# **SECTION THREE**

## **MINDFULNESS-BASED**

### **THERAPY MODELS**

### 03.01 Differentiation

Murray Bowen, the founder of Natural (or Family) Systems Theory, believed that problems occur in families due to fused relationships. A fused relationship is a relationship in which two (or more) members of a family become so emotionally entangled with each other that it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell where the thoughts and feelings of one person end and the thoughts and feelings of the other person begin. In a fused relationship, a person feels 'smothered' by the needs and desires of another person. In such a relationship, one person is absorbing the anxiety and stress for the entire relationship. He or she is held responsible for the success or failure of the relationship. Such a person has taken on the responsibility for the emotional wellbeing of the other person(s) in the family.

Such a state can be emotionally and cognitively debilitating to the persons enmeshed in the dysfunctional relationship.

At the other end of the spectrum lies *differentiation*.

One definition of *differentiation* could be: "The ability to separate thinking and feeling about a given relationship or situation."

When a person lacks the ability to separate their emotions from their thoughts, that person is said to be *undifferentiated*. Being undifferentiated means being flooded with feelings and powerful emotions. Such a person has a great deal of difficulty thinking rationally. Additionally, such people may feel that they are responsible for other people's feelings, and that other people are responsible for their feelings. They lack the ability to tell where their feelings end and other people's feelings begin.

The process of differentiation involves learning to free yourself from emotional dependence and codependence on your family and/or romantic relationships. Differentiation involves taking responsibility for your own emotional well-being, and allowing others to be responsible for their own emotional well-being.

A fully differentiated person can remain emotionally attached to the family without feeling responsible for the feelings of other family members.



### Mindful Awareness

One of the skills we develop in the practice of mindfulness is the skill of *acceptance*. Acceptance allows us to experience emotions without feeling obligated to react to them. This is done by noting the emotion, and then letting go of the thought processes that the emotion generates. By letting go of these negative thought processes, we come to accept other people for who they are, without feeling the need to try to manipulate the situation or to take responsibility for the emotional outcome of our interactions with other people.

An undifferentiated person can benefit from mindfulness by learning to accept the flood of emotions that blocks rational thought. The goal of acceptance in differentiation isn't to become a totally rational person, devoid of emotion.

Instead, the goal is to practice *wise mind*. Wise mind is the balance of emotional mind and rational mind, in perfect harmony.

As mindful awareness increases, acceptance of others increases as well. As acceptance of others increases, differentiation also increases.

### Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Differentiation

The primary goal of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is to modify maladaptive thought processes in order that we may obtain more positive consequences. CBT is a type of metacognition, or "thinking about thinking." Therapists and counselors who use CBT are

helping their patients to focus on their belief systems and to examine the thoughts and feelings that lead to consequences they may not want. By changing those thought processes, the consequences of those belief systems should change.

A person who is not differentiated generally believes that he/she is responsible for the happiness of others, and that others should be responsible for his/her happiness as well. This idea usually manifests itself in the form of, "If \_\_\_\_\_ would just behave the way I want him to, then I'd be happy," or, "She expects me to make her happy by doing \_\_\_\_\_."

As mindful awareness increases, practitioners of mindfulness come to realize that each individual is responsible for his or her own happiness. By being present in the moment, a practitioner of mindfulness comes to realize that "it is what it is." In other words, by accepting that we are responsible for our own emotional wellbeing, and others are responsible for theirs, we learn to become fully differentiated.

### **Case Study: Harry and Sally**

Harry and Sally, a married couple in their mid-thirties, were having difficulties after ten years of marriage. After the birth of their second child, Harry felt that Sally had become more emotionally distant and that she had turned into a complete stranger. Sally felt that Harry was smothering her by making far too many demands on her time and attentions. Harry felt that he would be much happier with the relationship if Sally would pay more attention to his needs, and less attention to the needs of the children. Sally felt that she would be much happier in the marriage if Harry would just, "Back off and let me have some space."

As Sally and Harry began to practice mindfulness skills, their mindful awareness grew, as did their ability to achieve radical acceptance.

Eventually Harry was able to see that instead of relying on Sally to, "Make me happy," he could be responsible for his own happiness. Sally came to realize the same. As Harry learned to take responsibility for his own happiness, his demands on Sally's attention decreased. As these demands decreased, Sally felt less pressured to try to 'make' Harry happy. As these pressures and demands on Sally's time decreased, she became more willing to spend time with Harry, because, "I don't feel as if he's smothering me anymore. He's learned to be happy with himself, and I don't feel as if I have to work to make him happy."



## 03.02 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

According to Bach and Hayes (2002): “Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is based on the view that many maladaptive behaviors are produced by unhealthy attempts to avoid or suppress thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations (Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette & Strosahl, 1996). Among other components, patients are taught (a) to identify and abandon internally oriented control strategies, (b) to accept the presence of difficult thoughts or feelings, (c) to learn to “just notice” the occurrence of these private experiences, without struggling with them, arguing with them, or taking them to be literally true, and (d) to focus on overt behaviors that produce valued outcomes.”

ACT has a wide variety of clinical applications. Research has demonstrated that it is especially useful in helping to reduce negative behaviors and their impact by teaching practitioners to accept troubling and stressful thoughts and emotions instead of fighting them. Acceptance of these thoughts and emotions then keeps them from interfering with desired positive behaviors (Bond & Bunce, 2000). ACT has also been used to increase acceptance (tolerance) of chronic pain, even if the pain itself is not reduced (Hayes, Bissett, et al., 1999).

### ACT: A Contextual Approach

Steven C. Hayes, of the University of Nevada, Reno, is the founder of ACT. It is a contextual approach, meaning that it is based on the four factors of Contextual Therapy. These factors are: 1. facts pertinent to the client (medical history, genetic factors, physical health, employment, etc.); 2. individual psychology (the patient’s psychodynamic constitution); 3. Systemic interactions (how the patient interacts with the family system, and other factors pertaining to the biopsychosocial context in which the patient lives), and 4. Relational ethics (the unwritten and often unspoken rules about how the patient interacts with her family, and how the family interacts with her). The “context” of contextual approaches refers to all of the factors that make up a person’s personal narrative; her life story. Contextual therapies believe that all behavior, even maladaptive behavior, is purposeful when examined in the patient’s context. From this viewpoint, a therapist asks, “What is the function of the dysfunction?” In other words, what contextual processes are serving to maintain the problematic interactions? The basic premise behind ACT is that a certain amount of suffering in the form of anxiety, stress, depression and other troublesome thoughts and behaviors, is inevitable. ACT seeks to minimize the negative impact of negative thoughts and feelings by teaching practitioners how to accept them. This is often expressed with the acronym ACT: **A**ccept the effects of life’s hardships, **C**hoose directional values, and **T**ake action.



### Relational Frame Theory (RFT)

Another key element of ACT is relational frame theory (RFT). One of the aspects of this approach is the theory that many psychopathologies are the result of attempts to avoid negative internal thoughts, feelings and behaviors. RFT examines how we use our language and vocabulary to remain trapped in these cycles of approach/avoidance. By examining the language we use to contextualize such situations, we are able to restructure these internal

dialogues so that they have more positive outcomes. We do so by accepting that negative thoughts and feelings are a normal part of existence.

### **Core Processes of ACT**

Hayes (2005) describes six core processes of ACT: 1. acceptance, 2. cognitive defusion, 3. being present, 4. self as context, 5. valuing, and 6. committed action. Wilson et al (1996) provides a method for using these six core processes in therapeutic interventions. An overview of this process would be:

1. **Acceptance:** This is the “A” portion of ACT. The first step in acceptance in ACT is to assess the patient’s patterns of avoidant behavior. These behaviors are then re-contextualized to patterns of acceptance.
2. **Cognitive Defusion:** If the therapeutic goal is to reduce anxiety, and effort is a cause of anxiety, then “trying hard” to minimize anxiety only generates even more anxiety. By examining this paradox in context, ACT *defuses* it by allowing the patient to recognize that thoughts and feelings are just processes of the mind. Thoughts and feelings are not facts; they are merely thoughts and feelings.
3. **Being Present:** attempting to avoid internal negative processes is akin to trying to run away from your own shadow. By turning to face these processes instead, patients learn to accept them without having to engage in the downward spiral they tend to create. This is done by avoiding the tendency to assume that thoughts and feelings are facts, but instead asking yourself, “Is acting on this thought helpful or effective?”
4. **Self as Context:** Here the patient learns to step back from “self in content,” and to engage “self in context.” This idea is similar to the process of externalization in Narrative Therapy. The patient is taught to engage the objective internal observer (True Self) to recognize that thoughts and feelings are content separate from the context of the True Self.
5. **Valuing:** ACT defines this as, “Choosing a direction and establishing willingness (acceptance)” to focus on process instead of content. This means learning to avoid the temptation to confuse values with goals. ACT enhances a client’s motivation to work towards values by engaging in the process of living, rather than becoming stuck in focusing on the content of negative thoughts and emotions.
6. **Committed Action:** This is the “C” portion of ACT. In the final stages of therapy, the patient makes a commitment to stop trying to avoid the past and to move forward by continuing to seek opportunities for further empowerment.

### **ACT Techniques and Protocols**

Techniques in ACT include the use of metaphors, paradoxes, and experiential activities. Gifford, Hayes, and Stroschal (2010) define several protocols for designing these techniques. Some of these include:

1. **Creative hopelessness:** In this protocol, patients are asked to examine things that they have tried to make better, and to see which of these techniques have actually worked. For those that have not worked, they are asked to “make space” for something else to happen. This protocol encourages a 180-degree turn from behaviors that have not worked in the past. In short, “If what you’re doing isn’t working, try something else.”
2. **Acceptance techniques:** Patients are asked to reduce their motivation to engage in avoidance behaviors by unhooking their thoughts and feelings from their actions. This acceptance strategy allows them to realize that they don’t necessarily have to act on thoughts and feelings just because they are experiencing them.



3. Deliteralization (cognitive defusion): In this protocol, patients learn to observe the process without getting caught up in the outcome. By learning that thoughts are simply processes, not outcomes, the content of maladaptive thoughts can be *deliteralized* or *defused* so that they don't have to become outcomes.
4. Valuing: In this protocol, patients are asked to focus on the things that give their lives meaning. By making choices on values, the client develops a clearer sense of self. This helps to draw the distinction between values and goals.
5. Self as context: This is a shift from content to context. This protocol allows the client to use her values to define an identity that is separate from the content of her experience. It is designed to help the client realize her identity is not the sum of the contents of her experience.

### **ACT Resources**

There are several sites that contain resources on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. You may wish to bookmark these for future reference:

ACT for Anxiety Disorders

<http://www.ACT-for-Anxiety-Disorders.com>

Acceptance and Mindfulness -- New Harbinger

<http://www.acceptanceandmindfulness.com>

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

<http://www.acceptanceandcommitmenttherapy.com>

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine at UMASS Boston

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>

Relational Frame Theory

<http://www.relationalframetheory.com/>

Mindfulness from a Buddhist Perspective—Pema Chödrön

<http://www.shambhala.org/teachers/pema/>

### 03.03 Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was created by Marsha Linehan, PhD as a method of treating Borderline Personality Disorder. Prior to DBT, the treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) met with limited success. DBT, a type of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), has been demonstrated to be an effective treatment not only for BPD, but for many other dysfunctions as well.

DBT is founded on the principle of the Hegelian Dialectic. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept of the dialectic is usually described as: thesis/antithesis/synthesis, wherein the thesis is the theory or idea in question, the antithesis is the idea's polar opposite, and synthesis is a fusion of thesis and antithesis. DBT examines the dialectics behind maladaptive thought patterns and attempts to achieve a synthesis in order to restore balance to the psyche. For example, people with BPD often engage in *splitting*, in which they see a person either as all bad or all good. In this case, "all good" would be the thesis, and "all bad" would be the antithesis. A synthesis of these two ideas would be the realization that sometimes bad people can do good things, and sometimes good people can do bad things. DBT makes use of the dialectic to challenge maladaptive patterns of behavior.

Another example, and one of the major dialectics used in DBT, is the Acceptance vs. Change dialectic. In this dialectic, the patient learns to accept her flaws and imperfections, and to come to the realization that it is okay not to be "perfect," while at the same time realizing that making changes in destructive coping patterns could lead to a happier, more productive life.



DBT grew out of Linehan's work with BPD patients in the 1970s. She had this to say about the beginnings of the model: "People who meet the criteria for BPD almost always hate themselves, so I figured I needed to accept them myself, and then teach them how to accept themselves. If you don't accept yourself as you are, you can't change. It's a

paradox, but true."

#### Fundamental DBT Concepts

One of the fundamental assumptions of DBT is that patients are doing the best they can. Adler (1957) said that, "All behavior is purposeful when you understand the context." According to the tenets of DBT, patients behave the way they do because at some point in time those behaviors yielded beneficial results. Over time, these patterns of behavior may not remain as successful, but patients become stuck in those patterns because they don't know how to change.

Another assumption of DBT is that patients are motivated and willing to change. When a patient becomes stuck in a pattern of behavior, she may not be able to see a way out. This does not mean that she doesn't want to change. She knows her impulsive and maladaptive patterns may be leading her to consequences she doesn't want to experience. In short, BPD patients often have a strong motivation and commitment to change.

The third and final fundamental assumption of DBT is that radical acceptance is essential to recovery. The paradox at the heart of DBT is that before you can change, you must first accept yourself exactly the way you are. This means examining yourself non-judgmentally, without blaming, shaming or guilt. By coming to the realization that they were doing the best they knew how in a given situation, patients learn to accept that they are human, and they are entitled to

make mistakes. This acceptance of self then frees them up emotionally and mentally and allows them to move forward towards change.

### **DBT and Emotional Regulation**

A common problem in most mental dysfunctions and disorders is the tendency to become overwhelmed by powerful emotions. Such emotional flooding tends to disengage the mind's capacity for rational thought. DBT uses mindfulness to create a space between overpowering emotions and the patient. By learning to step back from these emotions, patients come to see them as processes of the mind, and not necessarily as components of their identity. It's not, "I'm a bad person because I'm having bad feelings." DBT uses Mindfulness to teach patients that, "I'm a good person who occasionally has negative thoughts and feelings, and that's okay."

### **DBT: The Process**

DBT is a long-term therapeutic intervention. Maladaptive behavior patterns can often be difficult to change, especially in the case of Borderline Personality Disorder. Because of this, DBT interventions routinely last two years or longer.

DBT patients have two sessions per week. One of these sessions is a skills training session (often in group format) and the other is an individual session with a DBT therapist. DBT therapists also offer coaching calls by telephone as a method of crisis management. When using such coaching calls it is important that the patient understand and agree to the limits of confidentiality regarding the sharing of clinical information by telephone.

Skills Training in DBT is comprised of four modules: distress tolerance, core mindfulness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

*Core mindfulness* is the cornerstone of the other three modules. By learning mindfulness skills, patients learn to live in the moment. Since most anxiety and depression is rooted in thoughts and feelings about past or future events, mindfulness skills help patients overcome such anxieties by focusing on the "now" of existence. Mindfulness skills also help patients with Borderline Personality Disorder to overcome the tendency to make assumptions about situations, and to simply see what is there.

*Distress tolerance* works by teaching patients to find ways to distract themselves from troubling thought and feeling patterns that are self-destructive. Instead of engaging in cutting behavior, for example, a DBT student might do something nice for someone they're angry with. Patients are taught to know their bodies, and how their bodies react to certain emotional states. By becoming familiar with the physiological changes their bodies go through as a precursor to a stressful state, patients gain more space and time in which to engage in distress tolerance skills. By examining their own beliefs and assumptions about the stressful situations, the patients also learn to create less maladaptive responses to such situations.

The *emotional regulation* module focuses on reducing and minimizing the intensity of overwhelming emotional cycles of response. Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder are by definition highly emotional people. In order to fit in with less emotionally-sensitive people, many people with Borderline Personality Disorder have learned to suppress stronger emotions. Over time, this suppression leads them to have difficulty in identifying cues that indicate the onset of a strong emotional cycle. In many cases, the tendency to suppress emotions can lead to the eventual inability to define subtle nuances of emotion. Most, if not all, emotions tend to become identified with one emotional state. For example, sadness, fear, and guilt may all be expressed as anger. The emotional regulation module focuses on learning to identify emotions so that their negative impact may be successfully minimized.

People with Borderline Personality Disorder often feel socially isolated simply because of their dysfunctional patterns of interaction. They literally don't know how to behave in certain social situations. The *interpersonal effectiveness* module helps them to learn the skills necessary to navigate day-to-day social interactions. By learning to examine and challenge their negative assumptions about social situations, patients learn more positive resolutions to those situations. As their skills in social situations increase, their fear of abandonment diminishes.

### **Other Uses of DBT**

Although DBT was created to treat patients with Borderline Personality Disorder, it has also been used to successfully treat many other dysfunctions. DBT has been demonstrated to be particularly effective with addiction issues and anxiety disorders. There are, however, some cases in which DBT might not be effective. Since it is a long-term treatment program, requiring two sessions per week, it is often quite expensive. People with limited financial resources might not be able to have access to such services. DBT also requires that the patient have a high motivation and commitment to change. It is an intense form of intervention, requiring a lot of hard work. If a patient is not committed to the process, DBT might not be the most effective form of therapy.

## 03.04 Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

### Origins of MBCT

Jon Kabat-Zinn developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) as an eight-week program for people with stress-related health issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and chronic pain. The success of Kabat-Zinn's program let Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale to create Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) as a means of preventing relapse for their patients who had been treated for chronic depression issues.

Segal, Williams and Teasdale released their book, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse* in 2002. This work is the definitive text on MBCT.

### What is MBCT?

Segal, Williams and Teasdale adapted Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program for specific use with people suffering from chronic depression. MBCT is the result of this modification. MBCT helps practitioners understand the nature of depression. Students of MBCT learn the specific states and conditions that leave them vulnerable to downward spirals of depression. MBCT also uses radical acceptance strategies to help patients overcome feelings of inadequacy that lead to cycles of depression. Research into the effectiveness of MBCT in preventing relapse (a return to depressive symptoms) demonstrates that the techniques of MBCT can reduce rates of depressive relapse by as much as 50% (Ma and Teasdale, 2004; Teasdale et al, 2000).



### MBCT and Depression

The most common treatment for depression is antidepressants. While antidepressants can alleviate the symptoms of depression, they do nothing to treat the root causes of the depressive state, and when the patient stops taking the medication, the symptoms can return. Depression is often described as a “bottomless pit” or a “black hole.” Once a person has entered this state, it is very difficult to climb out of the pit of depression.

As the symptoms of depression worsen, hopelessness increases. Physical ailments often accompany the depression. These physical maladies are generally caused by the depression and not by any physical illness. If allowed to progress far enough, this sense of hopelessness and helplessness can lead to suicidal thoughts.

A person who has experienced one major depressive episode has about a 50% chance of having another. After a second episode, the risk of having a third rises to somewhere between 80% and 90% (Teasdale et al, 2000).

One theory of problem development with depression says that negative thinking leads to negative moods. Research tends to support this theory. The reverse is also true: negative mood leads to negative thinking. When a person starts to consider himself a failure, or when hope seems to have disappeared, both negative thoughts and negative moods reappear.

This pattern of brooding over negative thoughts is called *rumination*. When rumination begins, a return to depression is almost inevitable. Rumination occurs because the depression sufferer

is trying to seek a solution; he is looking for a way out of the depression cycle. Paradoxically, rumination only serves to intensify feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, which in turn reinforce the depression, making things worse instead of better.

MBCT helps to defuse this downward spiral of depression by allowing practitioners to identify these negative cycles of thought and mood, and to slow or stop the process of rumination before it spirals out of control.

### **How Does MBCT Work?**

As noted above, depression sufferers often describe the experience as being at the bottom of a well or a pit. In such a situation, a sort of mental tunnel vision sets in. MBCT draws on mindfulness skills to help practitioners identify the signals of such negative interactional patterns early, before they have a chance to develop into a full-blown depression. Mindfulness allows the patient to see that negative thought and mood cycles are simply processes. They do not have to choose to participate in those cycles if they do not wish to.

As depression sets in, a person tends to withdraw and set up barriers of non-feeling as a protective measure. Retreating behind this wall of non-feeling results in a state of anhedonia: the inability to feel pleasure in things that the patient once found pleasurable. One of the skills of mindfulness is focusing on one thing at a time. By combining this skill with the skills of observing and describing, a depression sufferer is able to lower the barriers of non-feeling and again begin to experience pleasurable thoughts, feelings and activities.

A great deal of rumination involves anxieties about past events or worries about possible future events. MBCT draws on the mindfulness skill of being present in the moment. By focusing only on the “now,” an MBCT practitioner avoids the tendency to make assumptions about future events or to engage in regrets over past events. By living in the present, the patient breaks the rumination cycle that leads to deeper states of depression.

Another goal of the rumination cycle is to view negative moods as problems to be solved. This tendency leads to self-reinforcing cycles of negativity, especially if faced with an insoluble problem. Instead of trying to find a solution to the depression, MBCT teaches the patient to enter into *being mode*. From this mode, the depression is no longer a problem to be solved. It is simply a transitory state of mind. By learning to be still and wait for the depression to pass, the rumination cycle is broken. If there is no problem to be solved, then there is no need to find a solution, and there is no reason for the rumination.

Mindfulness and MBCT allow a person to become more aware of the patterns of thought and behavior that lead to her depressive states. By identifying these cycles and increasing awareness of them, she learns that such states are not things to be battled. They are simply transitory processes. As she comes to accept them as a part of herself, she comes to realize that fighting the depression only increases the depressive symptoms. But by engaging in being mode, she finds that there is nothing to fight.

### **MBCT Programs**

MBCT programs are based on Kabat-Zinn’s eight week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. Consequently, MBCT programs are usually eight weeks in length, and consist of one session per week, usually two hours long. A different skill is covered each week, and homework assignments are usually given in the form of directives. The goal of MBCT is to move patients from reacting to negative circumstances to responding to them. The goal of MBCT is not to find relaxation or happiness, but to learn to accept that negative thought and feeling cycles occur. MBCT teaches patients how to avoid getting drawn into self-reinforcing cycles of rumination and avoidance behavior.

MBCT programs are generally eight weeks long, and usually follow the outline below:

*Week 1* consists of an introduction to mindfulness and an explanation of the foundations of the practice.

*Week 2* teaches students how to cultivate patience and to become more aware of perceptions by using the skills of observing and describing.

*Week 3* usually involves learning to shift from doing mode into being mode by ceasing to strive against emotional states. In this class, practitioners learn to minimize avoidance behavior. Basic mindful meditation skills are also usually taught at this time.

*Week 4* helps students learn to differentiate between responding and reacting by introducing the idea of viewing their perceptions non-judgmentally.

*Week 5* usually incorporates group reflections on how the practice of mindfulness has brought change to their lives.

*Week 6* Incorporates a mindful walking meditation and lessons on communicating mindfully by being present and minimizing the tendency to avoid difficult topics of conversation.

*Week 7* focuses on building trust and self-reliance.

*Week 8* ends the series by encouraging students to continue learning. There is also a review and time for reflection from students and instructors.

## **Resources**

CREST MBCT Training Seminars

[http://psych-srv3.colorado.edu/~crest/?page\\_id=233](http://psych-srv3.colorado.edu/~crest/?page_id=233)

Mindful Living Programs

Online Training in MBCT and MBSR

<http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/onlinecourse.php>

Mindfulness Across the Globe

List of links to Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Centers worldwide

[http://www.mbct.com/Resources\\_Main.htm](http://www.mbct.com/Resources_Main.htm)

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Official Site of the founders of MBCT, Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale

<http://www.mbct.com>





## 03.05 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

### Foundations of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, M.D. began using the techniques of mindfulness with his patients in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This work eventually led to the development of the Mindfulness -Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Since that time, there has been a wealth of research into the benefits of mindfulness. The seminal work by Kabat-Zinn on the use of mindfulness is *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (1994).

The program as designed by Kabat-Zinn combines mindfulness and yoga in an eight-week intensive training program. It began at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and is now offered at over 200 clinics and medical centers throughout the world. Nearly three decades of research into MBSR and mindfulness continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in dealing with a wide range of both mental and physical health care problems.

### What Is MBSR?

MBSR is an eight-week intensive course in using mindfulness as a tool to reduce stress. Since its inception in 1979, over 20,000 people have completed the program. MBSR is heavily evidence-based. It is one of the more well-researched programs in history. It is also one of the most widespread stress reduction programs in the world.

The core concept of MBSR is to learn to step out of autopilot and to become fully aware of what is happening in our lives at any given moment. This is accomplished by moving from doing mode, in which our minds become preoccupied with completing the tasks of the day, and entering into being mode, where we simply allow ourselves to experience our perceptions of the world. By entering being mode we disengage from the “doing” activities of rumination and avoidance behaviors. We stop trying to find solutions to problems that may have no solution. We just allow ourselves the freedom to “be.” In gaining this freedom, we learn to let go of the stress that accompanies negative thought and feeling cycles.



### Applications for MBSR

Kabat-Zinn created MBSR as a stress reduction program in 1979. Since that time, studies have examined the use of mindfulness in a wide variety of applications. Some of these include:

- Astin (1997) found that mindfulness meditation increased sense of control over the practitioner's life circumstances and enhanced their spiritual experiences.
- Barnes, et al (2004) found that meditation helped to reduce blood pressure and heart rate in youth.
- Brown & Ryan (2003) demonstrated that mindfulness increases a sense of wellbeing.
- Carson, et al (2001) found that MBSR alleviated symptoms of stress in cancer patients, and also improved their overall moods.
- Davidson, et al (2003) studied the power of mindfulness meditation to improve immune system functioning.
- Kabat-Zinn (1982) studied the effects of mindfulness on the management of chronic pain. Although participants indicated that there was no decrease in the severity of the pain after participating, they did state that the practice of mindfulness allowed them to accept the pain. This led to better overall lifestyle ratings. A follow-up study in 1988

revealed similar results. Overall, participants were better able to regulate chronic pain after participating in mindfulness meditation classes.

- Kabat-Zinn, et al (1992) showed that MBSR could be used to effectively treat anxiety disorders
- Kaplan and Galvin-Nadeau (1993) studied the effects of MBSR on patients with fibromyalgia.
- Kristeller & Hellest (1999) reported that mindfulness-based interventions were effective in treatment of binge-eating disorders.
- Mills & Allen (2000) studied mindfulness of movement as a technique for helping victims of multiple sclerosis.
- Reibel, et al (2001) demonstrated a positive correlation between MBSR and health-related quality of life ratings.
- Semple, et al (2005) studied the utility of mindfulness in treating children with anxiety disorders.
- Shapiro, et al (2007) looked at the effects of MBSR on therapists-in-training.

This is just a small sampling of some of the most recent research into the efficacy of MBSR in helping practitioners reduce stress and improve their quality of life. MBSR and mindfulness continue to demonstrate efficacy in a wide variety of applications for a large range of mental and physical health issues.

### **Theoretical framework of MBSR**

The predominant model of behavior modification used by therapists and counselors is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT grew out of its predecessor, Behavioral Therapy. One of the tenets of Behavioral Therapy is that the mind is a “black box.” Since, theoretically, one cannot know the contents of another’s mind, therapists and behavioral scientists cannot know for sure which of their techniques are working and which are not. B. F. Skinner and his colleagues therefore conceptualized the mind and its processes as this black box, under the assumption that we can never know its contents. We can only study input and output into this system. In other words, we can only observe events and how a subject reacts to those events. By modifying the events, we modify the resulting behaviors. While this sounds good in theory, some of the conclusions of this line of thinking were uncomfortable. Since, according to behaviorism, only the results matter, a person with a severe mental disorder could be pronounced “cured” by simply modifying the behaviors that led to the diagnosis. A person with severe delusions could be considered “cured” under behaviorism if he were just trained not to talk about the delusions and not to behave oddly in public.

Films like Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange*, in which the protagonist undergoes a brutal and invasive behavior modification program to “cure” him of his sociopathic behaviors, and the gradual realization that a person’s cognitions play an important part in behavior modification, led to mental health professionals to re-evaluate behaviorism.

As behavioral scientists came to realize that what a person thought about a situation impacted that person’s behavior, a number of new therapeutic techniques, such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Rational Behavior Therapy, and Rational Living Therapy, began to appear. These models and others like them are known collectively under the umbrella of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The idea inherent in CBT models is that a person’s cognitions (thoughts) about a situation can influence their behaviors. A goal of CBT modes of therapy is to examine a person’s beliefs (cognitions) and to determine which of those beliefs constitute “thinking errors” that lead to undesirable consequences such as maladaptive behaviors. By restructuring beliefs about certain situations, behaviors can be changed.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapies have been hugely successful. By pinpointing the cognitions that need to be changed, patients and therapists are able to target these beliefs for modification. CBT modalities help to identify what needs to be changed, but there is often a missing component, and that would be *how* to change those beliefs. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction offers a path to change that is simple yet powerful. MBSR creates a space in which students can slow down the process of cognition and examine it step-by-step, while using the skills of observing and describing. As students learn to move from reacting to responding, they come to realize which behaviors they would like to change, and which they can simply accept as fleeting processes of the mind.

Research into MBSR shows that it can help reduce pain levels, diminish anxiety and depression, increase a sense of wellbeing, enhance relaxation, decrease psychological and physiological symptoms, increase the ability to act effectively in high-stress situations, and increase self-esteem and self-efficacy ratings.

### **Techniques of MBSR**

MBSR instructs students in a wide variety of meditative practices. One of the goals of MBSR is to increase our awareness of our present state. We go through many activities in life on automatic pilot. For example, prior to reading this sentence, were you aware of your own breathing? In the mindful breathing exercise from Section One we learned to be present in the moment by directing our attention only to our breathing. We can learn to increase our awareness by focusing on anything, but since our breath is always present, we use it as a means of increasing awareness of the present moment. This mindful breathing progresses to mindful sitting, in which we become aware of our body posture and all the sensations and perceptions that accompany it.

In the body scan meditation, students learn to increase their awareness of their own bodies. Our emotions reveal themselves in our bodies before they reveal themselves in our conscious mind. By becoming more aware of what our bodies are telling us from moment to moment, we become more aware of our emotional cycles as well.

In the mindful walking exercise, students of MBSR learn to apply their awareness skills to the simple activity of walking. By noticing what their feet and legs are doing at each step in the process of walking, awareness is increased. As we learn to walk mindfully, we come to realize that there are many daily activities that can be completed in a mindful fashion.

An MBSR program meets for eight weeks, usually in two or three hour sessions, once per week. In addition to these weekly sessions, participants engage in daily mindful meditations, either on their own, or through the use of guided audio recordings.

### **Resources**

Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts  
<http://www.umassmed.edu/content.aspx?id=41254>

MBSR Workbook  
<http://mbsrworkbook.com/reviews>

Mindfulness Meditation New York Collaborative  
Video Resources on MBSR  
<http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr/more-resources-on-mbsr>

Oasis Institute  
Become a MBSR Teacher: <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/oasis/index.aspx>

## 03.06 Mindfulness and Spirituality

### Meditation and Religion

As you begin to introduce the concepts of mindfulness and meditation into your therapy practice, you may notice that some of your patients may be hesitant to meditate or practice mindfulness, especially if you live in an area where a fundamentalist religion is practiced. I began my practice in the Bible Belt, and I was surprised to discover that the word “meditation” is almost a dirty word here. In certain regions of the United States and the world, meditation is associated with cults and mysticism.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, in *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, had this to say about meditation and religious practice:

*“When we speak of meditation, it is important for you to know that this is not some weird cryptic activity, as our popular culture might have it. It does not involve becoming some kind of zombie, vegetable, self-absorbed narcissist, navel gazer, “space cadet,” cultist, devotee, mystic, or Eastern philosopher. Meditation is simply about being yourself and knowing something about who that is. It is about coming to realize that you are on a path whether you like it or not, namely, the path that is your life. Meditation may help us see that this path we call our life has direction; that it is always unfolding, moment by moment; and that what happens now, in this moment, influences what happens next.”*

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

During my internship as a Marriage and Family Therapist, as I began to introduce the ideas of mindfulness and meditation into my clinical practice, I would occasionally come across a patient who felt that mindfulness was “the devil’s work.” When I addressed this issue with my clinical supervisor, he advised me to simply use the techniques without referring to them as mindfulness techniques. As I began to do this, I noticed that the preconceived notions these patients had soon evaporated. I had eliminated the resistance to the therapy by not referring to it as mindfulness. By my doing so, the client was able to see the techniques for what they were, without any preconceptions or assumptions about their content.

Although mindfulness originated with Buddhism, it is not a religious practice. It is just a way of “falling awake.” Becoming more fully conscious of where you are and what you are doing at any given moment, you may enhance any religious practice. A careful reading of the Bible, or the Quran, or the Tao, or the Vedas, or most other works of a religious or spiritual nature, will reveal elements of mindfulness.

### Spirituality

Somewhere between 90% and 95% of people on Earth practice some sort of spirituality. Obviously, spirituality must be pretty important. Studies tend to back this up. What the studies show is that the type of spirituality doesn’t really matter. Whether you’re Christian, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu or Pagan, practicing some sort of spiritual path yields benefits.

Since the particular type of spirituality is secondary to the benefits gained (in other words, since all spiritual paths lead to a better quality of life for those who practice them properly), what is it about spirituality that allows it to work its magic?

Suppose you could take all the spiritual paths practiced worldwide, put them into a cauldron, and boil them down to their essence. What would remain? I believe that the common thread to all spiritual practices is a feeling of connection. Connection to others, or connection to the divine, or simply connection to nature and to ourselves. In short: Spirituality is a sense of connectedness to something greater than ourselves.



If you think back on the spiritual experiences you've had in your lifetime, do recall feeling connected on some level? Many describe spiritual experiences as a sense of oneness. Oneness implies connection to something outside ourselves. In this sense, even an agnostic or an atheist could achieve spirituality through connection.

Mindfulness doesn't offer a path to a specific god or a specific divinity. What mindfulness does is to increase awareness and enhance the stillness so a practitioner may experience the divine in his or her own way. Think of the religious path as the highway, and mindfulness as the vehicle. Just as you may drive a vehicle on any number of roads, so you may use mindfulness to experience any number of religious paths more fully. Mindfulness is the tool that makes those connections possible.

### **Second-Order Change**

One of the concepts of Cybernetic Systems Theory (a founding theory of Marriage and Family Therapy) is the idea of *Second Order Change*. Oftentimes, families get stuck in a "game without end." Solutions that families use to overcome problems sometimes only serve to maintain the problem. When this happens, the family is caught in a feedback loop that perpetuates the problem. In such a case, playing by the unspoken and unwritten rules of the family does not lead to a solution. What is needed is a change in the rules of the game. Such a change is called a Second-Order Change.

How many of your natural assumptions prevent you from finding solutions to the problems you encounter in your day-to-day life?

Mindfulness is more than just a meditative technique. It is a way of seeing the world as it really is, without the filter of our assumptions and expectations. By viewing the world through mindful eyes, we experience a paradigm shift. This shift in perception allows us to change the things we can, and to accept the things we cannot change. Such a worldview is at the heart of every religious practice. It is also at the heart of most, if not all, forms of therapy and counseling.

### **Beginner's Mind**

Mindful Ecotherapy is a way of achieving beginner's mind through nature and natural experiences. It allows us to examine the assumptions we have made about our world and how we exist in it. Some of those assumptions may be useful assumptions, but some of those assumptions may not be. By beginning each day with a blank slate, we erase those assumptions that may lead to results we don't want.

How do you tell which assumptions are useful and which ones are not? The answer is that we use the mindful skill of focusing on one thing at a time to really pay attention to our thoughts and feelings, and to the thoughts and feelings of those around us. When using mindful awareness to examine our own inner motivations, we are able to discover which assumptions are useful in our daily lives, and which assumptions might need to be modified, or even cast away. Mindfulness is the wisdom to know the difference between the things we can change, and the things we must accept.

## 03.07 Course Summary

### What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a type of focused attention, sometimes described as “falling awake.” Kabat-Zinn (2003) refers to mindfulness as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” It is a way of leaving doing mode and entering being mode. Mindfulness is especially helpful in dealing with anxiety and depression.

### Doing Mode vs. Being Mode

We are so accustomed to getting things done in our busy lives, that learning to stop “doing” is sometimes difficult. Mindfulness is a way to stop doing and enter into being mode. In being mode, rumination and avoidance behaviors cease, and there is less of a tendency to get trapped in self-reinforcing negative cycles of behavior.

Thinking mode is to doing mode as sensing mode is to being mode. Thinking is a thing that we do, where sensing (perceiving, participating) is simply a state of being.

### Wise Mind

When we are in a state of emotional dysregulation, subject to wild mood swings and being driven by our feelings, we are said to be in *emotional mind*. On the other hand, when we are using pure logic and reason, totally devoid of feeling and emotion, we are said to be in *rational mind*.

A goal of mindfulness is to achieve wise mind, which is a balance of emotional mind and rational mind in perfect harmony.



### Observing

Observing can be defined as, “The mindful technique of directing attention to a particular event or activity, while not engaging directly in that event or activity.” Observing is a type of sensing the environment around you or your own inner state, or entering into being mode. It allows you to disengage from your thoughts and feelings, and simply observe them.

### Describing

Describing can be defined as, “The mindful technique of focusing on the details of an event or activity, sensing the components of that activity, and then defining the experience without necessarily having to engage in the experience.”

### Fully Participating

Fully participating can be defined as, “Living only in the present moment, devoid of thoughts, feelings or anxiety about the past or the future, while focusing only on the present moment.”

Mindful awareness allows you to experience every aspect of an activity. We have a tendency, when in thinking mode, to see things and activities as either “all bad” or “all good.” This is not necessarily an accurate depiction of reality. In reality, there is a little good in most bad things, and a little bad in most good things. Fully participating allows us to engage in all aspects of the present moment.

### **Being Non-Judgmental**

We often act as if there is some objective standard of perfection that we are trying to live up to, but when we learn to be non-judgmental, we learn that perfection is subjective. Not only is it subjective, but we are the ones who define it ourselves. By being non-judgmental, we give ourselves permission to make mistakes once in a while. It is through our mistakes that we learn and grow.

### **Focusing on One Thing at a Time**

Focusing your attention on one activity, and one activity only, such as enjoying each bite of a meal, is an example of focusing on one thing at a time. Mindful awareness allows one to become fully aware and to participate in every activity as if experiencing it for the first time.

### **The Power of Intention**

The Power of Intention involves taking a solution-focused approach to problem-solving. If your intention is to carve an elephant, then you chip away anything that doesn't look like an elephant. Mindfulness allows us to hone our power of intention so that our lives are lived deliberately, with purpose, and with full awareness, chipping away anything that doesn't look like a purpose-driven life. From a therapeutic perspective, the Power of Intention works well with solution-focused forms of therapy, such as Narrative Therapy or Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

### **Acceptance vs. Change**

An example of the Acceptance vs. Change dialectic would be the Serenity Prayer, which states, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." One of the paradoxes of mindfulness is that you must accept yourself as you are before you can change. This is summed up succinctly by Marsha Linehan as, "You're perfect. Now change."

### **Radical Acceptance**

A question commonly asked in order to learn radical acceptance is, "What if this is as good as it gets?" This does not mean we are taking on a defeatist attitude; instead, it means recognizing that the purpose of life is not to avoid problems, but to learn to deal with them effectively in the moment.

### **Letting Go**

Radical acceptance is used to facilitate the process of letting go. This means letting go of the anxiety associated with a problem, without letting go of the problem itself. When we have problems in relationships with others, a way of dealing with it is to remember the phrase, "Never overestimate your ability to change others; never underestimate your ability to change yourself."

By realizing that we cannot change anyone but ourselves, we learn to let go of the need to try to change others.

### **Crystal Ball Thinking**

Mindfulness involves paying attention only to the present moment, which is all we really have. If we are focused on worries about the past, or anxieties about the future, we are not living in the present moment. We cannot change the past, and unless we have a crystal ball, we cannot predict the future. When we try to do so, we are not living in the present moment; instead, we are engaging in Crystal Ball Thinking.

## **True Self**

Descartes said, “I think, therefore I am.” Does that mean that if we stop thinking, we cease to exist? Of course not. We are not our thoughts or our feelings. What we are is the internal observer that watches our thoughts and feelings. This internal observer is called the *True Self*.

## **Mindful Breathing**

Mindfulness is simply a heightened state of awareness. The practice of mindful meditation can focus on anything, but one of the first things a practitioner of mindfulness learns to focus on is the breath, since the breath is always present. By focusing on the breath and only on the breath, we leave the world of doing and enter the world of being.

## **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Behavioral Models of Therapy**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy works to modify maladaptive thought and belief patterns commonly referred to as *thinking errors*. The theory is that by modifying the beliefs, the behaviors will change. These beliefs are *what* to change; Mindfulness is *how* to change the beliefs.

## **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a type of mindfulness-based therapy based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT). It is a type of Contextual Therapy that works to increase acceptance and to generate commitment to acceptance as a lifelong process.

## **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)**

DBT was founded by Marsha Linehan as a method of treating Borderline Personality Disorder. It has four basic skill sets. These are:

1. Mindfulness Skills
2. Distress Tolerance Skills
3. Emotional Regulation Skills
4. Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

DBT is based on the concept of the Hegelian Dialectic of thesis/antithesis/synthesis. It works to achieve a balance between polar opposites.

## **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)**

MBCT was developed from MBSR as a means of preventing relapse in patients with clinical depression. Students of MBCT learn the specific states and conditions that leave them vulnerable to downward spirals of depression. MBCT also uses radical acceptance strategies to help patients overcome feelings of inadequacy that lead to cycles of depression. Research into the effectiveness of MBCT in preventing relapse (a return to depressive symptoms) demonstrates that the techniques of MBCT can reduce rates of depressive relapse by as much as 50%.

## **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**

MBSR was developed by Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s at the University of Massachusetts. MBSR is an eight-week intensive course in using Mindfulness as a tool to reduce stress. The core concept of MBSR is to learn to step out of autopilot and to become fully aware of what is happening in our lives at any given moment. MBSR and Mindfulness continue to demonstrate a wide variety of applications for a large range of mental and physical health issues.



## **Mindfulness and Spirituality**

In certain regions of the United States and the world, meditation is mistakenly associated with cults and mysticism. This sometimes leads to resistance in treatment. One way of dealing with this resistance is to simply avoid using the term *mindfulness*. Another is to explain to patients that mindfulness is merely a way of heightening awareness. What mindfulness does is to increase awareness and enhance the stillness so a practitioner may experience the divine in his or her own way. Mindfulness is more than just a meditative technique. It is a way of seeing the world as it really is, without the filter of our assumptions and expectations. By viewing the world through mindful eyes, we experience a paradigm shift. This shift in perception allows us to change the things we can, and to accept the things we cannot change. Such a worldview is at the heart of every religious practice.

## **ACTIVITY**

### **Final Exam**

If you are taking this course for home study credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center ([www.mindfulecotherapy.org](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.org)), you will need to pass the post-test to get credit for the course. You will need to pass the test with a score of 80% or higher. If you do not pass the test you will be given an opportunity to correct your answers.

## **About the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Facilitator Certification Program**

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook and the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workshop series were developed by Charlton Hall, LMFT/S, RPT-S as a 12-week program to help individuals re-connect with the healing power of nature. The series meets once per week for 90 minutes, usually in an outdoor setting. The Mindful Ecotherapy Center has been training facilitators for Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy since 2012. Now this popular facilitator training program is available online!

The MBE Facilitator Training Program is a 32-hour program that includes the following courses:

- Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy in Clinical Practice – 12 hours
- Mindfulness: An Introduction – 5 hours
- Ecotherapy: An Introduction – 5 hours
- Running a Successful Group – 10 hours

To learn more, visit [www.mindfulecotherapy.com](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.com)



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## **ABOUT THE MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY (MBE) PROGRAM**

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Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) is a 12-week nature-based program. Each session meets outdoors for about 90 minutes and is guided by a trained MBE facilitator. The *Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook* was designed to accompany the 12-week program. A facilitator manual is also available for mental health professionals interested in training in the program. For details, visit [www.mindfulecotherapy.com](http://www.mindfulecotherapy.com).

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Prior to becoming a Marriage and Family Therapist, Charlton (Chuck) Hall, LMFT/S, RPT-S, CHt worked in the addiction treatment field. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in South Carolina and North Carolina. Chuck's area of research and interest is using Mindfulness and Ecopsychology to facilitate acceptance and change strategies within a family systemic framework, and he has presented research at several conferences and seminars on this and other topics. He facilitates workshops on Mindfulness and Ecotherapy throughout the Southeast. Chuck's approach to therapy involves helping individuals and families to facilitate change through Mindfulness and Ecopsychology techniques in a non-judgmental, patient-centered, positive environment.





## **Books by Charlton Hall, LMFT/S, RPT-S**

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