

Reproducible forms for

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition

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HANDOUT 6.1

Preliminary Handout for Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Please read this before we meet.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a very common problem. Twenty percent of adults become severely depressed at some point in their lives. Depression involves both biological changes in the way the brain works and psychological changes—the way we think and feel. Because of this, it is often useful to combine medical treatments for treating depression (which act on the brain) with psychological approaches (which teach new ways to deal with thoughts and feelings).

TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION

When you have been depressed in the past your doctor may have prescribed antidepressants. These work through their effects on the chemical messengers in your brain. In depression, these chemical messengers have often become run down, lowering mood and energy levels, and disturbing sleep and appetite. Correcting these brain chemicals may have taken time, but most people experience improvements in 6 to 8 weeks.

Although antidepressants generally work well in reducing depression, they are not a permanent cure—their effects continue only so long as you keep taking the pills. Your doctor could continue to prescribe antidepressants for months, or even years, since this is now recommended if further depression is to be prevented by this means.

However, many people prefer to use other ways to prevent further depression. This is the purpose of the classes you will be attending.

PREVENTION OF MORE DEPRESSION

Whatever caused your depression in the first place, the experience of depression itself has a number of aftereffects. One of these is a likelihood that you will become

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depressed again. The purpose of these classes is to improve your chance of preventing further depression. In the classes, you will learn skills to help you handle your thoughts and feelings differently.

Since many people have had depression and are at risk for further depression, you will learn these skills in a class with up to a dozen other people who have also been depressed and treated with antidepressants. You will meet in eight 2-hour sessions to learn new ways of dealing with what goes on in your mind, and to share and review your experiences with other class members.

After the eight weekly sessions are over, the class will meet again four times over the following few months for reunions, and to see how things are progressing.

HOME PRACTICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICING BETWEEN CLASSES

Together, we will be working to change patterns of mind that often have been around for a long time. These patterns may have become habit. We can expect to succeed in making changes only if we put time and effort into learning skills.

This approach depends entirely on your willingness to do home practice between class meetings. This home practice will take at least an hour a day, 6 days a week, for 8 weeks, and involves tasks such as listening to the recorded meditations and other exercises, performing brief exercises, and so on. We appreciate how it is often very difficult to carve out that amount of time for something new in lives that are already very busy and crowded. However, the commitment to spend time on home practice is an essential part of the class; if you do not feel able to make that commitment, it would be best not to start the classes.

FACING DIFFICULTIES

The classes and the home practice assignments can teach you how to be more fully aware and present in each moment of life. On one hand, this makes life more interesting, vivid, and fulfilling. On the other hand, this means facing what is present, even when it is unpleasant and difficult. In practice, you will find that turning to face and acknowledge difficulties is the most effective way, in the long run, to reduce unhappiness. It is also central to preventing further depression. Seeing unpleasant feelings, thoughts, or experiences clearly, as they arise, means that you will be in much better shape to “nip them in the bud,” before they progress to more intense or persistent depressions.

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In the classes, you will learn gentle ways to face difficulties, and be supported by the instructor and the other class members.

PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

Because we will be working to change well-established habits of mind, you will be putting in a lot of time and effort. The effects of this effort may become apparent only later. In many ways, it is much like gardening—we have to prepare the ground, plant the seeds, ensure that they are adequately watered and nourished, and then wait patiently for results.

You may be familiar with this pattern from your treatment with antidepressants: Often there is little beneficial effect until you have been taking the medication for some time. Yet improvement in your depression depended on your continuing to take the antidepressant even when you felt no immediate benefit.

In the same way, we ask you to approach the classes and home practice with a spirit of patience and persistence, committing yourself to put time and effort into what will be asked of you, while accepting, with patience, that the fruits of your efforts may not show straight away.

THE INITIAL INDIVIDUAL MEETING

Your initial individual meeting provides an opportunity for you to ask questions about the classes or issues related to the points raised in this handout. You may find it useful, before you come for that interview, to make a note of the points you wish to raise.

Good luck!

HANDOUT 6.2

An Introduction to Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

INTRODUCTION

At the introductory interview you had the opportunity to tell us some of your own story, learn about the course, discuss how we understand the problem of recurrent depression, find out about some of the practical arrangements for attending the sessions, and ask any other questions you might have had at that time.

In this brief handout we would like to summarize some of the things we discussed together.

UNDERSTANDING RECURRENT DEPRESSION

You, along with other group members, are here because you have had episodes of recurrent depression and are interested in preventing them from recurring. The work you will be doing in MBCT is based on the latest psychological research on those factors that make people vulnerable to and maintain depression.

First, we would like to share with you our best guess of what these factors are. You have been doing the best you can, and the things you have tried may have worked to a certain extent, but they may not have helped as much as you had hoped. Because you have had no other options, it has felt risky to stop doing what you habitually do. However, some ways of coping are rather like digging to get out of a hole, and just making the hole bigger. We think about this as a vicious circle that works something like this:

- People think more negatively when they are depressed than when they are relatively well.
- During the first episode of depression this negativity takes a while to really build up.
- After repeated episodes of depression, strong associations are formed, meaning that even a small trigger like a dip in mood can be a flash point for depression.
- The spiral of negative thinking that sets in can lead to hopelessness.
- This in turn makes it tempting to withdraw, and to avoid more and more situations.
- It can be difficult to extricate yourself from this, once your old beliefs are activated. It feels a bit like struggling to get out of quicksand.

(cont.)

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Instead of another relapse occurring, evidence suggests that it is possible to learn to step back and find somewhere else to go with the problem. We hope to help you find ways to do just this.

HOW WILL THE MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY COURSE BE HELPFUL TO YOU?

Clinical studies of hundreds of patients have shown that MBCT can significantly reduce the risk of your depression returning. Here are some things that participants in past groups have reported:

- I became aware of the workings of my mind.
- I learned to recognize patterns.
- I learned to stay steady, but also to stand back a little.
- I could recognize that I have choices other than slipping back into old patterns.
- I learned to take a kinder, more gentle attitude toward myself.
- I learned to recognize warning signals and take helpful action.
- I learned how to put less effort into “fixing” things.
- I learned how to focus on the here and now.

During the course, you will find that there are lots of different ways to be mindful. By letting yourself try all the mindfulness practices, you may discover the ones that are most useful for you. The weekly classes also provide the opportunity for you to practice being kinder and gentler to yourself.

HOME PRACTICE

You can expect that there will be home practice every week, often up to 1 hour a day. To help you find the room in your life for this new commitment, it is helpful to consider the following:

- Where in your day will you find the time needed for practice?
- Let others in your family or social circle know what is involved.
- Do you have access to a device on which you can play the guided meditation practices?

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HANDOUT 6.2 *(page 3 of 3)*

- See if you can balance the different motivations that naturally come up, such as being impatient for results versus letting go of your expectations for 8 weeks.
- Treat yourself with kindness throughout this time, especially if you run into some rough spots.

CHALLENGES OF THE COURSE

As we discussed, you might find that taking the MBCT course is challenging for a number of different reasons. We want to assure you that should these challenges arise, your instructor will be able to discuss any potential issues with you. In fact, the feedback that past participants wanted us to convey to those who are just getting started is that it is worth hanging in there, even if it is a struggle. The knowledge and understanding you gain will have an impact on reducing your risk for depression.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFETY

In order to create an atmosphere of trust and sharing within the group, we would like to establish some ground rules in the group.

- Confidentiality will be observed by both participants and instructors.
- If your instructor has a significant concern for your safety or well-being, including immediate risk to yourself or another, he or she will need to contact your general practitioner, or other professional person, but only after consulting you.

PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- The group starts promptly at _____ and finishes at _____.
- It is a good idea to wear comfortable clothes, and you might like to bring a light blanket.
- We would like to emphasize the importance of attending each session. Please let the instructor know if you can't be there.
- Because the class may be challenging, there may be times when you do not feel like coming. If this happens we would like you to telephone and let us know how you are. We can discuss any problems with you.

It can feel difficult to come back if you miss a session, but it is worth it. You are always welcome to return.

SESSION 1—HANDOUT 1

A Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention

on purpose,

in the present moment,

and

nonjudgmentally,

to things as they are.

—WILLIAMS, TEASDALE, SEGAL, AND KABAT-ZINN (2007)

SESSION 1—HANDOUT 2

Summary of Session 1: Awareness and Automatic Pilot

In a car we can sometimes drive for miles “on automatic pilot,” without really being aware of what we are doing. In the same way, we may not be really “present,” moment-by-moment, for much of our lives: We can often be “miles away” without knowing it.

On automatic pilot, we are more likely to have our “buttons pressed”: Events around us and thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the mind (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old habits of thinking that are often unhelpful, and may lead on to worsening mood.

By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice; we do not have to go down the same old “mental ruts” that may have caused problems in the past.

The aim of this program is to increase awareness, so that we can respond to situations with choice rather than react automatically. We do that by practicing to become more aware of where our attention is, and deliberately changing the focus of attention, over and over again.

To begin with, we used attention to eating the raisin to explore how to step out of automatic pilot. We then used attention to different parts of the body as a focus to anchor our awareness in the moment. We will also be training ourselves to put attention and awareness in different places at will. This is the aim of the body scan exercise, which forms the main home practice exercise for next week.

SESSION 1–HANDOUT 3

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 1

1. Do the body scan exercise six times before we meet again. Don't expect to feel anything in particular from doing the practice. In fact, give up all expectations about it. Just let your experience be your experience. Don't judge it, just keep doing it, and we'll talk about it next week.
2. Record on the Home Practice Record Form (Session 1–Handout 5) each time you do the practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.
3. Choose one routine activity in your daily life and make a deliberate effort to bring moment-to-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it, just as we did in the raisin exercise. Possibilities include waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, drying your body, getting dressed, eating, driving, taking out the rubbish (garbage), shopping, and so forth. Simply zero in on *knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it*.
4. Note any times when you find yourself able to notice what you eat in the same way you noticed the raisin.
5. Eat at least one meal “mindfully” in the way that you ate the raisin.

SESSION 1—HANDOUT 4

A Patient's Report

This patient had been hospitalized for depression 4 years before, after which her husband and children left her. There had been no further contact except through lawyers. She had become very depressed and lonely, although she had not been in the hospital again. She was now over the worst of her depression, and started to use the body scan exercise to help prevent her mood from deteriorating. These were her comments looking back after 8 weeks:

“For the first 10 days it was like a burden. I kept ‘wandering off’ and then I would worry about whether I was doing it right. For example, I kept having flights of fantasy. My mind was all over the place. I tried too hard to stop it, I think.

“Another problem at the start was him saying, ‘Just accept things as they are now.’ I thought that was totally unreasonable. I thought to myself, ‘I can’t do that.’

“Eventually, I just put the audio tracks on and expected to go off into a realm of thoughts. I didn’t worry if concerns came in. Gradually the 40 minutes passed without me losing him and from then on, the next time was more effective.

“After 10 days I relaxed more, I stopped worrying if I was thinking about anything else. When I stopped worrying about it then I actually stopped the flights of fancy. If I did think of something else, I picked up the audio tracks again when I stopped thinking. Gradually the flights of fantasy reduced. I was happy to listen to him and then I started to get some value from it.

“Soon I had developed it so that I could actually feel the breath going down to the base of my foot. Sometimes I didn’t feel anything, but then I thought, ‘If there’s no feeling then I can be satisfied with the fact there is no feeling.’

“It’s not something you can do half a dozen times. It’s got to be a daily thing. It becomes more real the more that you try it. I began to look forward to it.

“If people have got to structure the time for the 45 minutes for their recordings, it may be easier to structure other things in their life as well. The recordings would prove an impetus.”

SESSION 1—HANDOUT 5

Home Practice Record Form—Session 1

Name: _____

Record each time you practice on the Home Practice Record Form. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Thursday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Friday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Saturday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Sunday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Monday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Tuesday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	
Wednesday Date: _____	Body scan: Everyday mindfulness:	

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SESSION 2—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 2: Living in Our Heads

Our aim in this program is to be more aware, more often. A powerful influence taking us away from being “fully present” in each moment is our automatic tendency to judge our experience as being not quite right in some way—that it is not what should be happening, not good enough, or not what we expected or wanted. These judgments can lead to sequences of thoughts about blame, what needs to be changed, or how things could or should be different. Often these thoughts will take us, quite automatically, down some fairly well-worn paths in our minds. In this way, we may lose awareness of the moment and also the freedom to *choose* what, if any, action needs to be taken.

We can regain our freedom if, as a first step, we simply acknowledge the actuality of our situation, without immediately being hooked into automatic tendencies to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are. The body scan exercise provides an opportunity to practice simply bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in each moment, without having to do anything to change things. There is no goal to be achieved other than to bring awareness to bear as the instructions suggest—specifically, achieving some special state of relaxation is *not* a goal of the exercise.

SESSION 2—HANDOUT 2

Tips for the Body Scan

1. Regardless of what happens (e.g., if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things or focusing on the wrong bit of body, or not feeling anything), persist with it! These are your experiences in the moment. See if it is possible to be aware of them all, just as they are.
2. If your mind is wandering a lot, simply note the thoughts (as passing events), then bring the mind gently back to the body scan.
3. Let go of ideas of “success,” “failure,” “doing it really well,” or “trying to purify the body.” This is not a competition. It is not a skill for which you need to strive. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. Just do it with an attitude of openness and curiosity, then allow the rest to take care of itself.
4. Let go of any expectations about what the body scan will do for you: Imagine it as a seed you have planted. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to develop. So with the body scan, just give it the right conditions—peace and quiet, regular and frequent practice. That is all. The more you try to influence what it will do for you, the less it will do.
5. Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: “OK, that’s just the way things are right now.” If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, the upsetting feelings will only distract you from doing anything else. Be aware, be nonstriving, be in the moment, accept things as they are.

SESSION 2—HANDOUT 3

Mindfulness of the Breath

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or a soft surface on the floor, with your buttocks supported by cushions or a low stool. If you use a chair, it is very helpful to sit away from the back of the chair, so that your spine is self-supporting. If you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees actually touch the floor; experiment with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel comfortably and firmly supported. Whatever you sit on, arrange things so that your knees are lower than your hips.
2. Allow your back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor, with your legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes.
3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations, just as in the body scan.
4. Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath moves in and out of your body. (When you first try this practice, it may be helpful to place your hand on your lower abdomen and become aware of the changing pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact with your abdomen. Having “tuned in” to the physical sensations in this area in this way, you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations in the abdominal wall.)
5. Focus your awareness on the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each inbreath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each outbreath. As best you can, follow with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen all the way through as the breath enters your body on the inbreath, and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the outbreath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between one inbreath and the following outbreath, and between one outbreath and the following inbreath.
6. There is no need to try to control the breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.

(cont.)

SESSION 2—HANDOUT 3 *(page 2 of 2)*

7. Sooner or later (usually sooner), your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath in the lower abdomen to thoughts, planning, daydreams, drifting along—whatever. This is perfectly OK—it's simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where the mind has been (“Ah, there’s thinking”). Then, gently escort the awareness back to a focus on the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen, renewing the intention to pay attention to the ongoing inbreath or outbreath, whichever you find.
8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again), as best you can, congratulate yourself each time on reconnecting with your experience in the moment, gently escorting the attention back to the breath, and simply resume following in awareness the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each inbreath and outbreath.
9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.
10. Continue with the practice for 10–15 minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time you notice that your mind has wandered and is no longer down in the abdomen, following the breath.

SESSION 2–HANDOUT 4

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 2

1. Do the body scan for 6 days and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form (Session 2–Handout 5).
2. At different times, practice 10 minutes of mindfulness of breathing for 6 out of 7 days (www.guilford.com/MBCT_audio, track 4). Being with your breath in this way each day provides an opportunity to become aware of what it feels like to be connected and present in the moment without having to *do* anything.
3. Complete Session 2–Handout 6, the Pleasant Experiences Calendar (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations around one pleasant event each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, *in detail* (e.g., use the actual words or images in which the thoughts came the precise nature and location of body sensations).
4. Choose a new routine activity to be especially mindful of (e.g., brushing your teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out garbage, reading to kids, shopping, eating).

SESSION 2—HANDOUT 5

Home Practice Record Form—Session 2

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Thursday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Friday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Saturday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Sunday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Monday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Tuesday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	
Wednesday Date: _____	Body scan: Breath: Everyday mindfulness:	

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SESSION 2—HANDOUT 6

Pleasant Experiences Calendar

Name: _____

Be aware of a pleasant event *at the time it is happening*. Use the following questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down later.

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
	Example: Heading home at the end of my shift—stopping, hearing a bird sing.	<i>Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping, uplift of corners of mouth.</i>	Relief, pleasure.	“That’s good,” “How lovely [the bird],” “It’s so nice to be outside.”	“It was such a small thing, but I’m glad I noticed it.”
Monday					

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Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

SESSION 3—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 3: Gathering the Scattered Mind

This week we practiced resting awareness on the breath and the body in movement. The mind is often scattered and lost in thought because it is working away in the background to complete unfinished tasks from the past and strive for goals for the future. We need to find a reliable way intentionally to “come back” to the here and now. The breath and body offer an ever-present focus on which we can reconnect with mindful presence, gather and settle the mind, and ease ourselves from doing into being.

Focusing on the breath:

- Brings you back to this very moment—the *here and now*.
- Is always available as an anchor and *haven*, no matter where you are.
- Can actually change your experience by connecting you with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things.

SITTING MEDITATION: BASICS

It helps to adopt an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically—the physical counterpart of the inner attitudes of self-reliance, self-acceptance, patience, and alert attention that we are cultivating.

Practice on a chair or on the floor. If you use a chair, choose one that has a straight back and allows your feet to be flat on the floor. If at all possible, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting.

If you choose to sit on the floor, do so on a firm, thick cushion (or a pillow folded over once or twice), which raises your buttocks off the floor 3–6 inches. Whatever you are sitting on, see if it possible to sit so that your hips are slightly higher than your knees.

Mindful movement allows us to:

- Build on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and “inhabit” body experience/sensation.
- See old habitual patterns of the mind—especially those that emphasize *striving*.

(cont.)

SESSION 3–HANDOUT 1 *(page 2 of 2)*

- Work with physical boundaries and intensity and learn acceptance of our limits.
- Learn new ways of taking care of ourselves.

The movements provide a direct way to connect with awareness of the body. The body is a place where emotions are often expressed, under the surface and without our awareness. So becoming more aware of the body gives us an additional place from which to stand and look at our thoughts.

SESSION 3—HANDOUT 2

The 3-Minute Breathing Space: Basic Instructions

STEP 1. BECOMING AWARE

Become more aware of how things are in this moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture, whether sitting or standing. If possible, close your eyes. Then, bringing your awareness to your inner experience and acknowledging it, ask, “What is my experience **right now**?”

- What **THOUGHTS** are going through the mind? As best you can, acknowledge thoughts as mental events, perhaps putting them into words.
- What **FEELINGS** are here? Turn toward any sense of discomfort or unpleasant feelings, acknowledging them.
- What **BODY SENSATIONS** are here right now? Perhaps quickly scan the body to pick up any sensations of tightness or bracing, acknowledging the sensations.

STEP 2. GATHERING

Then redirect your attention to focus on the physical sensations of the breathing itself. Move in close to the sense of the breath in the abdomen . . . feeling the sensations of the abdomen wall expanding as the breath comes in . . . and falling back as the breath goes out. Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out, using the breathing to anchor yourself into the present.

STEP 3. EXPANDING

Now expand the field of your awareness around the breathing so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression.

If you become aware of any sensations of discomfort, tension, or resistance, take your awareness there by breathing into them on the inbreath. Then breathe out from those sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath.

As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.

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SESSION 3—HANDOUT 3

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 3

This week we are going to use three different formal practices:

1. *On Days 1, 3, and 5*, use the combined Stretch and Breath meditation (audio track 6) and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form. This meditation combines a few minutes of gentle stretching exercises and instructions for mindfulness of the breath and body.
2. *On Days 2, 4, and 6*, use the Mindful Movement meditation (audio track 5) and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form. **If you have any back or other health difficulties that may cause problems, make your own decision as to which (if any) of these exercises to do, and consult your physician or physical therapist if you are unsure.**
3. *Every day*: Practice using the 3-Minute Breathing Space (using the audio version, track 8, at least once a day) three times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance, and record each time by circling an R on the Home Practice Record Form.
4. *Every day*: Complete the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in one unpleasant event each day, *at the time that they are occurring*. Notice and record, as soon as you can, in detail (e.g., put the actual words or images in which thoughts came, and the precise nature and location of body sensations). **What are the unpleasant events that “pull you off center” or “get you down” (no matter how big or small)?**

SESSION 3—HANDOUT 4

Home Practice Record Form—Session 3

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Thursday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Friday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Saturday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Sunday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Monday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Tuesday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	
Wednesday Date: _____	Stretch and Breath Mindful Movement R R R	

R, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular Version

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SESSION 3—HANDOUT 5

Unpleasant Experiences Calendar

Name: _____

Be aware of an unpleasant experience *at the time it is happening*. Use these questions to focus your awareness on the details of it as it is happening. Write it down later.

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
	Example: Waiting for the cable company to come out and fix our line. Realize that I am missing an important meeting at work.	Temples throbbing, tightness in my neck and shoulders, pacing back and forth.	Angry, helpless.	“Is this what they mean by service?” “They don’t have to be responsible, they have a monopoly.” “This is one meeting I didn’t want to miss.”	“I hope I don’t have to go through that again soon.”

(cont.)

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SESSION 3—HANDOUT 5 *(page 2 of 3)*

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					

(cont.)

SESSION 3—HANDOUT 5 *(page 3 of 3)*

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 4: Recognizing Aversion

Difficult things are part and parcel of life itself. It is how we handle those things that makes the difference between whether they rule (control) our lives or whether we can relate more lightly to them. Becoming more aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations evoked by events gives us the possibility of freeing ourselves from habitual, automatic ways of reacting, so that we can instead mindfully respond in more skillful ways.

In general, we react to experience in one of three ways:

1. With spacing out, or boredom, so that we switch away from the present moment and go off somewhere else “in our heads.”
2. With wanting to hold on to things—not allowing ourselves to let go of experiences we are having right now, or wishing we were having experiences that we are not having right now.
3. With wanting it to go away, being angry with it—wanting to get rid of experiences we are having right now, or avoiding future experiences that we do not want.

As we discuss further in class, each of these ways of reacting can cause problems, particularly the tendency to react to unpleasant feelings with aversion. For now, the main issue is to become more aware of our experience, so that we can respond mindfully rather than react automatically.

Regularly practicing sitting meditation gives us many opportunities to notice when we have drifted away from awareness of the moment, to note with a friendly awareness whatever it was that took our attention away, and to gently and firmly bring our attention back to our focus, reconnecting with moment-by-moment awareness. At other times of the day, deliberately using the breathing space whenever we notice unpleasant feelings, or a sense of “tightening” or “holding” in the body, provides an opportunity to begin to *respond* rather than *react*.

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 2

Mindful Walking

1. Find a place where you can walk up and down, without feeling concerned about whether people can see you. It can be inside or outside—and the length of your “walk” may vary perhaps between 7 and 10 paces.
2. Stand at one end of your walk, with your feet parallel to each other, about 4 to 6 inches apart, and your knees “unlocked,” so that they can gently flex. Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides, or hold your hands loosely together in front of your body. Direct your gaze, softly, straight ahead.
3. Bring the focus of your awareness to the bottoms of your feet, getting a direct sense of the physical sensations of the contact of the feet with the ground and the weight of your body transmitted through your legs and feet to the ground. You may find it helpful to flex your knees slightly a few times to get a clearer sense of the sensations in the feet and legs.
4. When you are ready, transfer the weight of the body into the right leg, noticing the changing pattern of physical sensations in the legs and feet as the left leg “empties” and the right leg takes over the support of the rest of the body.
5. With the left leg “empty,” allow the left heel to rise slowly from the floor, noticing the sensations in the calf muscles as you do so, and continue, allowing the whole of the left foot to lift gently until only the toes are in contact with the floor. Aware of the physical sensations in the feet and legs, slowly lift the left foot, carefully move it forward, feeling the foot and leg as they move through the air, and place the heel on the floor. Allow the rest of the bottom of the left foot to make contact with the floor as you transfer the weight of the body into the left leg and foot, aware of the increasing physical sensations in the left leg and foot, and of the “emptying” of the right leg and the right heel leaving the floor.
6. With the weight fully transferred to the left leg, allow the rest of the right foot to lift and move it slowly forward, aware of the changing patterns of physical sensations in the foot and leg as you do so. Focusing your attention on the right heel as it makes contact with the ground, transfer the weight of the body into the right foot as it is placed gently on the ground, aware of the shifting pattern of physical sensations in the two legs and feet.
7. In this way, slowly move from one end of your walk to the other, aware particularly of the sensations in the bottoms of the feet and heels as they make contact with the floor, and of the sensations in the muscles of the legs as they swing forward.

(cont.)

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SESSION 4—HANDOUT 2 *(page 2 of 2)*

8. At the end of your walk, stop for a few moments, then turn slowly around, aware of and appreciating the complex pattern of movements through which the body changes direction, and continue walking.
9. Walk up and down in this way, being aware, as best you can, of physical sensations in the feet and legs, and of the contact of the feet with the floor. Keep your gaze directed softly ahead.
10. When you notice that the mind has wandered away from awareness of the sensations of walking, gently escort the focus of attention back to the sensations in the feet and legs, using the sensations as the feet contact the floor, in particular, as an “anchor” to reconnect with the present moment, just as you used the breath in the sitting meditation. If you find your mind has wandered, you might find it helpful to stand still for a few moments, gathering the focus of attention before resuming your walking.
11. Continue to walk for 10 to 15 minutes, or longer, if you wish.
12. To begin with, walk at a pace that is slower than usual, to give yourself a better chance to be fully aware of the sensations of walking. Once you feel comfortable walking slowly with awareness, you can experiment as well with walking at faster speeds, up to and beyond normal walking speed. If you are feeling particularly agitated, it may be helpful to begin walking fast, with awareness, and to slow down naturally as you settle.
13. As often as you can, bring the same kind of awareness that you cultivate in walking meditation to your normal, everyday experiences of walking.

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 3

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 4

1. Practice the Guided Sitting meditation (audio track 11) for 6 out of the next 7 days and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form. (Alternative option: Alternate Guided Sitting meditation with mindful walking *or* movement. Indicate which on the Home Practice Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular (audio track 8): Practice three times a day, at the times that you have decided in advance. Record each time you do it by circling an R next to the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive (audio track 9): Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant feelings*. Record each time you do it by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 4

Home Practice Record Form—Session 4

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

R, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular Version; X, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive Version.

(cont.)

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SESSION 4—HANDOUT 4 *(page 2 of 2)*

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Saturday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Sunday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Sitting meditation: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 5

Staying Present

Remember to use your body as a way to awareness. It can be as simple as staying mindful of your posture. You are probably sitting as you read this. What are the sensations in your body at this moment? When you finish reading and stand, feel the movements of standing, of walking to the next activity, of how you lie down at the end of the day. Be in your body as you move, as you reach for something, as you turn. It is as simple as that.

Just patiently practice feeling what is there—and the body is always there—until it becomes second nature to know even the small movements you make. If you are reaching for something, you are doing it anyway; there is nothing extra you have to do. Simply notice the reaching. You are moving. Can you train yourself to be there, to feel it?

It is very simple. Practice again and again bringing your attention back to your body. This basic effort, which, paradoxically, is a relaxing back into the moment, gives us the key to expanding our awareness from times of formal meditation to living mindfully in the world. Do not underestimate the power that comes to you from feeling the simple movements of your body throughout the day.

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SESSION 5—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 5: Allowing/Letting Be

TURNING TOWARD THE DIFFICULT

In Session 5 we extended our formal practice to begin deliberately to turn toward and approach painful experiences with kindness. The basic guideline in this practice is to become mindfully aware of whatever is most predominant in our moment-by-moment experience.

So, the *first step*, if the mind is repeatedly drawn to a particular place, to particular thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, is deliberately to take a gentle and friendly awareness to whatever is pulling for our attention, noting the sense of being pulled again and again to the same place.

The *second step* is to notice, as best we can, how we are relating to whatever is arising in the body or mind. Our reactions to our own thoughts and feelings may determine whether they are passing events or persist. Often we can be with an arising thought, feeling, or body sensation but in a nonallowing, reactive way. If we like it, we may become attached to it, and try to hold on to it. If, on the other hand, we dislike it because it is painful, unpleasant, or uncomfortable in some way, then we may experience fear or irritation, tense up and contract, or try to push it away. Each of these responses is the opposite of allowing.

LETTING GO AND LETTING BE

The easiest way to relax is, first, to let go of trying to make things different. *Allowing experience means simply allowing space for whatever is going on, rather than trying to create some other state.* Through cultivating a “willingness to experience,” we settle back into awareness of what is already present. We let it be—we simply notice and observe whatever is already here. This is the way to relate to experiences that have a strong pull on our attention, however powerful they seem. When we see them clearly, it helps prevent us from getting pulled into brooding and ruminating about them, or trying to suppress or avoid them. We begin the process of freeing ourselves from them. We open up the possibility of responding skillfully and with compassion rather than reacting, in knee jerk fashion, by automatically running off old (often unhelpful) strategies.

(cont.)

A NEW PRACTICE

In the class, we explored together this new way of approaching the difficult. If we noticed that our attention kept being pulled away from the breath (or another focus) to painful thoughts, emotions, or feelings, the first step was to become mindfully aware of any physical sensations in the body that were occurring alongside the thought or emotion; we then deliberately moved the focus of awareness to the part of the body where those sensations were strongest. We explored how the breath could provide a useful vehicle to do this—just as we practiced in the body scan, we can take a gentle and friendly awareness to that part of the body by “breathing into” it on the inbreath, and “breathing out” from it on the outbreath.

Once our attention had moved to the body sensations, and they were in the field of awareness, the guidance was to say to ourselves, “It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK to allow myself to be open to it.” Then we just stayed with the awareness of these body sensations and our relationship to them, breathing with them, accepting them, letting them be. It may be helpful to repeat “It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK. Let me be open to it,” using each outbreath to soften and open to the sensations. “Allowing” is *not* resignation—it allows us, as a vital first step, to become fully aware of difficulties and to respond to them skillfully.

SESSION 5—HANDOUT 2

Using the Breathing Space: Extra Guidance

You have been practicing the breathing space regularly, three times a day, and whenever you need it. Now we suggest that whenever you feel troubled in body or mind, the first step is always to take a breathing space. Here is some extra guidance that may help at these times.

1. AWARENESS

We have already practiced bringing the focus of awareness to your inner experience and noticing what is happening in your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. Now, you may find it helpful to describe and identify what is arising—to put experiences into words (e.g., say in your mind, “A feeling of anger is arising” or “Self-critical thoughts are here”).

2. REDIRECTING ATTENTION

We have already practiced gently redirecting your full attention to the breath; following the breath all the way in and all the way out. In addition, try noting “at the back of your mind”: “Breathing in . . . breathing out” or counting breaths from 1 to 5, then starting over again: “Inhaling, 1 . . . exhaling, 1; inhaling, 2” . . . and so forth.

3. EXPANDING ATTENTION

We have already practiced allowing the attention to expand to the whole body. So now we become aware of our posture and facial expression. We hold in awareness all the sensations in our bodies right now, just as they are . . .

Now extend this step, if you choose, especially if there is any sense of discomfort, tension, or resistance. If these sensations are present, bring your awareness to them by “breathing into them” on the inbreath. Then, breathe out from the sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath. Say to yourself on the outbreath, “It’s OK. . . whatever it is, it’s already here. Let me feel it.”

As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.

SESSION 5—HANDOUT 3

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 5

1. Practice Working with Difficulty meditation on Days 1, 3, 5 (guided practice audio track 12) and Sitting with Silence (unguided practice) for 30–40 minutes on Days 2, 4, 6 and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular (audio track 8): Practice three times a day at times that you have decided in advance. Record each time by circling an R next to the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive (audio track 9), if you choose (see Session 5—Handout 2): Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant feelings*. Record each time by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.

SESSION 5—HANDOUT 4

Home Practice Record Form—Session 5

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— self-guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— self-guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	

R, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular; X, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive.

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SESSION 5—HANDOUT 4 (page 2 of 2)

(cont.)

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Sunday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— self-guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Working with Difficulty meditation— self-guided: R R R X X X X X X X X X X	

SESSION 5—HANDOUT 5

“The Guest House”

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

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SESSION 6—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 6: Thoughts Are Not Facts

It is amazing to observe how much power we give unknowingly to uninvited thoughts: “Do this, say that, remember, plan, obsess, judge.” They have the potential to drive us quite crazy, and they often do!

—JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN⁸⁹

Our thoughts can have very powerful effects on how we feel and what we do. Often those thoughts are triggered and run off quite automatically. By becoming aware, over and over again, of the thoughts and images passing through the mind and letting go of them as we return our attention to the breath and the moment, it is possible to get some distance and perspective on them. This can allow us to see that there may be other ways to think about situations, freeing us from the tyranny of the old thought patterns that automatically “pop into mind.” Most important, we may eventually come to realize “deep in our bones” that *all thoughts are only mental events* (including the thoughts that say they are not), that *thoughts are not facts*, and that *we are not our thoughts*.

Thoughts and images can often provide us with an indication of what is going on deeper in the mind; we can “get hold of them,” so that we can look them over from a number of different perspectives, and by becoming very familiar with our own “top 10” habitual, automatic, unhelpful thinking patterns, we can more easily become aware of (and change) the processes that may lead us into downward mood spirals.

It is particularly important to become aware of thoughts that may block or undermine practice, such as “There’s no point in doing this” or “It’s not going to work, so why bother?” Such a pessimistic, hopeless thought pattern is one of the most characteristic features of depressed mood states, and one of the main factors that stop us from taking actions that would help us get out of those states. It follows that it is particularly important to recognize such thoughts as “negative thinking” and not automatically give up on efforts to apply skillful means to change the way we feel.

From thoughts come actions. From actions come all sorts of consequences.
In which thoughts will we invest? Our great task is to see them clearly, so
that we can choose which ones to act on and which simply to let be.

—JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN⁸⁹

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 2

Ways You Can See Your Thoughts Differently

Here are some of the things you can do with your thoughts:

1. Just watch them come in and leave, without feeling that you have to follow them.
2. See if it is possible to notice the feelings that give rise to the thoughts: the “context” in which your thoughts are but one link in a chain of events.
3. View your thought as a mental event rather than a fact. It may be true that this event often occurs with other feelings. It is tempting to think of it as being true, but it is still up to you to decide whether it is true and how you want to deal with it.
4. Write your thoughts down on paper. This lets you see them in a way that is less emotional and overwhelming. Also, the pause between having the thought and writing it down can give you a moment to respond to it differently.
5. For particularly difficult thoughts, it may be helpful to take another look at them intentionally, in a balanced, open state of mind, as part of your sitting practice. Let your “wise mind” give its perspective, perhaps labeling the feeling out of which, it arises, and holding a sense of curiosity, as best you can: “Ah, here is sadness”; “Here is the voice of depression”; “Here is the familiar harsh and critical voice.” *The keynote attitude to take with your thoughts is gentle interest and curiosity.*

Based in part on Fennell.⁹⁶

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 3

Relapse Prevention

What are your warning signals that depression might be trying to take hold again (e.g., becoming irritable; decreased social contact—just “not wanting to see people”; changes in sleeping habits; changes in eating habits; getting easily exhausted; giving up on exercise; not wanting to deal with business, such as opening mail, paying bills; postponing deadlines)?

Set up an Early Warning System—write down on the next worksheet the changes that you should look out for (if it feels comfortable, include *those with whom you share your life* in a collaborative effort to *notice* and then to *respond* rather than to *react* to these signs).

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 4

Working Wisely with Unhappiness and Depression—I

SEEING CLEARLY (NOTICING THE FIRST SIGNS OF DEPRESSION)

This worksheet offers an opportunity to increase your awareness of what happens for you when depression appears. The aim is, carefully and with curiosity, to investigate the thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and patterns of behavior that tell you that your mood is starting to drop.

What triggers depression for you?

- Triggers can be external (things that happen to you) or internal (e.g., thoughts, feelings, memories, concerns).
- Look out for small triggers as well as large ones—sometimes something that appears quite trivial can spark a downward mood spiral.

What sort of thoughts run through your mind when you first feel your mood dropping?

What emotions arise?

(cont.)

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 4 *(page 2 of 2)*

What happens in your body?

What do you do, or feel like doing?

Are there any old habits of thinking or behavior that might unwittingly keep you stuck in depression (e.g., ruminating, trying to suppress or turn away from painful thoughts and feelings, struggling with it instead of accepting and exploring it)?

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 5

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 6

1. Practice with your own selection from the new meditations and previous ones (audio tracks 4, 10, and 13) for a minimum of 40 minutes a day (e.g., 20 + 20). Record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular (audio track 8): Practice three times a day at times you have determined in advance. Record each time by circling an R on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive (audio track 9), if you choose (see Session 5—Handout 2): Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant feelings*. Record each time by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties. If negative thoughts are still around after the breathing space, you might like to use some of the ideas in Session 6—Handout 2 to get a different perspective on these thoughts.
4. Complete the Working Wisely with Unhappiness and Depression Worksheet—I you started in class. Please include family members and friends, if you like. They may also notice early warning signs if your mood is low.

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 6

Home Practice Record Form—Session 6

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	

R, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular Version; X, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive Version.

(cont.)

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SESSION 6—HANDOUT 6 *(page 2 of 2)*

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Sunday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X	

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 7

Stepping Back from Thought

It is remarkable how liberating it feels to be able to see that your thoughts are just thoughts and not “you” or “reality.” For instance, if you have the thought that you must get a certain number of things done today and you don’t recognize it as a thought but act as if it’s “the truth,” then you have created in that moment a reality in which you really believe that those things must all be done today.

One patient, Peter, who’d had a heart attack and wanted to prevent another one, came to a dramatic realization of this one night, when he found himself washing his car at 10 o’clock at night with the floodlights on in the driveway. It struck him that he didn’t have to be doing this. It was just the inevitable result of a whole day spent trying to fit everything in that he thought needed doing today. As he saw what he was doing to himself, he also saw that he had been unable to question the truth of his original conviction that everything had to get done today because he was already so completely caught up in believing it.

If you find yourself behaving in similar ways, it is likely that you will also feel driven, tense, and anxious without even knowing why, just as Peter did. So if the thought of how much you have to get done today comes up while you are meditating, you will have to be very attentive to it as a thought or you may be up and doing things before you know it, without any awareness that you decided to stop sitting simply because a thought came through your mind.

On the other hand, when such a thought comes up, if you are able to step back from it and see it clearly, then you will be able to prioritize things and make sensible decisions about what really does need doing. You will know when to call it quits during the day. So the simple act of recognizing your thoughts as thoughts can free you from the distorted reality they often create and allow for more clear-sightedness and a greater sense of manageability in your life.

This liberation from the tyranny of the thinking mind comes directly out of the meditation practice itself. When we spend some time each day in a state of nondoing, observing the flow of the breath and the activity of our mind and body, without getting caught up in that activity, we are cultivating calmness and mindfulness hand in hand. As the mind develops stability and is less caught up in the content of thinking, we strengthen the mind’s ability to concentrate and to be calm. And if each time we recognize a thought as a thought when it arises and register its content, and discern the strength of its hold on us and the accuracy of its content, then each time we let go of it and come back to our breathing and a sense of our body, we are strengthening mindfulness. We come to know ourselves better and become more accepting of ourselves, not as we would like to be, but as we actually are.

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SESSION 6—HANDOUT 8

The Train of Associations

The thinking level of mind pervades our lives; consciously or unconsciously, we all spend much or most of our lives there. But meditation is a different process that does not involve discursive thought or reflection. Because meditation is not thought, through the continuous process of silent observation, new kinds of understanding emerge.

We do not need to fight with thoughts, struggle against them, or judge them. Rather, we can simply choose not to follow the thoughts once we are aware that they have arisen.

When we lose ourselves in thought, identification is strong. Thought sweeps the mind and carries it away, and, in a very short time, we can be carried far indeed. We hop on a train of association, not knowing that we have done so, and certainly not knowing the destination. Somewhere down the line, we may wake up and realize that we have been thinking, that we have been taken for a ride. And when we step down from the train, it may be in a very different mental environment from where we jumped aboard.

Take a few moments right now to look directly at the thoughts arising in your mind. As an exercise, you might close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting in a cinema watching an empty screen. Simply wait for thoughts to arise. Because you are not doing anything except waiting for thoughts to appear, you may become aware of them very quickly. What exactly are they? What happens to them? Thoughts are like magic displays that seem real when we are lost in them but then vanish upon inspection.

But what about the strong thoughts that affect us? We are watching, watching, watching, and then, all of a sudden—whoosh! We are gone, lost in a thought. What is that about? What are the mind states or the particular kinds of thoughts that catch us again and again, so that we forget that they are just empty phenomena passing on?

It is amazing to observe how much power we unknowingly give to uninvited thoughts: “Do this, say that, remember, plan, obsess, judge.” They have the potential to drive us quite crazy, and they often do!

The kinds of thoughts we have, and their impact on our lives, depend on our understanding of things. If we are in the clear, powerful space of just seeing thoughts arise and pass, then it does not really matter what kind of thinking appears in the mind; we can see our thoughts as the passing show that they are.

From thoughts come actions. From actions come all sorts of consequences. In which thoughts will we invest? Our great task is to see them clearly, so that we can choose which ones to act on and which simply to let be.

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SESSION 7—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 7: “How Can I Best Take Care of Myself?”

What we actually *do* with our time from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from one year to the next, can be a very powerful influence affecting our general well-being and our ability to deal skillfully with depression.

You might like to try asking yourself these questions:

1. Of the things that I do, what nourishes me, what increases my sense of actually being alive and present rather than merely existing? (*N* activities—for nourishing)
2. Of the things that I do, what drains me, what decreases my sense of actually being alive and present, what makes me feel I am merely existing, or worse? (*D* activities—for depleting)
3. Accepting that there are some aspects of my life I simply cannot change, am I consciously choosing to increase the time and effort I give to nourishing activities, and to decrease the time and effort I give to depleting activities?

By being actually present in more of our moments and making mindful decisions about what we really need in each of those moments, we can use activity to become more aware and alert, and to regulate mood.

This is true for dealing with both the regular pattern of our daily lives and periods of low mood that may lead to depression—we can use our day-by-day experience to discover and cultivate activities we can use as tools to cope with periods of worsening mood. Having these tools already available means that we will be more likely to persist with them in the face of negative thoughts (e.g., “Why bother with anything?”) that are simply part of the territory of depressed mood.

For example, one of the simplest ways to take care of your physical and mental well-being is to take daily physical exercise—as a minimum, aim for at least one brisk, 10-minute walk a day; also, if at all possible, engage in other types of exercise, such as mindful stretching, yoga, swimming, jogging, and so on. Once exercise is in your daily routine, it is a readily available response to depressed moods as they arise.

The breathing space provides a way to remind us to use activity to deal with unpleasant feelings as they arise.

(cont.)

USING THE BREATHING SPACE: THE ACTION STEP

After reconnecting with an expanded awareness in the breathing space, it may feel appropriate to take some *considered action*. In dealing with depressed feelings, the following activities may be particularly helpful:

1. Do something pleasurable.
2. Do something that will give you a sense of satisfaction or mastery.
3. Act mindfully.

Ask yourself: What do I need for myself right now? How can I best take care of myself right now?

Try some of the following:

1. **Do something pleasurable.**

Be kind to your body: Have a nice hot bath; have a nap; treat yourself to your favorite food without feeling guilty; have your favorite hot drink; give yourself a facial or manicure.

Engage in enjoyable activities: Go for a walk (maybe with the dog or a friend); visit a friend; do your favorite hobby; do some gardening; take some exercise; phone a friend; spend time with someone you like; cook a meal; go shopping; watch something funny or uplifting on TV; read something that gives you pleasure; listen to music that makes you feel good.

2. **Do something that gives you a sense of mastery, satisfaction, achievement, or control.**

Clean the house; clear out a cupboard or drawer; catch up with letter writing; do some work; pay a bill; do something that you have been putting off doing; take some exercise. (*Note.* It's especially important to congratulate yourself whenever you complete a task or part of a task, *and to break tasks down into smaller steps and only tackle one step at a time.*)

3. **Act mindfully** (read Staying Present, Session 4—Handout 5).

Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing right now; keep yourself in the very moment you are in; put your mind in the present (e.g., “Now I am walking down the stairs . . . now I can feel the banister beneath my hand . . . now I’m walking into the kitchen . . . now I’m turning on the light . . .”); be aware of your breathing as you do other things; be aware of the contact of your feet with the floor as you walk.

(cont.)

REMEMBER

1. Try to perform your action as an experiment. Try not to prejudge how you will feel after it is completed. Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way.
2. Consider a range of activities and don't limit yourself to a favorite few. Sometimes, trying new behaviors can be interesting in itself. "Exploring" and "inquiring" often work against "withdrawal" and "retreat."
3. Don't expect miracles. Carry out what you have planned as best you can. Putting extra pressure on yourself by expecting this to alter things dramatically may be unrealistic. Rather, activities are helpful in building your overall sense of control in the face of shifts in your mood.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 2

When Depression Is Overwhelming

Sometimes you may find that depression comes out of the blue. For example, you may wake up feeling very tired and listless, with hopeless thoughts going through your mind.

When this happens, it may be useful for you to tell yourself, “Just because I am depressed now does not mean that I have to stay depressed.”

When things come out of the blue like this, they set off negative ways of thinking in everyone.

If you have been depressed in the past, it will tend to trigger old habits of thought that may be particularly damaging: full of overgeneralizations, predictions that this will go on forever, and “back to square one” thinking. All of these ways of making sense of what is happening to you tend to undermine your taking any action.

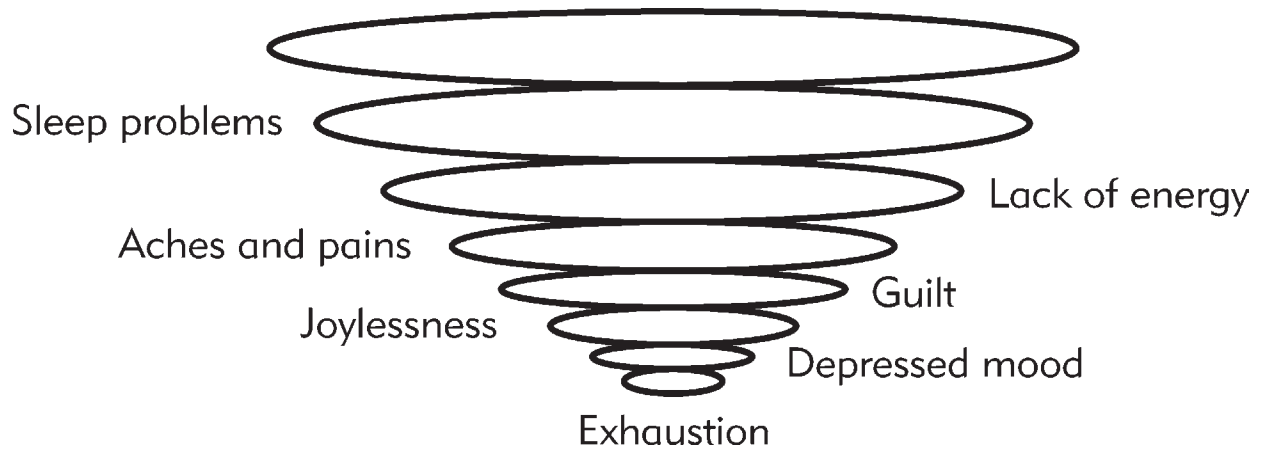
Having these symptoms does not mean that the depression needs to go on for a long time or that you are already in a full-blown episode of depression.

Ask yourself, “What can I do to look after myself to get me through this low period?”

Take a breathing space to help gather yourself. This may help you see your situation from a wider perspective. This wider perspective allows you to become aware of both the pull of the old habits of thinking and what skillful action you might take.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 3

The Exhaustion Funnel



The narrowing area of the circles illustrates the narrowing of our lives as we give up the things that we enjoy but that seem “optional.” The result is that we stop doing activities that would nourish us, leaving only work or other stressors that often deplete our resources. Professor Marie Asberg suggests that those of us who continue downward are likely to be those who are the most conscientious workers, those whose level of self-confidence is closely dependent on our performance at work (i.e., those who are often seen as the best workers, not the lazy ones). The diagram also shows the sequence of accumulating “symptoms” experienced by one participant as the funnel narrowed and he became more and more exhausted.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 4

Working Wisely with Unhappiness and Depression—II

RESPONDING WISELY (CARING FOR YOURSELF WHEN YOU NOTICE THE FIRST SIGNS OF DEPRESSION)

In Session 6–Handout 4, you wrote down what triggers downward spirals in mood for you, and what you notice as the signs that your mood is dropping (e.g., thoughts, feelings, body sensations). On this sheet, we consider how you might skillfully respond when you find yourself in this position. It may be helpful to look back over your course handouts, to remind yourself of what you have done and see whether you have discovered anything that might help.

In the past, what have you noticed that helped when you were becoming depressed?

What might be a skilful response to the pain of depression? How could you respond to the turmoil of thoughts and feelings without adding to it (including what you have learned in the classes)?

(cont.)

SESSION 7–HANDOUT 4 (page 2 of 2)

How can you best care for yourself at this difficult and painful time (e.g., things that would soothe you, activities that might nourish you, people you might contact, small things you could do to respond wisely to distress)?

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Now write down suggestions to yourself for an Action Plan that you can use as a framework for coping, once you or your friends/family have noticed early warning signs (remember to address the frame of mind that you might be in at the time; e.g., “I know you probably will not be keen on this idea but I think that, nonetheless, it is very important that you . . .”). For example, you might put on a mindful movement, body scan, or sitting meditation recording; remind yourself of what you learned during the class that was helpful then; take frequent breathing spaces leading into thought review or considered action; read something that will “reconnect” you with your “wiser” mind; and so on.

It may be helpful to remind yourself that what you need at times of difficulty is no different from what you have already practiced many times throughout this course.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 5

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 7

1. From all the different forms of formal mindfulness practice you have experienced, settle on a form of practice that you intend to use on a regular, daily basis until our first follow-up class. Use this practice on a daily basis this week, and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form.
2. Complete the Action Plan (Working Wisely with Unhappiness and Depression—II, Session 7—Handout 4) to prepare for times when mood threatens to overwhelm you. Feel free to include others—family or friends—in this planning.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular (audio track 8): Practice three times a day at times that you have decided in advance. Record each time you do it by circling an *R* for the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
4. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive plus action (audio track 9): Practice *when-ever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings*. Record each time you do the coping breathing space by circling an *X* for the appropriate day on the Home Practice Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 6

Home Practice Record Form—Session 7

Name: _____

Record on the Home Practice Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? Planned—R R R Responsive— X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

R, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular Version; X, 3-Minute Breathing Space—Responsive Version.

(cont.)

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SESSION 7—HANDOUT 6 *(page 2 of 2)*

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Sunday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Which formal practice chosen? R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 1

Summary of Session 8: Maintaining and Extending New Learning

The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully *responding* to situations rather than immediately running off preprogrammed, “automatic” *reactions* have been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skillful action directed at changing your inner or outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that by carrying on, trying to solve an insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up “banging one’s head on a brick wall,” exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one’s sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, *you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it. Choosing not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.*

In the so-called “Serenity Prayer,” we ask for the *grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.*

Where do we find this grace, this courage, this wisdom? At some level, we *already* have all of these qualities—our task is to realize them (make them real), and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

THE FUTURE

Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be over the next weeks, until we meet again, and stick to it as best you can throughout this period. Note any difficulties you have, so that we can discuss them next time.

Also, remember that the regular breathing space practice provides a way of “checking in with yourself” a few times a day. Let it also be your first response in times of difficulty, stress, or unhappiness—KEEP BREATHING!

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 2

Daily Mindfulness

- When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass by, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing—use any sound as the bell of mindfulness. Really listen and be present and awake.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something that nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while you walk or stand. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking, can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?
- Whenever you wait in a line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of excess tension. Is there tension stored anywhere in your body? For example, your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back? If possible, stretch or do yoga once a day.
- Focus attention on daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing up, brushing your hair, putting on your shoes, or doing your job. Bring mindfulness to each activity.
- Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.

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