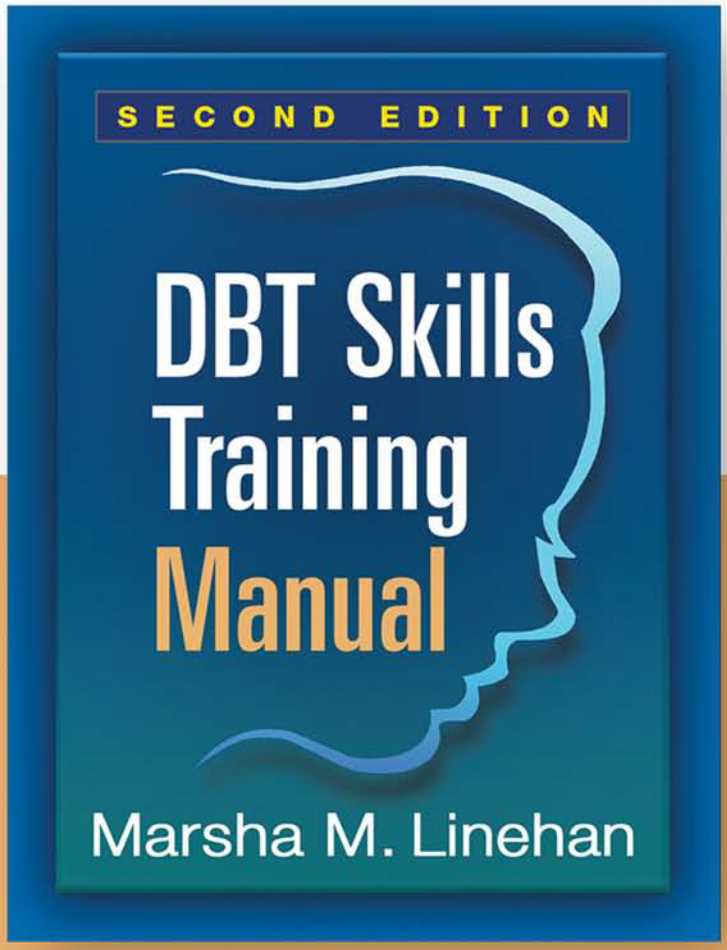

Module 1 / Mindfulness Skills

Teaching Notes

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Chapter 7

Mindfulness Skills

Mindfulness skills are central to DBT (hence the label "core" mindfulness skills for the first group of skills described below). The core skills are the first skills taught, and they underpin and support all of the other DBT skills. They are reviewed at the beginning of each of the other three skill modules and are the only skills highlighted throughout the entire treatment. DBT mindfulness skills are psychological and behavioral translations of meditation practices from Eastern spiritual training. Mindfulness skills are as essential for therapists and skills trainers to practice as they are for participants. Indeed, clinicians' practice of mindfulness has been found to be associated with a better therapeutic course and better outcomes.[1] Thus mindfulness practice is ordinarily the first agenda item in DBT treatment team meetings.

Mindfulness has to do with the quality of awareness or the quality of presence that a person brings to everyday living. It's a way of living awake, with eyes wide open. As a set of skills, mindfulness practice is the intentional process of observing, describing, and participating in reality nonjudgmentally, in the moment, and with effectiveness (i.e., using skillful means). In formulating these skills, I have drawn most heavily from the practice of Zen. But the skills are compatible with Western contemplative and other Eastern meditation practices, as well as with emerging scientific knowledge about the benefits of "allowing" experiences rather than suppressing, avoiding, or trying to change them. Both Eastern and Western psychologies, as well as spiritual practices, are converging on the same insights. Mindfulness practice per se was and is central to contemplative spiritual practices across denominations and beliefs, and the mindfulness practices included here may be incorporated into any individual's spiritual practices and beliefs. DBT, however, is specifically designed to be nondenominational (i.e., compatible with an array of beliefs and traditions), and thus practices are purposely provided in a secular format. No spiritual or religious convictions are expected or necessary for practicing and mastering these skills.

The mindfulness skills can also be thought of as the components that together make up the foundation for meditation practices taught in many psychological and stress reduction treatment packages (e.g., Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy,[2] Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention,[3] Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction[4]). In some ways, the mindfulness skills in DBT can be thought of as skills for beginners in mindfulness—that is, skills for individuals who cannot yet regulate themselves well enough to practice formal mindfulness meditation. They can also be thought of as skills for persons advanced in mindfulness—the skills such persons need to practice in everyday life. In this sense, these skills are the application of mindfulness meditation to everyday life.

What Is Mindfulness?

"Mindfulness" is the act of consciously focusing the mind in the present moment without judgment and without attachment to the moment. When mindful, we are aware in and of the present moment. We can contrast mindfulness with automatic, habitual, or rote behavior and activity. When mindful, we are alert and awake, like a sentry guarding a gate. We can contrast mindfulness with rigidly clinging to the present moment, as if we could keep a present moment from changing if we cling hard enough. When

mindful, we are open to the fluidity of each moment as it arises and falls away. In "beginner's mind," each moment is a new beginning, a new and unique moment in time. We can contrast mindfulness with rejecting, suppressing, blocking, or avoiding the present moment, as if "out of mind" really did mean "out of existence" and "out of influence" upon us. When mindful, we enter into each moment.

"Mindfulness practice" is the repeated effort of bringing the mind back to awareness of the present moment, without judgment and without attachment; it includes, therefore, the repeated effort of letting go of judgments and letting go of attachment to current thoughts, emotions, sensations, activities, events, or life situations. In sum, mindfulness is a practice of entering into the current moment without reserve or grudge, entering into the cosmic process of existence with awareness that life is a process of constant change. Mindfulness practice teaches us to move into the moment and become aware of everything in it, functioning from there.

"Mindfulness everyday" is a way of living. It's a way of living with our eyes wide open. It is very difficult to accept reality with our eyes closed. If we want to accept what's happening to us, we have to know what's happening to us. We have to open up our eyes and look. Now a lot of people say, "I keep my eyes open all the time." But if we look at them, we'll see that they are not looking at the moment. They're looking to their past. They're looking to their future. They're looking to their worries. They're looking to their thoughts. They're looking to everybody else. They're looking absolutely everywhere else, except at the moment. Mindfulness as a practice is the practice of directing our attention to only one thing. And that one thing is the moment we are alive. The very moment we are in. The beauty of mindfulness is that if we look at the moment, just this moment, we will discover that we are looking at the universe. And if we can become one with the moment—just this moment—the moment cracks open, and we are shocked that joy is in the moment. Strength to bear the suffering of our lives is also in the moment. It's just about practice. It's not a type of practice where listening to it just once and going through it just once gets us there. Mindfulness is not a place we get to. Mindfulness is a place we are. It is the going from and coming back to mindfulness that is the practice. It's just this breath, just this step, just this struggle. Mindfulness is just where we are now, with our eyes wide open, aware, awake, attentive. It can be extremely difficult. Things may come up that are difficult to bear. If that happens, we can step back, notice, let go. This moment will pass. Difficulty may come up again. It may be difficult again. We can look at it, let it go, let it pass. If it becomes too difficult at some moment, we can just gently stop. We can come another day, wait, and listen again.

"Meditation" is the practice of mindfulness while sitting or standing quietly for a period of time. Meditation is sometimes mistakenly thought to be the core of mindfulness. However, it is important not to confuse meditation and mindfulness. Although meditation implies mindfulness, the reverse is not necessarily so: Mindfulness does not require meditation. This distinction is very important. Although everyone can practice mindfulness, not everyone can practice meditation. Some cannot sit or stand still. Some are too terrified to look at their breath or watch their mind. Some cannot practice meditation now, but will be able to at a later point.

"Mindful meditation" is the activity of attending to, gazing, watching, or contemplating something. In Zen, for example, one is often given the instruction "Watch your mind." In other spiritual practices, one may be given words, texts, or objects to focus the mind on. In an art gallery, one stands or sits and gazes at artistic works. We attend to the chirp of the birds or the car engine sounding different than before. We watch the sun set and gaze at children frolicking in the park. Each of these is mindful activity. Although the term "meditation" is sometimes used to refer to thinking about something as in connection to the universe or the miracle of life, the more common understanding in secular circles is that of mindfulness. Just as common is the understanding that when one meditates, one is (usually) sitting quietly and is focusing on one's breath, one's bodily sensation, a word, or some other focus dictated by one's individual practice or tradition.

Meditation as a contemplative or mindfulness practice is both a secular practice, as in meditating on or contemplating art, and a religious or spiritual practice, as in contemplative prayer. Indeed, in all the major religions of the world, there is a tradition—however broad or narrow—of contemplative practice. This tradition within religions, often referred to as the "mystical" tradition, recommends mindfulness practices of various sorts and emphasizes spiritual experiences that may result from these practices. Whether mindful meditation and prac-

tice are secular or spiritual depends completely on the orientation and beliefs of the individual. For the spiritual person, mindfulness can be both a secular and a spiritual or religious practice.

In meditation and in mindfulness, there are two types of practices: "opening the mind" and "focusing the mind." Opening the mind is the practice of observing or watching whatever comes into awareness. In sitting meditation, it is simply noticing thoughts, emotions, and sensations that enter awareness without holding onto or pursuing them. It is like sitting and watching a conveyor belt going by—noticing what is going by on the conveyor belt, but not shutting off the belt to examine objects more closely. It is like sitting on a hill watching a harbor and noticing the boats entering and leaving without jumping onto one of the boats. For beginners or for persons with attention difficulties, opening the mind can be very difficult, because it is so easy to get caught up in a passing thought, emotion, or sensation and to lose the focus on awareness. For these individuals, focusing the mind is usually recommended.

When focusing the mind, one focuses attention on specific internal or external events. For example, when focusing on internal events, one might focus attention on a specific sensation succession (a series of sensations), emotions arising, thoughts going through the mind, or repeated words or phrases that have been decided before. For example, some schools of meditation give out mantras, or specific words to say with each breath. One instance of this is the "wise mind" practice (described below) of saying the word "wise" while breathing in and the word "mind" while breathing out. Another example is counting breaths (up to 10 and then starting over), which is a typical instruction in Zen. Guided mindfulness exercises given by clinicians or via meditation recordings give instructions of where and how to focus the mind. When focusing the mind externally one might focus on a leaf, a painting, a candle, another person or persons, or scenery, as in a walk in nature, a sunrise or sunset, and so forth.

There are also two stances one can take in practicing: either getting distance by pulling back and watching, or moving forward and becoming "what is" (by moving into what is being watched). Contrasts of these stances, stated in metaphorical language, are standing on a high mountain and picturing one's emotions as boulders far down below versus entering fully into the experience of one's emotions; sitting on the edge and watching the emptiness within oneself versus entering into and becoming the emptiness; noticing self-consciousness at a party versus throwing oneself completely into a party; and watching one's own sexual responses versus entering entirely into one's own sexual response.

Core Mindfulness Skills

States of Mind and the Mindfulness "Wise Mind" Skill

The core mindfulness skills are covered in Sections I–X of this module. In DBT, three primary states of mind are presented: "reasonable mind," "emotion mind," and "wise mind" (Section III). A person is in reasonable mind when he or she is approaching knowledge intellectually; is thinking rationally and logically; attends only to empirical facts; and ignores emotion, empathy, love, or hate in favor of being planful, practical, and "cool" in approaching problems. Decisions and actions are controlled by logic. The person is in emotion mind when thinking and behavior are controlled primarily by current emotional states. In emotion mind, cognitions are "hot"; reasonable, logical thinking is difficult; facts are amplified or distorted to be congruent with current affect; and the energy of behavior is also congruent with the current emotional state.

Wise mind is the synthesis of emotion mind and reasonable mind; it also goes beyond them: Wise mind adds intuitive knowing to emotional experiencing and logical analysis. In Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, two other states of mind are also discussed: "doing mind" or "doing mode" and "being mind" or "being mode."[5] Doing mind focuses on getting things done. It is multitasking, task-oriented, and driven. In contrast, being mind is "nothing-to-do" mind, where the focus is on experiencing rather than doing. These two states of mind are relevant to DBT mindfulness skills, because wise mind can also be considered as a synthesis of doing mind and being mind.

Mindfulness skills are the vehicles for balancing emotion mind and reasonable mind, being mind and doing mind, and other extreme sets of mind and action to achieve wise mind and wise action. There are three "what" skills (observing, describing, and participating). There are also three "how" skills (taking a nonjudgmental stance, focusing on one thing in the moment, and being effective).

Mindfulness "What" Skills

The mindfulness "what" skills are about what to do: "observe," "describe," and "participate" (Sections IV–VI). The ultimate goal of mindfulness skills practice is to develop a lifestyle of participating with awareness. Participation without awareness is a characteristic of impulsive and mood-dependent behaviors. Generally, paying special attention to observing and describing one's own behavioral responses is only necessary when one is learning new behaviors, when there is some sort of problem, or when a change is necessary or desirable. Learning to drive a stick-shift car, to dance, and to type are familiar examples of this principle. Consider beginning piano players, who pay close attention to the locations of their hands and fingers, and may either count beats out loud or name the keys and chords they are playing. As skill improves, however, such observing and describing cease. But if a habitual mistake is made after a piece is learned, a player may have to revert to observing and describing until a new pattern has been learned. This same deliberate reprogramming is necessary for changing impulsive or mood-dependent behavior patterns. Observing ourselves with curiosity and openness to what we will find can also, in time, lead to greater understanding and clarity about who we are. We find our "true selves" only by observing ourselves.

Observing

The first "what" skill (Section IV) is observing—that is, attending to events, emotions, and other behavioral responses, without *necessarily* trying to terminate them when they are painful or prolong them when they are pleasant. What the participants learn here is to allow themselves to experience with awareness, in the moment, whatever is happening—rather than leaving a situation or trying to terminate an emotion. Generally, the ability to attend to events requires a corresponding ability to step back from the event. Observing walking and walking are two different activities; observing thinking and thinking are two different activities; and observing one's own heartbeat and the heart's beating are two different activities. This focus on "experiencing the moment" is based on Eastern psychological approaches, as well as on Western notions of nonreinforced exposure as a method of extinguishing automatic avoidance and fear responses.

Describing

A second mindfulness "what" skill (Section V) is that of describing events and personal responses in words. The ability to apply verbal labels to behavioral and environmental events is essential for both communication and self-control. Learning to describe requires that a person learn not to take emotions and thoughts as accurate and exact reflections of environmental events. For example, feeling afraid does not necessarily mean that a situation is threatening to life or welfare. Many people confuse emotional responses with precipitating events. Physical components of fear ("I feel my stomach muscles tightening, my throat constricting") may be confused in the context of a particular event ("I am starting an exam in school") to produce a dysfunctional thought ("I am going to fail the exam"), which is then responded to as a fact. Thoughts ("I feel unloved" or "I don't believe anyone loves me") are often confused with facts ("I am unloved").

Participating

The third mindfulness "what" skill (Section VI) is the ability to participate without self-consciousness. A person who is participating is entering completely into the activities of the current moment, without separating him- or herself from ongoing events and interactions. The quality of action is spontaneous; the interaction between the individual and the environment is smooth and based in some part on habit. Participating can, of course, be mindless. We have all had the experience of driving a complicated route home as we concentrated on something else, and arriving home without any awareness of how we got there. But it can also be mindful. A good example of mindful participating is that of the skillful athlete who responds flexibly but smoothly to the demands of the task with alertness and awareness, but not with self-consciousness. Mindlessness is participating without attention to the task; mindfulness is participating with attention.

Mindfulness "How" Skills

The other three mindfulness skills are about *how* one observes, describes, and participates; they include taking a nonjudgmental stance ("nonjudgmentally"), focusing on one thing in the moment ("one-mindfully"), and doing what works ("effectively").

Nonjudgmentally

Taking a nonjudgmental stance (Section VII) means just that—taking a nonevaluative approach, not judging something as good or bad. It does not mean going from a negative judgment to a positive judgment. Although individuals often judge both themselves and others in either excessively positive terms (idealization) or excessively negative terms (devaluation), the position here is not that they should be more balanced in their judgments, but rather that judging should in most instances be dropped altogether. This is a very subtle point, but a very important one. The problem with judging is that, for instance, a person who can be "worthwhile" can always become "worthless." Instead of judging, DBT stresses the consequences of behavior and events. For example, a person's behavior may lead to painful consequences for self or others, or the outcome of events may be destructive. A nonjudgmental approach observes these consequences, and may suggest changing the behaviors or events, but would not necessarily add a label of "bad" to them. DBT also stresses accurate discrimination of one thing from another and description of what is observed. In discriminating, one determines whether a behavior meets a required definition or not. For example, a lawyer or judge can discriminate whether a certain behavior breaks the law or not. A diving judge can discriminate whether a diver's form matches the required form for the dive or not. Behavior may not be good or bad, but it can meet criteria for being against the law or for fitting the ideal model for a particular dive.

One-Mindfully

Mindfulness in its totality has to do with the quality of awareness that a person brings to activities. The second "how" skill (Section VIII) is to focus the mind and awareness in the current moment's activity, rather than splitting attention among several activities or between a current activity and thinking about something else. Achieving such a focus requires control of attention—a capability that many individuals lack. Often participants are distracted by thoughts and images of the past, worries about the future, ruminative thoughts about troubles, or current negative moods. They are sometimes unable to put their troubles away and focus attention on the task at hand. When they do become involved in a task, their attention is often divided. This problem is readily observable in their difficulties in attending to skills training sessions. The participants need to learn how to focus their attention on one task or activity at a time, engaging in it with alertness, awareness, and wakefulness.

Effectively

The third "how" skill (Section IX), being effective, is directed at reducing the participants' tendency to be more concerned with being "right" than with what is actually needed or called for in a particular situation. Effectiveness is the opposite of "cutting off your nose to spite your face." As our participants often say, it is "playing the game" or "doing what works." From an Eastern meditation perspective, focusing on effectiveness is "using skillful means." The inability to let go of "being right" in favor of achieving goals is often related to experiences with invalidating environments. A central issue for people who have been frequently invalidated is whether they can indeed trust their own perceptions, judgments, and decisions—that is, whether they can expect their own actions to be correct or "right." However, taken to an extreme, an emphasis on principle over outcome can often result in these individuals' being disappointed or alienating others. In the end, everyone has to "give in" some of the time. People often find it much easier to give up being right for being effective when it is viewed as a skillful response rather than as a "giving in."

Other Perspectives on Mindfulness

Three sets of supplementary mindfulness skills are included: mindfulness practice from a spiritual perspective; skillful means: integrating doing mind and being mind; and wise mind: walking the middle path (Sections XI–XVI). These skills add to and expand the core mindfulness skills described above, and each can be aligned with a spiritual perspective to a greater or lesser degree. They can be integrated into the teaching of the core skills, can be taught in an advanced skills course, or can be used in individual treatment settings as needed and as appropriate for the specific client.

Mindfulness Practice: A Spiritual Perspective

The focus on mindfulness from a spiritual perspective (Sections XI–XII) is included for a number of

reasons. The practice of mindfulness itself has its origins in age-old spiritual practices. For many individuals, spirituality and religious practices are very important in their lives. Such practices can be important sources of strength and can also provide coping resources in difficult moments. Religious affiliation, in addition, can provide a community that often furnishes important spiritual and interpersonal support. Leaving out a recognition—and, indeed, a recruiting—of spirituality as a source of strength and sustenance when we discuss mindfulness practices, particularly mindful meditation, runs the risk of ignoring the spiritual diversity of the populations we treat. Including handouts on mindfulness from a spiritual perspective provides an avenue for helping clients strengthen their own spirituality and integrate it into their practices of mindfulness.

In contrast to the psychological goals of mindfulness, the goals of mindfulness from a spiritual perspective include experiencing ultimate reality as it is (something that is defined differently across cultures and religious practices), cultivating wisdom, letting go of attachments and radically accepting reality as it is, and increasing love and compassion toward self and others. For many, the practice of mindfulness also includes reflectiveness and the cultivation of ethical qualities. It is important here to keep in mind that spirituality and religion are two different things. Although there are many definitions of spirituality, a working definition is that it can be viewed as the "acknowledgment of a transcendent being, power, or reality greater than ourselves" (p. 14).[6] In particular, from this perspective, spirituality is a quality of the individual that has to do with regard for the spiritual, transcendent, or nonmaterial. As a practice, spirituality focuses on beliefs that in the universe "there is more than meets the eye"; that is, reality is not limited to what we can know via the material and sensory world. A spiritual perspective on mindfulness is designed to include every person. It is important here to recognize that spirituality can cover a vast terrain—from the community as a higher power (as is often said in 12-step groups), to humanistic views, mystical experience, religious practices, and (in DBT) wise mind.

Whereas spirituality is a quality of the individual, a religion is an organized community of individuals. Religions focus on beliefs, rituals, and practices oriented to bringing individuals within the community into closer relationship with the transcendent. Both spirituality and religion emphasize values and moral actions, and both can provide meaning, purpose, and hope to life. In particular, both can create meaning for those living lives of intense suffering. Purpose and hope can be extremely important in finding a way to build a life experienced as worth living.

Wise Mind from a Spiritual Perspective; Loving Kindness

Wise mind from a spiritual perspective (Section XIII) outlines different types of spiritual practices, as well as providing a list (see Mindfulness Handout 7a) of some of the many names and terms used with reference to the transcendent. It also provides a description of the experience of wise mind from this perspective. Many spiritual and religious practices share elements with mindfulness practices, including silence, quieting the mind, attentiveness, inwardness, and receptivity. These are characteristics of deep spiritual experiences. Many individuals have such experiences without any realization of their importance or validity. This handout helps both clients and clinicians understand such experiences. The emphasis across spiritual paths on love and compassion for even enemies is captured here in the mindfulness practice of loving kindness (Section XIV). Although written as a practice of wishing self and others well, it can also be practiced as brief prayers for the welfare of self and others.

How to Talk about Spirituality with Skills Training Participants

1. Do not be afraid to ask participants whether they are spiritual. If you need to define what you mean, you can say simply that it is the belief that "there is more to reality than what we can know through our senses." For those who are spiritual, you can ask whether they believe in God, a higher power, or the like.
2. Not only do you need to respect the spirituality (or its absence) of participants, but it is also important to set the tone in such a way that other group participants also act in a respectful manner.
3. Do no harm. Do not impose your own spirituality (or lack of it) on participants.
4. Find a path and a language that can be translated in multiple ways. Many of the notes provided in this chapter are aimed at giving you multiple ways to talk about various topics re-

lated to spirituality. You can also try to pick up on the language used by participants.

Notes for Agnostic Skills Trainers and Therapists

You do not need to be spiritual to teach mindfulness practice from a spiritual perspective. However, I suggest not teaching it if none of your participants are spiritual. A few clarifying points addressing common questions may make it easier for you to teach these skills.

1. ***How do spirituality and therapy and skills go together?***

   The goal of psychotherapy and skills training is change. Change, however, requires acceptance of what is. The essential element across all spiritual and humanistic traditions is acceptance. Mindfulness emerged from spiritual contemplative practices. The common elements of contemplative practices are compassion, love, radical acceptance, and wisdom.

2. ***Isn't this Buddhism or some other religion that I am not part of?***

   As noted in the earlier discussion of mindfulness, mindfulness is a practice that is nondenominational and transconfessional (i.e., it is compatible with an array of beliefs and traditions). Thus it is important to recognize that the "ultimate reality" that the spiritual person seeks to encounter can go by the name of God, Yahweh, the Great Spirit, Allah, Brahman, Atman, "no self," "emptiness," "essential essence," "essential nature," "the ground of being," "higher power," or a wide variety of other names. It is important for skills trainers to assist participants in linking the skills here to their own practices and terms.

3. ***Isn't Zen a religion?***

   Zen is a practice, not a religion. Zen, Christian centering prayer, and many other contemplative and meditation practices across religions and cultures are similar in that they each focus on experiencing ultimate reality, however this is defined or understood. Although Zen was originally associated with Buddhism, as it has moved into Western culture it has expanded to embrace atheists, agnostics, and individuals across a wide variety of religious denominations and spiritual paths.

Skillful Means: Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind

Among the growing number of treatments combining mindfulness meditation and yoga practices with behavioral interventions are Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction,[7] as well as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy[2] and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention.[3] The latter two are also based on the work of Kabat-Zinn.[4] These treatments stress the differences between "doing mode" and "being mode." To bring these ideas into the fold of DBT, I have added the skill of skillful means (Section XV), and a handout focusing on the synthesis of these two concepts and titled Skillful Means: Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind (Mindfulness Handout 9). Doing mind focuses on achieving goals; being mind focuses on present experiencing. Put another way, doing mind is "something-to-do" mind, and being mind is "nothing-to-do" mind. From a spiritual point of view, the difference between Martha and Mary in the Biblical story is that Martha was distracted by preparing what was needed for Jesus when he was visiting them, and Mary chose the "better part" by sitting at his feet and listening.[8] Being mind is the contemplative life path, and doing mind is the active life path. (For more on this topic, put the term "contemplative vs. active life" into your search engine.) The polarity between them is similar to that between reasonable and emotion mind. Wise mind brings the two into a synthesis. Without aspects of both being mind and doing mind, it is difficult if not impossible to lead a balanced life.

Wise Mind: Walking the Middle Path

"Walking the middle path" is living life between the extremes, or finding the synthesis between the extremes (Section XVI). This skill is, to a degree, a summary of previous skills with a few additions. The idea here is that mindfulness brings together opposites, finding the truth in alternate and opposite sides. As discussed previously, mindfulness skills focus on the synthesis of reasonable mind and emotion mind, as well as between doing mind and being mind. From a spiritual perspective, mindfulness skills bring together the material and the mystical—form and emptiness as one. (For a dis-

cussion of mysticism, see *Mysticism: Its History and Challenge* by Bruno Borchert.)[9] The two new oppositions have to do with finding the synthesis between acceptance on the one side and change on the other. In the first dichotomy, the main focus is on recognizing that one can give up attachments, as in radical acceptance of the moment, without at the same time suppressing the desire for change. The paradoxical point is that the very effort to reduce desire is itself a failure to radically accept desire. The supplementary skills in Chapter 8 include walking the middle path in the context of interpersonal relationships, with a particular emphasis on parent–teen relations. From a spiritual perspective, the middle path brings together the material and the mystical, form and emptiness, wise mind and the cloud of unknowing.[10, 28, 68] It is represented in the skills of replacing self-denial and asceticism with moderation, and replacing self-indulgence and hedonism with just enough satisfaction of the senses.

Managing Yourself Mindfully: Tips for Skills Trainers

What to Do When You Feel Judgmental

We skills trainers are often as likely to get judgmental as are our skills training participants. Like our participants, when we feel judgmental we often fail to take action or confront others and say what needs to be said, because we are afraid of coming across as judgmental to those we are working with. We start backing off and backing up, which lands us out of the moment and out of the flow. It is hard not to close up when we are afraid of something, and this is what usually happens when we will not confront another person for the fear of looking judgmental. As a skills trainer, what can you do to counteract this?

With colleagues, it can be helpful to start off by stating your fear of sounding judgmental and ask for help in reducing your judgmentalness. Practicing being nonjudgmental yourself is critical for the effectiveness of DBT in general, and for teaching mindfulness in particular. Consistent practice not only makes teaching nonjudgmentalness and confronting participants in a positive way much easier, but it also gives you support for getting back into the flow.

Although as a clinician you can speak about feeling judgmental with colleagues, you do not have the same luxury with skills training participants. Many individuals simply cannot tolerate the thought of their skills trainers' being judgmental, and they may blame themselves for the trainers' feelings of annoyance or irritation. What can you do to ease the situation at hand or prevent such a problem from unfolding?

- ***First, practice what you preach.*** It is very difficult to engage in modeling nonjudgmentalness with participants if you are not consistently practicing the skill yourself. Practicing will help you quickly ease back into being nonjudgmental during a session if you start having difficulties.
- ***Second, practice opposite action when you feel judgmental.*** The best way to do this is to start making validating statements in a situation that fills you with judgment (such as making comments about how the participants' behaviors are understandable, given current events or their history; how their behavior could not be otherwise, given the facts; etc.). Be sure to validate all the way, remembering to use a nonjudgmental voice tone. Keep talking until your judgmentalness goes down. Such comments constitute opposite action, and they are not unlike doing cognitive therapy on yourself. That is, as you speak to the participants, you are stating the nonjudgmental thinking that will ease you into nonjudgmental thinking yourself.
- ***Third, remember that acceptance is not a blank check for approval.*** Although you may feel both the necessity and, simultaneously, the impossibility of acceptance when faced with extreme demands, egregious behavior, or untenable attacks, bear in mind that acceptance also entails accepting limits.
- ***Fourth, counteract the threat.*** Judgmentalness and the anger that it breeds often have to do with your own fears, such as "If I cannot control this participant, he will commit suicide," "If I cannot get this point across, this participant will never get along with her daughter," or "I can't stand this one more second." In a skills training group, a very common threat is that one member's dysfunctional behaviors in the group will ruin skills training for other members. The function of judgmentalness here is often aimed at controlling these dysfunctional behaviors. In my experience, however, one of the fastest ways to lose control of another person is to try to control them. Although when a participant is highly suicidal, extremely aggressive, or passive, it can be *very* hard to control your own efforts to con-

trol the participant, nonetheless such self-control is often of paramount importance. How to do it? Use your skills! Check the facts (see Emotion Regulation Handout 8) and analyze clearly whether your feared outcomes are likely. Observe (see Mindfulness Handout 4) what is really going on, and ask wise mind (see Mindfulness Handout 3) whether your feared outcomes constitute a true catastrophe. Cope ahead (see Emotion Regulation Handout 19) can be useful for getting better at handling situations that you know precipitate judgmentalness in you. When you are with a participant or group, cheerlead yourself silently: In your mind, keep repeating cheerleading self-statements that counteract the threat (see Distress Tolerance Handout 9). I have used self-statements such as "Find the synthesis," "Therapy will work if I let it," "I can stand this," "I can manage this," "This is not a catastrophe," "My team will help me," and so on. At other times the threat is that you may be the cause of the problem you are trying to solve. This thought is such a threat that rather than try to solve the problem, you may immediately move to judgmental blaming of the participant. Opposite action for shame (see Emotion Regulation Handout 10) can be useful here. Talk with your participants and/or with your team about what you might have done to cause the immediate problem.

What to Do When You Slip Out of the Present

Often enough, we skills trainers respond not to a participant's action at the moment, but to a future action that could happen as a result of it. During a group session, for example, our thoughts about a participant may have the following trajectory: "What you are doing doesn't upset me, but it could get worse and upset the group; then other participants may drop out or not improve. My treatment will be a failure." When we are in a highly stressful moment with a participant who is angry at us or is attacking another group member, we have the option of throwing ourselves into the interaction of the moment matter-of-factly without malice, or we can sit there fuming and wait for the participant to come under control. Instead of treating the participants, we sometimes are waiting for them to quit being who they are. In a sense, we are washing dishes and thinking about having a cup of tea. As a skills trainer, what can you do to move yourself back into the present?

- ***Remind yourself that all you have to do in this moment is apply the treatment you are doing.*** When you start thinking that you have to do therapy *and* control the participant, then you can get yourself into a mess. When you focus on thinking that all you have to do is apply the appropriate consequence to a functional or dysfunctional behavior when one appears, you will be in a much better place and shape. Ask yourself: What drives the need to hold up expectations and compare one reality to another? When your gauge inevitably misses the mark, you will get upset. To what extent is this going on with you?
- ***Take hold of the current moment.*** If you find yourself slipping out of the moment and the nonjudgmental state, start observing physical sensations—the way you breathe, the way your body is positioned. Taking hold of the moment prevents venturing into the past or future. Being out of the moment may narrow your focus, reducing it to tunnel vision. It may also make getting distracted by other thoughts easier for you.

To Teach Mindfulness, Practice Mindfulness

Practice mindfulness both at home and at work. Ask yourself: Can a person who cannot play the piano teach piano? Can a person who has never done therapy teach therapy? Can a person who cannot hold a tennis racquet correctly teach tennis? Although there are types of behaviors you can teach even when you cannot do the behavior yourself (e.g., gymnastics), this is not the case with mindfulness. Thus it is extremely important that you, as a skills trainer, also have some type of mindfulness practice. Finding a mindfulness teacher can be very helpful, as can joining mindfulness practice groups, reading meditation/mindfulness/contemplative practice books (e.g., contemplative prayer books, Zen books), and attending mindfulness retreats led by teachers who have adequate credentials. Go to my website or blog to find Zen mindfulness retreats that I lead (*www.linehaninstitute.org/retreats.php*; *http://blogs.uw.edu/brtc/marsha-linehans-mindfulness-retreats*). There are many other teachers in the United States and internationally who also provide mindfulness and contemplative prayer retreats. Be sure to read the descriptions of the retreats, as schedules vary; in addition, some are primarily silent, and others have much more talking and discussion.

Selecting Material to Teach

There is a great deal of material for each skill in the mindfulness teaching notes on the following pages. You will not cover most of it the first time you teach specific skills. The notes are provided to give you a deeper understanding of each skill, so that you can both answer questions and add new teaching as you go. As in Chapter 6 (and throughout Part II of this manual), in this chapter I have put a checkmark (✓) next to material I almost always cover. On this manual's special website (*www.guilford.com/dbt-manual*), I have put a star (★) on each handout that covers a standard DBT core skill not to be skipped. If I am in a huge rush, I may skip everything not checked (and on handouts without a star, I might skip them entirely or only review a few segments).

Also in this chapter (and in the rest of Part II), I have indicated information summarizing research in special features called "Research Points." The great value of research is that it can often be used to sell the skills you are teaching.

When you are teaching mindfulness skills (or any other DBT skills, for that matter), it is important that you have a basic understanding of the specific skills you are teaching. The first several times you teach, carefully study the notes, handouts, and worksheets for each skill you plan to teach. Highlight the points you want to make, and bring a copy of the relevant teaching note pages with you to teach from. Be sure to practice each skill yourself, to be sure you understand how to use it. Before long, you will solidify your knowledge of each skill. At that point, you will find your own favorite teaching points, examples, and stories and can ignore most of mine.

Teaching Notes

I. GOALS OF THIS MODULE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 1–1A)

Main Point: The goal of practicing mindfulness skills for most people is to reduce suffering and increase happiness. For some, a goal of mindfulness is to experience reality *as it is*.

Mindfulness Handout 1: Goals of Mindfulness Practice. Briefly review the goals and benefits of mindfulness practice. Provide enough information to orient participants to the module, link the module to participant goals, and generate some enthusiasm and motivation for learning mindfulness skills. Summarizing one or two research findings can be very useful. It is common to cover the goals of practicing mindfulness and wise mind in one session. If you only have two sessions for mindfulness, start on some of the mindfulness "what" skills in the first session also. When time is short, you can skip this handout and teach the information orally and quickly.

Mindfulness Handout 1a: Mindfulness Definitions *(Optional).* This is an optional handout that you can give with or without review. The need for this handout depends on the sophistication level of the participants. If you do not give out this handout, it is important that you weave in at least some of its points as you teach.

Mindfulness Worksheet 1: Pros and Cons of Practicing Mindfulness *(Optional).* The worksheet is designed to help participants decide whether they have anything to gain from practicing mindfulness, particularly when they are feeling willful or apathetic and don't want to practice. It can be reviewed quickly if participants already know how to fill out a pros-and-cons worksheet. If not, instruct participants to fill out pros and cons both for practicing mindfulness skills and for not practicing. Also instruct them in how to rate intensity of emotions from 0 (the emotion is not there at all) to 100 (it would be impossible for the emotion to be more extreme). Explain that over time they will get better at rating their emotions, and the numbers will start to take on meaning. Numbers only mean something with reference to the person doing the rating. For example, an 80 for one person may be a 70 for another.

A. Goals of Mindfulness Practice

✓ **Discussion Point:** Either before or after reviewing the handout, ask participants to check off each goal that is important to them in the boxes on the handout, and then share their choices. In what areas of their lives do they believe mindfulness might be of help?

Note to Leaders: With some participants, convincing them of the importance of mindfulness skills—which many have never heard of—can be a very hard sell. In these cases, it can be useful to let them know how widespread the teaching and practice of mindfulness are in many settings. For example, mindfulness practice is being taught in business schools, medical schools, and middle and high schools; it is also moving slowly into corporations.

✓ ***1. Reduce Suffering and Increase Happiness***

- Reduce pain, tension, and stress.
- Increase joy and happiness.
- Improve physical health, relationships, and distress tolerance.
- Other goals that participants might have can also be discussed and written in the handout.

✓ **Research Point:** There is some evidence that the regular practice of mindfulness has beneficial effects. The major effects found for mindfulness alone include the following. Review several of these but not too many.

- Increased emotional regulation.[5]
- Decreased in both distractive and ruminative thoughts and behaviors.[11]
- Decreased dysphoric mood.[12]
- Increased activity of brain regions associated with positive emotion.[13]
- Enhanced immune response.[13]
- Decreased depression, anxiety.[14, 15]
- Decreased anger and emotional irritability, confusion and cognitive disorganization, and cardiopulmonary and gastrointestinal symptoms.[16]
- Reduction of pain symptoms, improvement of depressive symptoms in patients with chronic pain, and improvements in coping with pain.[17]
- Decreased psychological distress and increased sense of well-being.[18]
- Decreased risk of depression relapse or reoccurrence.[19]
- Increased healing of psoriasis.[20]
- Improved functioning of the immune system in patients with HIV.[21]

Most of these findings have been obtained with individuals who have practiced mindful meditation and yoga every day for eight or more weeks. Even very brief mindfulness practice, however, can be beneficial. In two of these studies, the mindfulness practice was very brief. More permanent and long- lasting gains, however, are likely to require a longer period of reasonably faithful practice.

✓ ***2. Increase Control of Your Mind***

Tell participants: "To a certain extent, being in control of your mind is being in control of your attention—that is, what you pay attention to and how long you pay attention to it."

- ***Increase your ability to focus your attention.*** Say to participants: "In many ways, mindfulness practice is the practice of controlling your attention. With a lot of practice, you get better at it."[22] Explain that mindfulness reduces automaticity of attentional processes.[25]
- ***Improve your ability to detach from thoughts, images, and sensations***. Explain that often we react to thoughts and images as if they are facts. We get entangled in the events in the mind and cannot tell the difference between a fact in the world and thoughts or images of the world. Mindfulness, practiced often and diligently, can improve your skills of seeing the difference between facts and images and thoughts about facts.

Research Point: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy,[23] originally called Comprehensive Distancing Therapy,[24] focuses on just this: getting enough distance so that people can detach from their thoughts, images, and emotions. The central component of the therapy is teaching individuals how to step back and observe their minds—to see thoughts as thoughts, images as images, and emotions as emotions. Cognitive therapy also stresses the ability to differentiate thoughts, images, and emotions from facts.

- ***Decrease reactivity to mental events.*** Say to clients: "Mindfulness is the practice of observing what is going on inside yourself as well as outside, without doing anything to change it. Thus, in some ways, you can consider it as a practice of observing things without reacting to or trying to change them. The ability to experience without reacting is essential in many situations. Mindfulness practice improves your ability to be less immediately reactive to everyday situations. It gives you a chance to take whatever time is needed before you react."

Discussion Point: Draw from participants examples of how their inability to control their attention creates problems. Examples may include inability to stop thinking about things (e.g., the past,

the future, current emotional pain or hurt, physical pain); inability to concentrate on a task when it is important to do so; and inability to focus on another person or to stay on a task because of distraction.

3. *Experience Reality as It Is*

✓ Ask participants: "If you walk across a dark room, is it better to see the furniture or not? Is it easier with the light on or with it off?" Explain that a fundamental goal of mind*fulness* is to reduce mind*lessness*—both of what is going on around us, and of what we ourselves are doing, thinking, and feeling.

The idea is that if we truly experience each present moment of our lives—if we let go of mental constructs, ideas, and judgments about what is—then we will ultimately see that our worst imaginings of reality are not true. We will at some point see that life itself is unceasing change, and also that clinging to any moment of reality is ultimately not in our best interests.

✓ **a. Be Present to Your Own Life**

Tell clients: "Mindfulness is the practice of being in the present. It is being present to your own life. Many people find at some point that their life is whizzing by and they are missing a lot of it. Children are growing up; friends that we care about are moving away; we are getting older. It is easy to be so focused on distractions, the past, or the future that we actually miss many positive things in our lives."

Example: "If you are walking in the forest, and you slightly change directions without knowing this, it may not take long before you are really far from where you were originally going."

✓ **Research Point:** Explain to clients that being present to our lives is the opposite of avoiding our lives and trying to avoid or suppress our experiences.

- Suppression increases the frequency of the very thoughts and emotions we are trying to suppress.[26, 27]
- Avoidance has no permanent effect on our well-being. When we avoid situations and events that prompt difficult emotions, this temporarily decreases the painful emotions, but it has no permanent effect on our response to these same situations and events in the future. When we avoid and escape painful emotions now, they will be painful in the future.
- Escape often causes more problems and rarely solves problems.

b. Be Present to Others

Mindfulness is focusing on the present moment and on the people we are with *now*. It is very easy to be around people but far away—thinking about something or someone else, looking for someone else to talk to, wishing we were somewhere else, planning what we will do next, dreaming about other things, focusing on our pain or our suffering. We are not present to the people around us. Others, of course, often notice this. They may eventually pull away from us; it is hard for them to be ignored in this way.

c. Experience Reality as It Is

- ***Connection to the universe.*** Everyone and everything in the universe is connected. As physicists would point out, the universe is a network of interconnected atoms, cells, and particles that are constantly moving and changing. We touch the air around us that touches everything else around us, and on and on. Each move that we make interacts with the entire universe at some point. It is this point that we need to get across. However, knowing that we are interconnected is one thing; experiencing it is another.[28] Many people feel

isolated and alone. Their experience of themselves is as outsiders. But once we see that the world and universe is an interconnected network, we can see that there is really no outside or inside. Thus our experience is built on the delusion of separation. Mindfulness is aimed at enhancing our experience of the universe as it is, without delusion or distortion.

- ***Essential "goodness."*** Many individuals experience themselves as bad, unworthy, or somehow defective. Mindfulness is the practice of seeing ourselves as we are—ultimately simply ourselves and inherently neither good nor bad, but rather just as we are. From this perspective, all things in the universe, including ourselves, are good. (Although the use of the term "goodness" may seem to contradict the notion that "good" and "bad" are concepts in the mind of the observer, we cannot deny the use of "good" as an adjective and "goodness" as a term to denote a quality of something. Thus it is important not to move too far into a rigid notion that we can never use the term "good," as in my saying "Good boy" to my dog when he does something I have taught him, or "Good job" to a colleague at work. Once we have given up "good" and "bad" as judgments, we can revert to using them as shorthand comments about what is observed.)
- ***Essential validity.*** "Validity" here means that each person has inherent significance which cannot be taken away or discounted. Each person's voice and needs warrant being heard and taken seriously. Each person's point of view is important.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants their own experiences of being connected to the universe, as well as experiences of being an outsider.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants their own experiences of being bad or unworthy, or of not being taken seriously. Discuss.

Note to Leaders: Sometimes individuals will be put off by references to Eastern meditation practice. You need to be very sensitive to this point. You can either divorce meditation from any religion or relate it to all religions.

1. The fact that meditation is now commonly used in the treatment of chronic physical pain and stress management programs, is increasingly being used in the treatment of emotional disorders, and is part of many wellness programs suggests that it can be practiced and be effective outside of any spiritual or religious context.
2. Eastern meditation practice is very similar to Christian contemplative prayer, Jewish mystical tradition, and forms of prayer taught in other religions.

Be alert to difficulties on this topic and discuss them. It is important not to push mindfulness onto religious participants if they start out by thinking of it as incompatible with their religion. Suggest that they practice what they can. Tell them to discuss it with others of the same religion. Give them time.

Discussion Point: Ask participants how what you have said about mindfulness so far seems similar or different from their own spiritual practices.

B. Mindfulness Definitions

1. Universal Characteristics of Mindfulness

a. Intentionally Living with Awareness in the Present Moment

Explain that this means waking up from automatic or rote behaviors to participate and be present to our own lives.

b. Without Judging or Rejecting the Moment

Point out that this means noticing consequences, as well as discerning helpfulness and harmfulness—but letting go of evaluating, avoiding, suppressing, or blocking the present moment.

c. Without Attachment to the Moment

Emphasize that this means attending to the experience of each new moment, rather than ignoring the present by clinging to the past or grasping for the future.

Example: "You can't be attached to having a newborn baby in the house, because quickly the baby will grow into a toddler."

2. Mindfulness Skills

"Mindfulness skills" are the specific behaviors that, put together, make up mindfulness.

3. Mindfulness Practice

a. What It Is

"Mindfulness practice" is the intentional practice of mindfulness and mindfulness skills. There are many methods of mindfulness practice.

b. How It Can Be Practiced

Mindfulness can be practiced at any time, anywhere, while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment, without judging it or holding on to it, is all that is needed.

c. Meditation

The similarities in meditation methods are much greater than the differences. Similarities are as follows:

- ***Instructions to focus attention.*** The focus is generally on either "opening the mind" to attend to all sensations and thoughts as they arise and fall away, or "focusing the mind" (which varies in what is attended to and may be a sacred word; a mantra given by a teacher; a word selected by the meditator; a story, event, phrase, or word; one's breath; sensations of the body and mind; or a large variety of other objects of focus).
- ***Emphasis on observing nonjudgmentally,*** without attachment or avoidance.
- ***Emphasis on letting go of intellectual analyses*** and logic, discursive thoughts, and distractions to gently bring oneself back to the practice, over and over again.
- ***Letting the word or the practice do the work,*** allowing oneself to go into the "cloud of unknowing"[29] and leave behind the "cloud of forgetting."
- ***Carrying the practice into everyday life.***

d. Contemplative or "Centering" Prayer

Contemplative or "centering" prayer is a Christian mindfulness practice. Similar to meditation as described above, it emphasizes selecting a word to focus on. The difference is that contemplative prayer emphasizes a sacred word, interior silence, and the relationship with God within.[30] (See the work of Thomas Keating.[31])

e. Mindfulness Movement

Mindfulness movement has many forms:

- Dance (all religions; indigenous cultures)
- Martial arts (primarily Eastern religions)
- Walking or hiking with focused awareness on walking/moving and on the natural world
- Ritual music making (e.g., drumming)

C. The Importance of Practicing Mindfulness Skills

Emphasize to clients: "Mindfulness skills require practice, practice, practice. Mindfulness practice can be very difficult at first. Focusing the mind can take a lot of energy. Distractions may be frequent, and it is very easy to find that a few minutes after you started practicing your mindfulness skills, you have fallen out of it and are doing something else."

Discussion Point: Discuss with participants the crucial importance of behavioral practice in learning any new skill. Behavioral practice includes practicing control of one's mind, attention, overt behavior, body, and emotions. Draw from participants their beliefs about the necessity of practice in learning: "Can you learn without practice?"

Example: "Mechanics have learned how to assess what is wrong with a car when it breaks down. It takes practice to be able to do that."

II. OVERVIEW: CORE MINDFULNESS SKILLS (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 2)

Main Point: Three sets of skills form the backbone of mindfulness practice: wise mind; the "what" skills of observing, describing, and participating; and the "how" skills of practicing nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively.

Mindfulness Handout 2: Overview: Core Mindfulness Skills. Use this handout for a quick overview of the skills. Do not teach the material from this handout unless you are skipping the related skill-specific handouts.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b: Mindfulness Skills Practice; Mindfulness Worksheet 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Calendar. These worksheets offer four variations for recording mindfulness skills practice. Each worksheet covers all of the mindfulness skills, and any one of them can be used with Mindfulness Handout 2 if you are using this handout as a review. Worksheet 2 provides space for recording practice of skills only twice between sessions; thus this worksheet can be a good starter worksheet with individuals you are trying to shape into more frequent skills practice. Worksheet 2a instructs participants to practice and gives multiple opportunities for each skill. Worksheet 2b calls for practicing each skill two times. Worksheet 2c is for those who like writing diaries and provides space for describing practice daily.

These worksheets can be given again and again for each of the mindfulness skills if you do not want to use the worksheets specific to each skill. Either assign one worksheet to all participants (and bring copies of only one worksheet to the session), or allow participants to choose which worksheet they wish to fill out; giving them a choice increases their sense of control and may improve compliance. Bring new worksheets weekly to give to participants, so that they can incrementally mark the skills they practice.

✓ A. Wise Mind

Define "wise mind" for clients as "finding inside yourself the inherent wisdom that each person has within."

✓ B. "What" Skills

Tell clients that the "what" skills are "the skills that tell you *what* you should actually do when you practice mindfulness. There are three 'what' skills: observing, describing, and participating."

✓ C. "How" Skills

Explain to clients that the "how" skills are "the skills that teach you *how* to practice your mindfulness skills. Without the 'how' skills, you can veer far away from mindfulness itself. There are three 'how' skills: acting nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively."

III. WISE MIND (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 3–3A)

Main Point: Each person has inner wisdom. "Wise mind" is the mindfulness practice of accessing this inner wisdom. Entering the state of wise mind, we integrate opposites (including our reasonable and emotional states of mind), and we are open to experiencing reality as it is.

Mindfulness Handout 3: Wise Mind: States of Mind. Because wise mind is a critical skill in DBT, this is not a handout that can be skipped. As you go through the concepts of "emotion mind," "reasonable mind," and "wise mind," it can be useful to draw the overlapping circles from the handout on the board and then fill them in. When trying to describe wise mind, it can be useful to draw a picture of a well in the ground (see Figure 7.1, p. 170) and use the drawing to explain the concept of "going within." You cannot ordinarily cover all the points about wise mind in one session; however, over several sessions you can cover most if not all points.

Mindfulness Handout 3a: Ideas for Practicing Wise Mind *(Optional)***.** It is useful to have this handout available, as it gives instructions for the various wise mind practice exercises.

Mindfulness Worksheet 3: Wise Mind Practice. This worksheet lists several ways to practice wise mind, all described in more detail in Handout 3a. If you do not teach each type of wise mind practice, briefly describe them or tell participants that you will cover other ways of getting to wise mind in future classes. If you teach a different practice exercise, ask participants to write that exercise on their worksheet so that they will remember what it is. Next to each exercise on Worksheet 3, there are four boxes. Instruct participants to check off one box for every day they practice that exercise. If they practice more than four times in a week, put extra check marks outside the boxes. Review also how to rate wise mind practice. Note that the ratings are for how effective their practice was for getting into their own wise mind. These are not ratings of whether or not the practice calmed them or made them feel better. Also note at the bottom that the worksheet asks participants to list any and all wise things they did during the week. With some individuals, this may be an important worksheet or portion of a worksheet to give every week, even when you are not specifically teaching skills in the Mindfulness module.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b, 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice. These worksheets cover practice of all the core mindfulness skills, including the "what" and "how" skills. See the Section II overview for how to use these worksheets.

✓ A. Wise Mind

Wise mind is the inner wisdom that each person has. When we access our inner wisdom, we can say that we are in wise mind. Inner wisdom includes the ability to identify and use skillful means for attaining valued ends. It can also be defined as the ability to access and then apply knowledge, experience, and common sense to the situation at hand. For some people, accessing and applying their own inner wisdom are easy. For others, it is very hard. But everyone has the capacity for wisdom. Everyone has wise mind, even if they cannot access it at a particular point.

✓ B. Reasonable Mind and Emotion Mind

Reasonable mind and emotion mind are states of mind that get in the way of wise mind. Often what interferes with accessing our own wisdom is our state of mind at the time. We can be in different states of mind at different times. In one state of mind, we can feel, think, and act very differently than we do in another state of mind.

Example: A person might say, "I was out of my mind when I said that," meaning "I was not thinking clearly when I said that."

✓ ***1. Emotion Mind***

Say to clients: "Emotion mind is your state of mind when your emotions are in control and are not balanced by reason. Emotions control your thinking and your behavior. When completely in emotion mind, you are ruled by your moods, feelings, and urges to do or say things. Facts, reason, and logic are not important."

✓ **Discussion Point:** Elicit from clients which emotions usually get in the way of their acting wisely.

a. Vulnerability Factors

Factors that make us all vulnerable to emotion mind include (1) illness; (2) sleep deprivation/tiredness; (3) drugs or alcohol; (4) hunger, bloating, overeating, or poor nutrition; (5) environmental stress (too many demands); and (6) environmental threats.

Example: "You can wake up in emotion mind and be immediately worrying about work."

Discussion Point: Elicit other vulnerability factors from participants.

b. Benefits of Emotions

Emotions, even when intense, can be very beneficial. Intense love fills history books as the motivation for relationships. Intense love (or intense hate) has fueled wars that in turn have transformed cultures (e.g., fighting to stop oppression and murders as in the battle against the Nazis). Intense devotion or desire motivates staying with very hard tasks or sacrificing oneself for others (e.g., mothers running through fires for their children). A certain amount of intense emotion is desirable. Many people, particularly those with emotional problems, have more intense emotions than most. Some people are the "dramatic" folks of the world and will always be so. People with intense emotions are often passionate about people, causes, beliefs, and the like. There are times when emotion mind is the cause of great feats of courage or compassion—when if reason were there at all, a person would not overcome great danger or act on great love.

c. Problems with Emotions

Problems occur when emotions are ineffective and control us. Emotions are ineffective when the results are positive in the short term but highly negative in the long term, or when the emotional experience itself does not fit the facts of our lives and is very painful, or when it leads to other painful states and events (e.g., anxiety and depression can be painful in themselves).

d. Different Effects of Emotions

Sometimes people become so emotional that they shut down and act like automatons. They may dissociate and appear very, very calm. Or they may isolate themselves, staying very quiet. They appear cool, deliberate, and reasonable, but their behavior is really under the control of overwhelming emotions that they would experience if they let go and relaxed. This is emotion mind; emotions are in control. At other times, of course, emotion mind looks, thinks, talks, and acts in very extreme ways.

✓ **e. The Difference between Strong Emotion and Emotion Mind**

Tell clients: "Don't confuse being highly emotional with emotion mind." Emotion mind is what occurs when *emotions are in control* at the expense of reason. People often have intense emotions *without* losing control. For example, holding one's newborn baby, walking up to receive an award, or finding out a loved one has died can each elicit intense emotions of love (for the baby), pride (at getting the award), or grief (over the loved one's dying). Each of these would be emotion mind only if the emotions crowded out reason and effectiveness.

✓ ***2. Reasonable Mind***

Say to clients: "Reasonable mind is the extreme of reason. It is reason that is not balanced by emotions and values. It is the part of you that plans and evaluates things logically. When completely in reasonable mind, you are ruled by facts, reason, logic, and pragmatics. Emotions, such as love, guilt, or grief, are irrelevant."

a. Benefits of Reason

Reason can be very beneficial. Without it, people could not build homes, roads, or cities; they could not follow instructions; they could not solve logical problems, do science, or run meetings. Explain to clients: "Reason is the part of you that plans and evaluates things logically. It is your cool part. But, again, when you are completely in reasonable mind, you are ruled by facts, reason, logic, and pragmatics. Values and feelings are not important."

✓ **b. Problems with Reason**

Reasonable mind is cold and dismissive of emotions, needs, desires, and passion. This can often create problems.

Example: A hired assassin coolly and methodically planning the next murder is in reasonable mind.

Example: A task-focused person attending only to what must be done next, and ignoring even loved ones who want at least a nod hello, is in reasonable mind.

Say to clients: "It is hard to make and keep friends if you are only in reasonable mind. Relationships require emotional responses and sensitivity to others' emotions. When you ignore your own emotions and treat other people's emotions as unimportant, it is hard to maintain relationships. This is true about relationships in multiple settings—in families, with friends, and in work environments."

Discussion Point: When other people say that "If you could just think straight, you would be all right," they mean "If you could be reasonable, you would do OK." Elicit from participants times other people have said or implied that if they would just not distort, exaggerate, or misperceive things, they would have far fewer problems. How many times have participants said the same thing to themselves?

Discussion Point: Discuss pros and cons of emotion and reason. Draw from participants their experiences of being in reasonable mind and in emotion mind.

✓ C. Wise Mind as the Synthesis of Opposites

Explain to clients: "Wise mind is the integration of opposites: emotion mind and reasonable mind. You cannot overcome emotion mind with reasonable mind. Nor can you create emotions with reasonableness. You must go within and bring the two together."

Note to Leaders: You do not need to cover each of the following points on wise mind every time through. Give just enough to get your point across. After making a few points, do one of the exercises described below before continuing with more information. You will be covering this section many times. Expand on your points a bit more each time through. (See Chapter 7 of the main DBT text for a fuller discussion of wise mind.)

✓ ***1. Everyone Has Wise Mind***

Everyone has wise mind; some people simply have never experienced it. Also, no one is in wise mind all the time.

Note to Leaders: Participants will sometimes say that they don't have wise mind. You must cheerlead here. Believe in participants' abilities to find wise mind. Use the metaphor that wise mind is like having a heart; everyone has one, whether they experience it or not. Use the "well" or "radio channel surfing" analogies below. Remind them that it takes practice to access and use wise mind.

2. *Wise Mind Is Sometimes Experienced as a Particular Place in the Body*

People sometimes experience wise mind as a particular point in the body. This can be the center of the body (the belly), or in the center of the head, or between the eyes. Sometimes a person can find it by following the breath in and out.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants where they think (or suspect) wise mind is within themselves.

3. *It Is Not Always Easy to Find or Even Be Sure about Wise Mind*

✓ **Story Point:** "Wise mind is like a deep well in the ground." (See Figure 7.1; show clients a copy of this figure, or draw it on the whiteboard or blackboard.) "The water at the bottom of the well, the entire underground ocean, is wise mind. But on the way down, there are often trap doors that impede progress. Sometimes the trap doors are so cleverly built that you actually believe there is no water at the bottom of the well. The trap door may look like the bottom of the well. Perhaps it is locked and you need a key. Perhaps it is nailed shut and you need a hammer, or it is glued shut and you need a chisel. When it rains emotion mind, it is easy to mistake the water on top of the trap door for wise mind."

Emotion mind and wise mind both have a quality of "feeling" something to be the case. The intensity of emotions can generate experiences of certainty that mimic the stable, cool certainty of wisdom. Continue the "well within" analogy above: "After a heavy rain, water can collect on a trap door within the well. You may then confuse the still water on the trap door with the deep ocean at the bottom of the well."

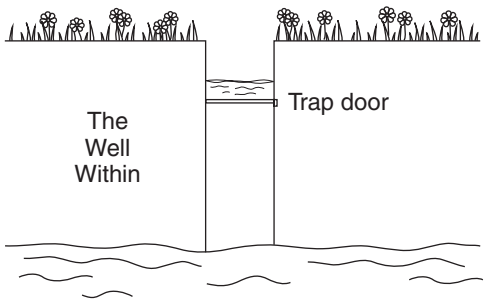

FIGURE 7.1. The well within: An illustration of wise mind.

Discussion Point: Ask participants for other ideas on how to tell the difference between wise mind and emotion mind. There is no simple solution here. Suggest: "If intense emotion is obvious, suspect emotion mind. Give it time; if certainty remains, especially when you are feeling calm and secure, suspect wise mind."

✓ *Example:* Extreme anger often masquerades as wise mind. When really angry, we often think we are absolutely right in everything we think!

4. *Wise Mind Is the Part of Each Person That Can Know and Experience Truth*

It is where a person knows something to be true or valid. It is where the person knows something in a centered way.

5. *Wise Mind Is Similar to Intuition*

Wise mind is like intuition—or, perhaps, intuition is part of wise mind. It is a kind of knowing that is more than reasoning and more than what is observed directly. It has qualities of direct

experience; immediate knowing; understanding the meaning, significance, or truth of an event without having to analyze it intellectually;[32] and "feelings of deepening coherence."[33]

6. *Wise Mind Is Free of Conflict*

✓ Tell clients: "In wise mind, you are free from conflict, making wise action almost effortless (even when it is difficult beyond words). Wise mind has a certain peace."

Example: "You are determined to pass a difficult college course or get a good evaluation at work. You have an assignment that will take up a lot of your time, and you would really like to just sit home and relax. But you think about the consequences of failing and know you will work on it."

✓ *Example:* "You are with your daughter in a boat on the river. You know how to swim, but your child does not, and she falls into the water. You immediately jump into the river to save her, even though the water is freezing."

Example: "You are deciding on a major for a program you're taking. One choice involves taking only classes you're likely to do well in without a lot of effort, but you don't like the job options afterward; the other choice involves taking more challenging classes, but getting specialized training for jobs you really like. In wise mind, you make the decision to go with what you like, even if it's harder."

Note to Leaders: It is important here to point out that a goal of mindfulness and wise mind is not to make life all effort and work, work, work. Most people do not have to work all the time at keeping themselves regulated, doing things to keep their life on track, and moving toward their goals. The idea is to practice skills enough so that life gets easier and better. Wise mind is the road to that: In wise mind, it is easier to act in our own best interests instead of being controlled by our moods and emotions.

7. *Wise Mind Depends on Integrating Ways of Knowing*

Wisdom, wise mind, or wise knowing depends upon integration of all ways of knowing: knowing by *observing*, knowing by analyzing *logically*, knowing by what we *experience* in our bodies (kinetic and sensory experience), knowing by *what* we *do*, and knowing by *intuition*.[34]

8. *Finding Wise Mind Consistently Can Take a Lot of Practice*

Story Point: "Learning to find wise mind is like searching for a new channel on the radio. First you hear a lot of static, and you can't make out the lyrics of the music—but over time, if you keep tuning in, the signal gets louder. You will learn to know right where the station is, and the lyrics become a part of you, so that you can access them automatically—just like you can finish the lyrics immediately if someone starts singing a song you know really, really well."

Discussion Point: Elicit feedback from participants on their own experiences of wise mind.

Discussion Point: Wise mind is getting to the heart of a matter. It is seeing or knowing something directly and clearly. It is grasping the whole picture when before only parts were understood. It is "feeling" the right choice in a dilemma, when the feeling comes from deep within rather than from a current emotional state. Elicit similar experiences and other examples from participants.

Discussion Point: Wise mind may be the calm that follows the storm—an experience immediately following a crisis or enormous chaos. Sometimes a person may reach wisdom only when suddenly confronted by another person. Or someone else may say something insightful that unlocks an inner door. Elicit similar experiences and other examples from participants.

✓ D. Ideas for Practicing Wise Mind

1. About the Exercises

Conduct at least one or two practice exercises for going into wise mind, and be sure to describe several different methods of getting into wise mind. Of the exercises described below, I have found these to be most important: 1, 2, 4 (or 5), 6, and 8. Participants ordinarily have no idea what you are talking about until you do some practice exercises with them. Start with either Exercise 1 (stone flake on the lake) or 2 (walking down the spiral stairs) to give participants a sense of going within, or 3 (breathing "wise" in, "mind" out). Then select one or two more that you have tried yourself, or that you think your participants would like or find useful. You can give out Mindfulness Handout 3a: Ideas for Practicing Wise Mind. Although each exercise is also listed on Mindfulness Worksheet 3: Wise Mind Practice, having a handout can be useful, since participants often write all over, turn in, or throw away their worksheets. Briefly describe the exercises you do not do with them, so that, if they wish, they can practice these others by themselves.

Recommend that participants keep their eyes open when practicing mindfulness. The idea is to learn to be mindful and in wise mind in everyday life. Most of each day is lived with eyes open. Learning to be mindful with eyes closed may not generalize to everyday life with eyes wide open. That said, however, some teachers recommend closing eyes during many mindfulness and contemplative practices. Although it can be a matter of preference, it can also be a practice of willingness (distress tolerance) and mindfulness itself to keep eyes open and simply notice the discomfort (usually not too long lasting). At the beginning of mindfulness practice, this is definitely not a point worth arguing about. Encourage participants who are used to mindfulness or contemplative prayer with their eyes closed to try it for a while with eyes open. The first two exercises below (1 and 2) call for eyes closed.

2. General Steps for Leading Mindfulness Practice Exercises

- ***Practice an exercise yourself*** before you try to teach it.
- ***Tell a story, present a problem, or describe a situation*** that hits on a universal theme, to get the attention and interest of participants.
- ***Relate the story, problem, or situation to yourself,*** to highlight the importance of the skill or exercise being taught. This modeling can be particularly useful if participants are emotionally attached to you as the leader, since you are clearly asking them to try something that is important in your own life and you believe may be important in their lives also.

Example: "I was faced with a really big decision about where to send my child to kindergarten. Two schools were very good but had different strengths and weaknesses. I needed to be clear about what was really most important to me. In making my decision, it was important for me to access wise mind."

- ***Orient participants to the reason for the exercise or practice.*** People are less likely to try an exercise if they have no idea how it relates to themselves and their own personal goals. Make it clear that "this is an exercise that helps you get into wise mind," and explain how.
- ***Remind participants to get in a "wide-awake" posture*** (i.e., one where they will be likely to stay awake). Ordinarily, participants in a skills training group will be sitting in a chair. If so, it is best for them to keep both feet on the floor and sit in a posture that is likely to keep them both alert and comfortable.
- ***Give clear and concise instructions*** telling participants exactly what to do. See below for scripts. Demonstrate exercise if need be. Do not instruct participants to do more than one thing at the same time (e.g., count your breath and pay attention to sensations as they arise). If the instructions are brief and easily remembered, give instructions at the start of the practice. If the instructions are complicated and what participants do changes over time, give an overview before starting and then give instructions in sequence during the exercise. Even

for brief instructions, it can be helpful to make occasional guiding comments during the exercise to help individuals keep their focus. So that you don't distract participants during exercise, speak in a soft but steady voice, with brief instructions and pauses.

- ***Instruct participants on what to do if they get distracted.*** Tell participants that if they get distracted, notice that they have stopped the exercise, or get lost, they should simply notice this and gently bring themselves back to the practice, starting over at the beginning. Remind participants to avoid judging themselves. The practice of noticing distractions and then coming back to the practice *is* the practice.
- ***Signal the start and end of the practice.*** You can do this by using a mindfulness bell (e.g., "To start, I will ring the bell three times, and to stop, I will ring the bell once"), or you can signal verbally (e.g., "Start now," and at the end, "When you are ready, open your eyes," or "Bring yourself back to the room.").
- ***Invite participants to share and comment on their experiences.*** This sharing is a critical part of the practice and should not be skipped. Going around the circle will usually be the quickest way, as it eliminates long waits between sharing. Allow individuals to say they don't want to share if they wish. In most groups, it is best to discourage cross-talk (i.e., responding to others' comments, discussing others' experiences). However, it can be useful to allow questions of fact or interpretation (e.g., "Did you say X?" or "I don't understand what you mean by XYZ; can you say more?").
- ***Give corrective feedback and troubleshoot.*** This is a critical part of mindfulness teaching. It is particularly important to remind participants consistently that the goal of mindfulness practice is mindfulness practice.

3. Scripts for Exercises

Note to Leaders: When reciting your script, your tone of voice and pace are of crucial importance. Try to use a low, gentle, semihypnotic tone; speak slowly; and leave pauses as you go. Bring people out of imagery gently.

✓ **a. Exercise 1: Imagining Being a Stone Flake on the Lake**

Start instructions with a soft voice, with pauses (. . .) as you go, using the following script (or something similar): "Sit in a comfortable but attentive position. Close your eyes. . . . As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath. . . . Attend to your breath coming in . . . and your breath going out . . . as you breathe naturally in and out. . . . " Then say something like this:

> *"Imagine you are by a lake on a warm sunny day. . . . It is a large, clear, very blue lake. . . . The sun is shining warmly on the lake. . . . Imagine that you are a small . . . stone . . . flake from a piece of stone near the lake, and imagine being gently tossed out onto the lake . . . out to the middle of the lake . . . skimming onto the cool, . . . clear, . . . blue . . . waters of the lake. . . . Imagine that you are slowly . . . very slowly floating down in the lake . . . noticing all that is in the lake as you gently float down . . . floating down in the cool, clear blue waters . . . gazing at what is around you . . . and now settling on the clear bottom of the lake, . . . at the center of the lake . . . gazing at the clear waters and what is nearby. . . . And when you are ready, open your eyes, come back to the room, trying to maintain your awareness of that clear center that is within you."*

✓ **b. Exercise 2: Imagining Walking Down the Inner Spiral Stairs**

As with Exercise 1 above, start instructions with: "Sit in a comfortable but attentive position. Close your eyes. . . . As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath. . . . Attend to your breath coming in . . . and your breath going out . . . as you breathe naturally in and out. . . . " Then say something like this:

"Imagine there is an inner spiral staircase within you. . . . Imagine that you are walking down the staircase . . . going at your own pace . . . making the staircase as light or as dark as you wish . . . with as many windows as you wish . . . walking slowly down . . . and as you walk, noticing if you are tired or afraid . . . sitting down on the steps if you wish . . . walking down the stairs . . . as steep or as shallow as you wish . . . light or dark . . . noticing as you walk down moving toward your very center . . . toward your own wise mind . . . toward wisdom . . . simply walking down at your own pace . . . stopping and sitting when you arrive at a still point. . . . And when you are ready, open your eyes, come back to the room, trying to maintain your awareness of that clear center that is within you."

✓ **c. Exercise 3: Breathing "Wise" In, "Mind" Out**

Start instructions "Finding wise mind is like riding a bike; you can only learn it by experience. Keeping your eyes open, find a good place to rest your eyes . . . " as described above for Exercises 1 and 2. Then say:

"As you breathe in . . . say silently to yourself the word 'Wise' . . . and as you breathe out . . . say silently to yourself the word 'Mind.' . . . Continue saying 'Wise' as you breathe in . . . and 'Mind' as you breathe out."

Note to Leaders: You can substitute "Wise mind in" and "Wise mind out." You or participants may have other words that work better for various individuals, and that is fine.

d. Exercise 4: Asking Wise Mind a Question (Breathing In) and Listening for the Answer (Breathing Out)

Start instructions as described above for Exercise 3. Then say:

"As you inhale, ask yourself a question (e.g., What can I feel good about myself? Should I accept this job?). As you exhale, listen (don't talk, don't answer) for the answer. . . . Keep asking with each breath in and listening with each breath out. . . . See if an answer comes to you. . . . If not, perhaps there is no answer now."

Note to Leaders: The practice of asking wise mind a question and listening for the answer is in line with research showing that the impact of self-talk in interrogative form (questions) on future behavior may be different from the impact of declarative talk (assertions). Self-posed questions may lead to thoughts about intrinsic motivation to pursue a goal, leading the person to form intentions about that goal and increasing the likelihood of the person's performing behaviors linked to the goal.[35]

e. Exercise 5: Asking, "Is This Wise Mind?"

Start instructions as described above for Exercise 3. Then say:

"Bring to mind something you want to do or something you don't want to do, an opinion you have, or something you are doing right now. . . . Focus your mind on your breath . . . notice your breath coming in and your breath going out as you breathe naturally . . . in and out. As you inhale, ...ask yourself, 'Is this wise mind?' . . . ('Is eating a second dessert wise mind?' 'Is not going to my therapy session wise mind?'). As you exhale, listen (don't talk, don't answer) for the answer. . . . Keep asking with each breath in and listening with each breath out. . . . See if an answer comes to you. . . . If not, perhaps there is no answer now, or perhaps you are too ambivalent to know the answer."

Note to Leaders: Exercise 5 is one you should definitely practice with participants. Accessing wise mind is one of the most important DBT skills. The questions can be anything: "What do I have to be proud of—

to help me feel good about myself?" "Should I continue to smoke pot?" "Do I really love him?" (While storming out of skills training early:) "Is this wise mind?" (When adamantly disagreeing with someone:) "Is this wise mind?"

f. Exercise 6: Attending to the Breath/Letting Attention Settle into the Center

Note to Leaders: Attending to one's breath is the most universal mindfulness practice. It can be woven into teaching about wise mind without a lot of orientation beforehand. It can be done with just a few breaths, while clients are sitting down, standing, or walking. It is very important to help participants let go of expectations about breathing. Expecting breaths to become slow or deep, expecting any other specific type of breath, or expecting to relax or feel differently while practicing can induce panic responses and actually interfere with experiencing wise mind. For some individuals, simple focusing on breathing for any extended length of time is not possible. As one participant once said, "I don't do breathing."

For many, a focus on breath alone allows their mind to generate trauma memories, ruminating thoughts, and traumatic and/or painful images. Extreme emotion and/or dissociation may be the result. Others get agitated immediately when they focus on their breathing. For these individuals, a shaping process is needed, and it may take a long time and/or exposure-based treatment before meditative breath focus becomes possible. For others, difficulties with attention or with sitting or standing still can make prolonged attention to breathing very difficult. The difficulties those with severe disorders often have with meditation practices are the principal reason why DBT does not require meditation (i.e., focus on breath) for individuals who cannot tolerate it.

Start instructions as described above for Exercise 3. Then say:

"As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath . . . attend to your breath coming in and your breath going out . . . as you breathe naturally in and out. . . . Attending to your breath coming in and out, . . . letting your attention settle into your center . . . at the bottom of your breath when you inhale . . . just near your gut or in the center of your forehead. That very centered point is wise mind . . . as you breathe in and out . . . keeping your attention there at your very center . . . in your gut."

g. Exercise 7: Expanding Awareness

Note to Leaders: Begin this exercise by having participants attend to the breath for a few minutes and then expand their awareness. It is important that participants keep their eyes open during this exercise. You might add to the instructions, "Keeping your eyes focused where they are now, expand your awareness to the walls or to the floor or table." Most people will definitely notice the difference when taking this extra step.

Start instructions as described above for Exercise 3. Then say:

"As you inhale and exhale normally, not changing your breathing . . . let your attention settle into your center . . . just near your gut. . . . As you breathe in and out . . . keeping your attention there at your very center . . . in your gut, gently expand your awareness to the greater space around you . . . not changing the focus or your eyes, but expanding the focus of your awareness . . . with widened awareness, keeping your primary awareness at your center."

Discussion Point: Ask participants to share their experience with expanding awareness, and to discuss how this is different from activities where they are so focused on a task, a game, or an interaction that they become oblivious to everything around them. The ability to be focused but aware of our surroundings is like that of a mother who, while working at home, is constantly

aware of where her young child is. Contrast this with becoming lost in computer games, watching TV, or engaging in any other behavior patterns that can become addictive. Discuss the implications of this contrast with participants.

h. Exercise 8: Dropping into the Pauses between Inhaling and Exhaling

Start instructions as described above for Exercises 3. Then say:

"As you inhale, bring your attention up with your breath . . . notice the very top of your breath . . . at the top of your chest. Notice the very slight pause before your exhale. . . . As you reach this pause, drop yourself and your attention into the pause. . . . Notice as you exhale, letting your attention travel down with your breath. At the very bottom of your exhalation, before you inhale, drop yourself and your attention into that pause. . . . Continue breathing in and out, dropping yourself into the pauses, into wise mind."

Note to Leaders: Some participants simply cannot do Exercise 8. It sounds incomprehensible and weird to them. Other participants, perhaps those with a poetic bent, love the exercise. Be prepared with another exercise when you plan to use this one.

✓ E. Review of Between-Session Practice Exercises for Wise Mind

Mindfulness Handout 3a lists all of the ideas described above for practicing wise mind. It is important to go over some of these if they are not practiced in the session.

IV. MINDFULNESS "WHAT" SKILLS: OBSERVE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 4–4A)

Main Point: There are three mindfulness "what" skills and three mindfulness "how" skills. "What" skills are what we do when practicing mindfulness, and "how" skills are how we do it. The three "what" skills are observing, describing, and participating. Observing is paying attention on purpose to the present moment.

Mindfulness Handout 4: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "What" Skills. First, give a brief overview of each "what" skill. The key points are on this handout. Point out that a person can only do one thing at a time—observe, or describe, or participate—but not all three at once. If you are trying to teach all the core mindfulness skills in two sessions, cover wise mind and the "what" skills in their entirety in the first session. Observing, the first "what" skill, is fundamental to all mindfulness teaching and thus must be covered until participants understand what the practice is. Be sure to conduct practice exercises for observing before moving to the next skill. You will have a chance to do further teaching on these skills during the review of homework practice in the next session. These skills are best learned by practice, feedback, and coaching.

Mindfulness Handout 4a: Ideas for Practicing Observing *(Optional)***.** This multipage handout gives instructions for three types of observing exercises: "coming back to your senses," "focusing the mind," and "opening the mind." It's useful to have this handout in the session. If you distribute the handout, be sure to describe (at least briefly) the differences between these three types of observing. For some groups of participants, these handouts may be overwhelming or confusing, and giving specific practice assignments may be more useful.

Mindfulness Worksheet 4: Mindfulness "What" Skills: Observing, Describing, Participating; Mindfulness Worksheet 4a: Observing, Describing, Participating Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheet 4b: Observing, Describing, Participating Calendar. These three worksheets offer three different formats for recording practice of mindfulness "what" skills. Worksheet 4 asks participants to practice mindfulness skills only twice between sessions. Worksheet 4a instructs participants to practice and gives

multiple opportunities for each skill, as well as multiple check boxes for each skill. Worksheet 4b is aimed at participants who like to write. Assign one worksheet to all participants, or allow participants to choose; choosing may give them a greater sense of control and possibly improve adherence.

For participants new to mindfulness skills, asking them to practice all three "what" skills in a single week can be too much. It can be useful to ask which skill each participant has the most trouble with. For example, a person who has ADHD, or who ruminates a lot or gets completely lost in the moment, may want to practice observing first and then later practice the other skills. Observing is also a good first skill for a person who suppresses or avoids emotions or other experiences. A person who frequently distorts information or misinterprets what is going on may want to practice describing first. However, the skill of describing depends on accurate observation, so be sure the person has learned the skill of observing before you move to describing. The person who is usually an observer of others and does not jump in and participate in events may want to practice participating first. Although you ultimately want everyone practicing all the skills, it is often best to start with the skill a person wants to practice or believes is most needed.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b, 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice. These worksheets cover practice of all the core mindfulness skills, including both the "what" and "how" skills. See Section II of this chapter for how to use these worksheets.

✓ A. The Mindfulness "What" and "How" Skills

There are three mindfulness "what" skills and three mindfulness "how" skills.

"What" skills are what we do when practicing mindfulness, and "how" skills are how we do it.

Each "what" skill is a distinct activity. Like walking, riding a bike, or swimming, the "what" skills are three separate activities. Thus "what" skills are practiced one at a time: We are either observing, or describing what has been observed, or participating in the moment. This is in contrast to the "how" skills (nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively), which can be applied all at once.

Note to Leaders: You need not cover each of the points below every time through. Cover just enough to get your point across. You will be covering this section many times. Expand on your points a bit more each time through. Either before starting or after giving just a few points, do one or two exercises from the list at the end of this section. One of the brief introductory exercises followed by the lemon exercise can be very useful and engaging.

B. Why Observe?

✓ *1. We Observe to See What Is*

Say to participants: "Observing is like walking across a room full of furniture with your eyes open instead of closed. You can walk across the room either way. However, you will be more effective with your eyes open. If you don't like the furniture in the room, you might want to close your eyes, but ultimately it's not very effective. You keep running into the furniture."

We all walk through life with our eyes closed sometimes, but opening our eyes and actually observing what's there can be very helpful. The good thing about observing is that it brings us into contact with the real, factual, present moment. That's where we all actually live—in the here and now. We can't experience the past; we can't experience the future; and if we're living in the past or the future, we're not really living. Observing is all about learning to feel fully alive in the here and now.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Observing is the opposite of multitasking. As an example, discuss multitasking and driving, with an emphasis on how multitasking might interfere with seeing and responding to what is right in front of you—including other people.

2. We Observe to Get Information into Our Brains So That We Can Change

Research Point: Research shows that information coming into our senses will help us change in desired ways.

- Weighing ourselves consistently and seeing our weight regularly will often make our weight go down (if we feel too fat) or up (if we feel too thin).[36]
- Filling out diary cards is known to be reactive; that is, it can change the very behavior it is measuring.[37]

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants their own tendencies to avoid reality, particularly tendencies to avoid even noticing reality as it is. Discuss consequences of such avoidance.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants, and discuss, any problems they have with attention.

✓ C. Observing: What to Do

✓ *1. Notice What You Are Experiencing through Your Senses*

Say to clients: "Notice what you are experiencing through your eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue. You observe the world outside yourself through your five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. You also observe the world inside yourself through sensing your thoughts, emotions, and internal bodily sensations."

a. Sense Objects or Events Outside or Inside Your Body

Tell participants: "What you sense depends on where you focus your attention. Ultimately, you will want to be able to observe events occurring within your mind and body (i.e., thoughts, sensations, emotions, images) and events occurring outside your body."

Note to Leaders: When you are helping clients begin a mindfulness practice, it is important to start with something somewhat difficult but also doable. When clients are first learning a skill, it is important for them to get reinforced for it. Shaping is important here as it is in learning any other new skill.

✓ D. Observing Practice Exercises

We all walk through life with our eyes closed. Opening our eyes and observing what's there can be very helpful—and practice in doing this is necessary.

1. Brief Introductory Exercises

✓ The following are very brief exercises that can be done as you first start teaching observing. You can do one exercise and then share the experience, or you can do several of these sequentially and then share. Ask participants to do these things:

✓
- "Attend to your hand on a cool surface (such as a table or chair) or a warm surface (such as your other hand)."
- "Attend to your thigh on the chair."
- "Attend to and try to sense your stomach, your shoulders."
- "Listen for sounds."
- "Follow your breath in and out; notice the sensation of your belly rising and falling."
- "Watch in your mind to see the first thought that comes in." (As a leader, you can facilitate this by yelling the word "Elephant!" first and then giving instruction.)

- "Stroke just above your upper lip; then stop stroking and notice how long it takes before you can't sense your upper lip any longer."
- "Stand, arms relaxed at your sides, feet about a foot apart. Focus your attention on how your feet feel connecting with the floor. . . . Without moving your feet, find the spot where you feel most balanced over your feet."

Discussion Point: Share experiences at end of exercises.

b. Sense Your Mind

Explain to clients: "Observing your thoughts can sometimes be very difficult. This is because your thoughts about events may often seem to you like facts instead of thoughts. Many people have never really tried to just sit back and watch their thoughts. When you observe your own mind, you will see that your thoughts (and also your emotions and bodily sensations) never stop following one another. From morning till night, there is an uninterrupted flow of events inside your mind; you might notice thoughts, emotions, and other bodily sensations. As you watch, these will come and go like clouds in the sky. This is what thoughts and feelings do inside the mind when just observed—they come and go."

Practice Exercise: Instruct participants to sit with their eyes closed and listen as you say out loud a string of words (e.g., "up," "round," "salt," "tall"). Instruct them to observe what word comes into their minds following each word you say. Discuss the words that entered their minds.

- ***Some people are terrified to look at their own minds.*** They've avoided it for years. For these individuals, it may be more effective to start observing things outside their bodies first—for example, sitting on a park bench and watching people walk by; or holding something in one hand, such as a leaf or a flower, and noticing the weight of the object, the texture, the smell, the shape.
- ***Some people can't stop analyzing their minds.*** They're paying attention to their own experience all the time. For these individuals, it might be harder to start by observing their own minds, particularly if they are very used to analyzing themselves. In contrast, here it is important in observing the mind to adopt a curious attitude and simply watch what goes through the mind. That is, it is important not to try to understand the mind, figure out the mind, or analyze the mind. These are activities of "doing" mind. They are goal-directed. Observing is not goal-directed, other than toward noticing. Having a "Teflon mind"—a concept to which I return later—is essential here.

Note to Leaders: Some people dissociate or sense themselves leaving their bodies when observing. For people having trouble staying "inside themselves," it can be useful to suggest that they imagine that the place they go outside themselves is a flower. The flower is connected to their center by a long stem. Their center is the root of the flower. Instruct them to imagine coming down the stem to the root. Have them do this each time and then observe at the root.

2. Pay Attention on Purpose to Right Now—As It Happens

Mindful observing can be thought of as paying attention to present experiences on purpose. Instruct clients: "To observe, you simply step back, be alert, and notice. When you observe, it is the only thing you are doing, nothing else. Don't react, don't label, don't describe; just notice the experience. When you observe, you pay attention to direct physical sensation."

3. Observe by Controlling Attention

Explain to clients: "When you can control your attention, you can control your mind. There are two types of attending: focusing the mind and opening the mind."

a. Focusing the Mind

"Focusing the mind" is the practice of concentrating attention on specific activities, objects, or events. Many things can be used for focusing the mind. Give clients these examples:

- "The most common mindfulness practice is observing your breath. Your breath is the only thing that you can be certain you will always have for as long as you live. You can lose your arm; you can lose your leg; you can lose many things. But as long as you are alive, you have breath. Focusing attention on your breath is a central part of all mindfulness meditation and contemplative prayer practices."
- "Some schools of meditation give mantras or specific words to say with each breath."
- "Guided mindfulness exercises given by therapists, or meditation recordings, give intermittent instructions on where and how to focus the mind."
- "Counting breaths in and breaths out up to 10 and then starting over is a typical instruction in Zen."
- "Saying the word 'wise' when breathing in and the word 'mind' when breathing out is a way to focus your mind. Some people practice using a word such as 'calm.' "

Mindfulness of current emotions (see Emotion Regulation Handout 22), mindfulness of current thoughts (Distress Tolerance Handout 15), and mindfulness of others (Interpersonal Effectiveness Handout 12) are other examples of focusing the mind, as are the exercises described in the "Focusing the Mind" portion of Mindfulness Handout 4a.

b. Opening the Mind

In "opening the mind," instead of focusing on specific activities, objects, or events, we focus our attention on observing or watching whatever comes into awareness as it comes in and as it goes out of awareness. It is noticing thoughts, emotions, and sensations that enter awareness, without holding onto or pursuing the topics coming into mind. When opening the mind, we attempt at each moment to expand awareness to moment-to-moment experiencing. Thus the object in opening the mind is to observe the flow of moment-to-moment experience. This is like sitting and watching an operating conveyor belt, noticing the objects that go by on the belt, but without shutting down the belt to look at the objects more closely. Another metaphor for this is sitting on the shore of a stream in autumn and watching the leaves go by on the water without following any of the leaves to pay closer attention.

In Zen this practice is called *shikentaza,* which is mindfulness practice without the support of focusing on the breath or other techniques for concentrating the mind. This is also called "choiceless awareness"[38] to indicate that an individual notices anything that comes into awareness, not choosing one thing to pay attention to.

Note to Leaders: For participants who have attention difficulties (or sometimes even high anxiety), the practice of opening the mind can be very difficult, because they keep getting caught up in thoughts, emotions, or sensations that come into awareness. Focusing the mind is recommended for these participants.

✓ ***4. Practice Wordless Watching: Observe without Describing What Is Observed***

Observing without describing can be very hard, and for many people this takes a lot of practice. Our minds may be in the habit of immediately adding labels to anything we observe. We hear "chirp, chirp" and think "bird"; we hear "vroom, vroom" and say "car"; we sense our breath and say "breath"; we see a picture of a bird on the wall and say "bird." We often trade observations for concepts, such as hearing "chirp, chirp" and thinking, "I know what that is: a bird." But when hearing "chirp, chirp," we aren't actually seeing any birds. For all we know, somebody out there could be practicing bird calls. It could in fact be a bird, but we didn't observe a bird. It was only an observed sound. All we can know for sure is the sound we hear. Observing is notic-

ing the sound "chirp, chirp." That's it. That's all. In fact, jumping to label the sound as "bird" gets in the way of paying attention to the sound. This is like trying to text and drive, or talk on a cell phone and engage in an in-person conversation at the same time: No one can observe well while describing (the second "what" skill) at the same time. Grasping this idea may be difficult for many participants. They might even think it is not possible actually to observe something without the mind's saying anything. For many people, the mind is a constantly chattering set of thoughts.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants their own tendencies to label observations.

✓ ***5. Observe with a "Teflon (or Nonstick) Mind"***

Allowing emotions, thoughts, images, and sensations to come and go is central to mindful observing. A "Teflon/nonstick mind" is important in practicing opening the mind, and also in practicing focusing the mind. In both practices, thoughts, emotions, and images will come up in the mind. The idea is to let all experiences—feelings, thoughts, and images—flow out of the mind, rather than either grabbing experiences or holding onto them, or pushing experiences away.

Say to clients: "Observing inside your mind can be like sitting on a hill looking down on a train that's going by. Some of the train cars are thoughts, strung together. They come into view. They go out of view. Some of the train cars are emotions, feelings. Each thought and feeling arises, comes closer, then passes, and goes away down the tracks and around the hill out of sight. The trick is not to get caught in the content of the thought or feeling. Watch, observe, but do not get on the train."

✓ **a. Avoid Pushing Away Experiences**

"Experiential avoidance"[39] is trying to suppress or avoid experiencing what is happening in the present, in the moment. Some individuals may be afraid to observe their thoughts. Some thoughts are scary, and others may be thoughts a person would like to not have. If worried about any particular thought, a person may try to get rid of it, to shut it out of the mind.

Research Point: However, there is scientific evidence[27, 40] that trying to shut out thoughts is the best way to keep having them. The harder a person tries to shut them out, the more they will pop back into the mind. The best way to get rid of unwanted thoughts is to step back and simply observe them. They will go away by themselves. The attempt to avoid or suppress our own experiences is associated with higher, not lower, emotion dysregulation.[41, 42]

b. Avoid Holding on to Experiences

"Experiential hunger" is trying to hold on to positive experiences. We try to create positive experiences at the expense of noticing what is currently in our lives. People often overindulge in drugs, alcohol, sex, fast driving, and other exciting activities, seeking an emotional high or a thrill. Everyday life seems boring.

We may try to hold on to a sense of security or a sense of being loved. Holding on to damaging relationships, or being overly demanding of those we love, are often efforts to hold on to a false sense of safety and security. Life is too scary otherwise.

It is even possible to become overly "addicted" to spiritual experiences. Mindfulness meditation and/or prayer can become efforts to have "spiritual highs." Individuals constantly seeking reassurance or frequently demanding proof of unwavering love fall into the same category. When this happens, the individuals can become like ocean fish swimming around and around, constantly searching for the water.

Note to Leaders: It is essential to help participants observe in a nonattached way. Thus whatever happens in their minds is "grist for the mill," so to speak. No matter what they do, they can just "step back" and observe. Get feedback. Work with participants until they get the idea of observing. Check how long each person can observe. It is common to have to start and restart many times in the course of 1 or 2 minutes.

6. Observe with a "Beginner's Mind"

Each moment in the universe is completely new. This one moment, right now, has never occurred before. In "beginner's mind," we focus our minds on noticing the experience of each moment, noticing that each moment is new and unique. It is easy to forget this. We forget to observe and notice the moment. A new moment may be very much like a previous moment. We may find ourselves saying "same old, same old," but actually everything is changing, is constantly new. In reality, we are always in "beginner's mind"; that is, every moment is indeed new and unique. In observing, we take the stance of an impartial observer, investigating whatever appears in our conscious minds or strikes our attention.

Say to clients: "Nothing has ever been in your mind that has not gone away. If you just watch your mind, thoughts, images, emotions, and sensations all eventually go away. It is a fascinating thing. If you just sit there and look at them, they go away. When you try to get rid of thoughts they keep coming back."

7. Practice, Practice, Practice to Train the Mind to Pay Attention

Emphasize to clients: "Learning to observe your own mind takes patience and practice. It means training your mind to pay attention. It may seem impossible to ever get your attention under control, but it is possible. It just takes practice, practice, and more practice."

⊠ **Story Point:** An untrained mind is like a TV that gets 100,000 different channels, but the person watching the TV doesn't have a remote control. The mind keeps turning to the same stations over and over and over again—most of which are painful for participants.

⊠ **Story Point:** A Zen metaphor compares an untrained mind to a puppy. The untrained mind causes problems just like a puppy that pees where it's not supposed to, chews up its owner's favorite shoes, eats garbage, and throws up. Likewise, the untrained mind wanders all over, gets itself (and the person) in trouble, and ruminates about things that make the person feel worse.

✓ *8. Keep Bringing the Mind Back to Observing*

Say to clients: "Observe by *bringing your mind back to observing* over and over, each time that you notice being distracted. Most people, when they practice observing, find that their minds frequently and sometimes very quickly start thinking about something—and before they know it, they become lost in their thoughts, unaware of the present moment, no longer observing. Whenever your attention is drawn away from observing and awareness, gently but resolutely push distractions to the side as if you are dividing the clouds in the sky, and return, single-mindedly, to the object of attention. The idea here is to observe being distracted—that is, to observe yourself as you become aware that you were distracted. Notice, if you can, when you start to become distracted. Practice noticing distractions."

9. Observing Requires Controlling Action

The first rule of observing is to notice the urge to quit observing. One of the first things that happens when people start practicing observing is that they want to quit. They get bored; they get tired; they experience painful emotions; their bodies start hurting; they remember something else important they need to do; something else catches their interest; and on and on and on.

Tell participants: "You don't have to act on whatever comes into your mind. When you're

observing, you might notice you feel sleepy. Notice it, but don't fall asleep. Instead, bring your attention back to whatever you are observing. You might notice you're hungry. But don't get something to eat right now. Instead, notice that you're hungry; notice that your attention has been pulled into thinking about food. Notice that, and then bring your attention back to whatever you were observing."

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants estimates of their own ability to stay focused on observing for any length of time. Discuss strategies for increasing the ability to continue observing in the face of temptations to quit.

Note to Leaders: A common problem for many participants is that they forget why they are observing in the first place. They see no benefit. They may feel worse—certainly not better or calmer. They want to quit. At these times it can be helpful to do a quick review of the pros and cons (see Mindfulness Worksheet 1: Pros and Cons of Practicing Mindfulness), and to remind them (and have them remind themselves) that very little can be accomplished in this life without the ability to observe. Ultimately, this ability will depend somewhat on the ability to tolerate distress and to inhibit impulsive urges. This may be quite a task for some participants, requiring much practice before they can comfortably stay quiet and stay still long enough to fully observe something within or without.

10. Observing Is Very Simple, but It Can Also Be Surprisingly Hard

To make the point to participants about the surprising difficulty of observing, try one of the following exercises; the first focuses on not seeing what is there, and the second on seeing what is not there.

Practice Exercise 1: Hold up a page or poster, or put up a PowerPoint slide, with the sentence below written in the form shown. Instruct participants to observe the sentence, and then ask them, "What do you see?"

The yellow bird flew through
through orange curtains
into blue sky.

Take the display down and discuss. People ordinarily do not notice that the word "through" is repeated. (It's at the end of the first line and the beginning of the second line.) Put the display up again, and ask whether participants now see the word "through" two times. Discuss participants' experiences. Because people know how to read and write, they have expectations about words and sentences. If people saw the extra word the first time they read the sentence, they probably ignored it; they knew from past experience that it probably wasn't supposed to be there. If they weren't giving it their full attention, they may not have noticed the extra word. Their minds automatically "saw" the words as they should be. It's good to practice observing, because it's very easy not to see things that are there like the extra word above.

Practice Exercise 2: Hold up a page or poster, or put up a PowerPoint slide, with the image in Figure 7.2. Ask participants what shapes they see inside the box. It's clear that there are three black circles and that each has a notch, like a missing pie piece. In addition, many people see a triangle when they look at the shapes in Figure 7.2. But in fact, there is no triangle in the box. The notches in the three circles happen to line up with each other. If there

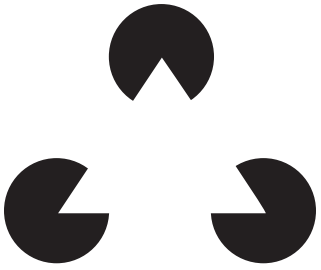

FIGURE 7.2. Three notched black circles with a "missing" triangle: An illustration of how surprisingly difficult observing can be.

were lines that connected the three notches, then there would be a triangle. But there are no connecting lines, and so there is no triangle shape. Our minds, however, can provide these "missing" lines, so we "see" a triangle even though it isn't really there. Discuss participants' experiences. The mind has the ability to fill in blanks, so we "see" something we expect even when it's missing. When the mind isn't fully paying attention, it can also erase something unexpected, even though it's there. In fact, most people stop paying attention when they think they know what something is. This can be useful and save us a lot of time. But it can cause lots of problems when what we think we see doesn't line up with what's really out there.

11. Observing Can Be Very Painful at Times

The trouble with observing is that people may wind up seeing things they do not want to see. This can be hard. In particular, those with histories of trauma may find observing very scary. They are afraid to watch what goes through their minds. Some are worried that thoughts and images that ordinarily cause enormous anxiety will race through their minds. Others are afraid of thoughts and images of the past, particularly when these set off intense emotions of sadness or anger. However, there is research showing that control of attention can reduce rumination.[43]

Note to Leaders: Remind participants to step back within themselves, not outside of themselves, to observe. Observing is not dissociating. As described in an earlier Note to Leaders, if some individuals have difficulty staying inside instead of going outside themselves, suggest that they try imagining that the place they go outside themselves is a flower.

*12. Practice Exercises for Observing That Require Preparation**

The following exercises need supplies and require some advance preparation. They are fairly active, most people find them fun, and they are very good for younger groups or people who are somewhat resistant to practice. They are also very good for people who have difficulty sitting still or focusing without much to do, thereby opening the door to traumatic images or thoughts.

✓ **a. Finding Your Lemon**

Hand one lemon to each person. Instruct participants to examine the lemon (by touching it, holding it, smelling it, etc.), but not to eat the lemon. After a period of time, collect all the lemons in one place. Mix up the lemons. Ask participants to come and find their own lemons. This can be done with other things (e.g., pennies), but be sure that the objects you choose look reasonably similar and will require examination to tell the difference.

b. Holding Chocolate on Your Tongue

Hand out a small piece of chocolate to each person. Have each person unwrap the chocolate. Before starting, give these instructions: "Put the piece of chocolate on your tongues. Hold it in your mouth, noticing the taste, the texture, the sensations in your mouth. Do not swallow. Notice the urge to swallow." Start by ringing a bell, and end in 3–5 minutes by ringing the bell. (Substitute some other sound for the bell if necessary.)

c. Eating or Drinking with Awareness

Give something to eat or to drink to each participant (or have participants select something from an array of food or drinks). Then instruct participants to eat (or drink) what they have selected very slowly, focusing on the feel of the food (or drink) in their hands; the smell, the

*All exercises in this section (and later in this chapter) marked with note number 44 are adapted from Miller, A. L., Rathus, J. H., & Linehan, M. M. (2007). *Dialectical behavior therapy with suicidal adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press. Copyright 2007 by The Guilford Press. Adapted by permission.

texture, the temperature, the sound, and the taste of the food (or liquid) in their mouths; the sensations of swallowing; and urges to eat or drink more slowly, faster, or not at all.

d. What's Different about Me?[44]

Two group members pair off and mindfully observe each other. Then they turn their backs, change three things (e.g., glasses, watch, and hair), and turn back toward each other. Can they notice the changes?

e. Observation of Music[44]

Play a piece of music and ask group members to listen quietly and to observe nonjudgmentally, while fully letting the experience surround them (their thoughts, emotions, physiological changes, urges). Variations include playing segments of two or three very different pieces (in terms of style, tempo, etc.) and having group members observe changes in the music and their internal reactions.

f. Mindfully Unwrapping a Hershey's Kiss[44]

Have each group member sit in a comfortable position with a Hershey's Kiss in front of him or her. Then say: "After I ring the bell the third time, observe and describe the outside of the Hershey's Kiss to yourself. Feel the differences in the texture between the paper tag and the foil. As you begin to unwrap the chocolate, note how the shape and texture of the foil change in comparison to the paper tag, as well as the chocolate. Feel the chocolate and how it changes in your hand. If your mind wanders from the exercise, note the distraction without judgment, and then return your attention to the chocolate."

g. Repeating an Activity[44]

Instruct participants: "When the bell rings, sit at the table with your arms resting on the table. Very slowly, reach several inches to pick up a pen. Raise it a few inches, and then set it down. Move your hand back to its original position of rest. While you repeat this action throughout the time period, experience each repetition with freshness, as though you have never done it before. You can allow your attention to wander toward different aspects of the movement: watching your hand or feeling the muscles contracting. You can even notice your sense of touch, being aware of the different textures and pressures. Let go of any distractions or judgments you may have. This activity will help you to become mindful of a simple activity that you perform often throughout the day."

h. Focusing on Scent

Bring in and distribute scented candles. Then instruct group members: "Choose a candle. When the bell rings, sit back in your chair and find a comfortable and relaxed position. Close your eyes, and begin to focus on the smell of the candle. Let go of any distractions or judgments. Notice how the smell makes you feel and what images it evokes." Afterward, discuss observations, emotions, thoughts, feelings, and sensations with participants: "How did the scent make you feel? What images came to your mind? Did the smell remind you of anything in particular?"

i. Mindfully Eating a Raisin

Bring in and distribute raisins. Then ask group members to hold a raisin; observe its appearance, texture, and scent; then put it in their mouths and slowly, with awareness, begin eating—noticing the tastes, sensations, and even the sounds of eating. This can also be done with candies (sweet tarts, caramels, fruit chews, fireballs, etc.). Eating a raisin (or other small food) is a very well-known exercise that is typically done in mindfulness-based treatments.

j. Observing Emotions

Say to participants: "Notice the emotions you are experiencing, and try to note how you know you are having those emotions. That is, what labels do you have in mind? What thoughts, what body sensations, and so on give you information about the emotions?"

k. What's My Experience?

Tell participants: "Focus your mind on your experience this very moment. Be mindful of any thoughts, feelings, body sensations, urges, or anything else you become aware of. Don't judge your experience, or try to push it away or hold onto it. Just let experiences come and go like clouds moving across the sky."

l. Noticing Urges[44]

Instruct participants: "Sit very straight in your chair. Throughout this exercise, notice any urges—whether to move, shift positions, scratch an itch, or do something else. Instead of acting on the urge, simply notice it." Then discuss the experience with participants. Was it possible to have an urge and not act on it?

m. Mindfulness of the Five Senses

The exercises for observing through the five senses are limited only by your imagination and creativity.

- ***Sight.*** Have participants pick a picture on a wall or an object in the room to look at, or ask them to pass around pictures or postcards. Or light a candle in the middle of the room, or go for a walk in an area with flowers or other sights to see. Instruct participants to contemplate or gaze at the sight.
- ***Touch.*** Bring things with various textures to pass around. Instruct participants to close their eyes and hold and examine the object(s) with their hands, and/or rub the object(s) on their skin. Find a nearby grassy place to walk barefoot, and ask participants to notice the feel of the ground on bare feet.
- ***Smell.*** Bring in aromatic things, such as spices, herbs, perfumes, perfumed soaps or candles, gourmet jelly beans, or other foods or aromatic oils. Instruct participants to close their eyes and focus on their sense of smell.
- ***Taste.*** Bring various small but tasty bites to eat. Try to make some tastes very different and some very similar. Have participants sample each bite to eat separately. Instruct them to focus on the taste and, if they are good cooks themselves, to try to inhibit analyzing the taste for what elements make up the taste.
- ***Sound.*** Instruct participants to close their eyes and listen to sounds in the room. Or bring a large mindfulness bell and ring the bell very slowly (but completely each time). Or put on a musical recording, instruct participants to listen, and have them make an effort to keep their attention on the sound only.

13. Practice Exercises for Awareness

Ordinarily, have participants practice the following exercises with eyes open. Speak in a low and gentle voice tone. You can give all the instructions at once or you can follow the script, with pauses (. . .). You can do one exercise and then share the experience, or you can do several of these sequentially and then share. As described earlier with the scripts for wise mind exercises, set up the practice as follows, and then continue with one of the scripts below:

> *"Sit in a comfortable but attentive position. Keeping your eyes open, find a good place to rest your eyes . . . looking down with only slightly open eyes, or keeping your eyes more open. You might want to clear the space in front of you so as to not be too distracted."*

a. Expanding Awareness While Staying Aware of Your Center

"See if you can let your attention settle into your center . . . at the bottom of your breath when you inhale . . . just near your gut. That very centered point is wise mind . . . as you breathe in and out . . . keeping your attention there at your very center . . . in your gut. . . . Now, as you keep your center of attention in your gut, expand your awareness outside . . . noticing in the periphery of your vision the colors of the walls or floor or table, objects in the room, people nearby . . . maintaining all the while awareness of your gut . . . your center point . . . your wise mind."

b. Awareness of Threes

"Stay focused on your breathing . . . in and out, for three breaths . . . and, maintaining your awareness of your breath, expand your awareness to your hands . . . just holding both in your awareness for three breaths. . . . Now, expand your awareness even further . . . maintaining awareness of your breath and of your hands, include in your awareness sounds . . . staying aware of all three for three breaths . . . letting go of perfection if you lose awareness of one . . . starting over again."

Note to Leaders: The two exercises above are very good for working on the ability to focus attention. Many people who have problems with emotion regulation or impulse control have great difficulties in controlling attention. With much practice of these exercises, their control of attention will gradually improve.

c. Watching Train Cars

"Imagine you are sitting on a hill near train tracks, watching train cars go by. . . . Imagine that thoughts, images, sensations, and feelings are cars on the train. . . . Just watch the train cars go by. . . . Don't jump on the train. . . . Just watch the train cars go by. . . . If you find yourself riding the train, jump off and start observing again. . . . Just noticing that you got on the train . . . watching the train cars . . . watching your mind again."

Note to Leaders: There are many variations on the "train cars" image. For the train cars, you can substitute boats on a lake, sheep walking by, and so forth.

d. Watching Clouds in the Sky

"Imagine that your mind is the sky, and that your thoughts, sensations, and feelings are clouds. . . . Gently notice each cloud as it drifts . . . or scurries . . . by."

✓ E. Review of Between-Session Practice Exercises for Observing

It is important to go over some of these exercises with participants if they are not practiced in the session. If time is short, leaf through the pages of Mindfulness Handout 5a with participants, just so they see how many ways there are for practicing observing. If you have time, ask participants to review some of the ideas and check off in the boxes practices they think would be useful for them.

V. MINDFULNESS "WHAT" SKILLS: DESCRIBE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 4–4B)

Main Point: Describing is the second of the three mindfulness "what" skills; it is putting into words what is observed.

Mindfulness Handout 4: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "What" Skills. This is the same handout used to teach the skill of observing. Review the "Describe" section of the handout with participants.

Mindfulness Handout 4b: Ideas for Practicing Describing *(Optional)***.** As with previous practice handouts, this list may be overwhelming; if so, it should be skipped. Most of the describing practice takes place in writing on the worksheets, but this handout can be used to find specific exercises to assign in areas where a participant is having trouble describing accurately.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b, 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice. These worksheets provide for practice of wise mind skills, "what" skills, and "how" skills. For instructions on how to use them, see Section II of this chapter.

Mindfulness Worksheet 4: Mindfulness "What" Skills: Observing, Describing, Participating; Mindfulness Worksheet 4a: Observing, Describing, Participating Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheets 4b: Observing, Describing, Participating Calendar. These worksheets are the same as those used in teaching the skill of observing. Choose one to distribute, or let the participants choose. The focus in teaching describing is on examining what is written to be sure that it was actually observed, nothing more, nothing less. The skill of describing permeates all of the worksheets in DBT. Each asks participants to describe something they have observed. To coach participants in describing, it is important to review these worksheets throughout all the modules, not just in the Mindfulness module.

A. Why Describe?

Note to Leaders: You can jump-start teaching this skill by using exercises to make the teaching points below before you go on to explain what you mean by the skill of describing.

✓ **Practice Exercise:** Looking right at one of the participants, ask him or her to tell you what you are thinking. Insist upon it. When the person cannot, turn to another person and ask him or her to describe what you are thinking. Keep at it. Insist, saying, "Other people tell you what you are thinking; why can't you tell me what I am thinking?" When they cannot, discuss how often we think we know what another person is thinking. Elicit times when others have insisted they know what participants are thinking but really do not.

✓ **Practice Exercise:** Turn to one of the participants and say, "I'm really tired, it's late." Then ask the participant to describe your intent or motive for saying that. Insist upon it. When a participant cannot do it or gets it wrong, ask another participant. Discuss how often we think we know other people's motives. Elicit times when others have insisted they know participants' minds but really do not. How does that make the participants feel?

✓ **Practice Exercise:** Ask one of the participants to describe what you are doing tomorrow. Insist upon it. When this person can't do it, turn to another person and ask him or her. Act as if you expect participants to be able to do this. When they cannot, discuss how often we say something about the future, like "I can't do this" or "I'll never make this," as if we are describing facts. Elicit times when others have acted as if they can describe what participants are going to do or not do—as if they know the facts. Ask, "Which is worse: describing your own future as facts, or having others describe it for you?"

1. Describing Distinguishes What Is Observed from What Is Not Observed

Describing develops the ability to sort out and discriminate observations from mental concepts and thoughts about what we observe. Confusing mental concepts of events with events themselves (e.g., responding to thoughts and concepts as if they are facts) can lead to unnecessary emotional distress and confusion.

Example: "When you find out that your child stole money, your mind might immediately describe that as 'My child is going to end up going to jail,' and that description causes emotional distress."

Responding to thoughts about events as if they were facts can lead to ineffective actions when the thoughts do not match the actual event.

Example: "Describing your boyfriend's not being dressed yet when you come home before going out to your birthday dinner as not loving you may ruin your chances of having a nice dinner together."

2. *Describing Allows Feedback from the Larger Community*

Those around us can correct or validate our perceptions and descriptions of events.

Example: Think of how children learn: They say words, and parents and others correct them until they become very proficient at accurately describing what they observe.

Example: In Zen, the interview with the teacher, called *dokusan*, gives students an opportunity to describe their experiences during their mindfulness practice. An important component of these interviews is the teacher's helping the students drop concepts and analyses of the world and instead respond to what is observed.

Example: After a party, one person often describes events to another and asks whether the other person saw it the same way. This can also be very important when getting consultation about interpersonal problems at work or in other settings.

3. *Describing Observations by Writing Them Down Allows Observation of the Information*

Observing, as discussed above, can change behavior in desired directions. Describing can also, at times, provide a means of processing the information we have observed. Many people, for example, find writing diaries very helpful in organizing the events they observe throughout their days.

Research Point: Describing and labeling emotions regulates emotions.[45] Brain imaging research has shown that when individuals describe their emotional responses, the very act of labeling the emotions changes brain responding in the direction of emotion regulation.[46]

✓ B. Describing: What to Do

✓ 1. *To Describe Is to Add Words to an Observation*

Describing is putting words on experiences. Describing follows observing; it is labeling what is observed. True describing involves just sticking with the facts.

Example: If I am looking at a painting, the words "landscape," "green," "yellow," and "brush strokes" might come to mind. That would be an example of describing. It's simply applying basic descriptors to what's there.

Example: Describing internal experience, I could say, "I observe a feeling of sadness arising."

Discussion Point: Discuss the difference between describing and observing. Again, observing is like sensing without words. Describing is using words or thoughts to label what is observed.

✓ **Practice Exercise:** Draw the image in Figure 7.3 on a board, or move the features of your face to mimic an emotional expression similar to that of a person experiencing sadness, anger, or fear. Exaggerate your expression somewhat. Then ask participants to describe your face. Almost always, they will use emotional terms ("sad," "angry," "afraid"). Give a number of people the opportunity

to speak; then point out that no one observed an emotion. They observed features of your face (e.g., eyebrows together, creases in the forehead, lips tight together, etc.). Tell them: "A hint about how to describe things is to imagine that you are instructing someone in how to draw something, or instructing a designer on how to put together a setting for a movie."

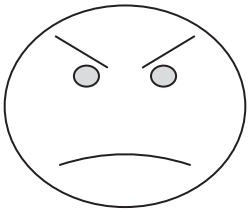

FIGURE 7.3. A facial expression for giving participants practice in describing.

✓ ***2. If It Wasn't Observed, It Can't Be Described***

No one has ever observed the thoughts, intentions, or emotions of another person.

✓ **a. No One Can Observe the Thoughts of Others**

Although we can observe thoughts that go through our own minds, we can only infer or guess what another person is thinking. Assumptions of what others are thinking are just that: assumptions in our own minds.

Example: "You think I'm lying" is not a description of an observation. "I keep thinking that you think I am lying" is a description.

Example: "You are just thinking up ways to get out of going to the party with me" is not a description of an observation. "I think [or believe] that you are trying to come up with ways to get out of going to the party with me" is a description. Tell participants: "Note also that when the sentence is framed this way, you clarify that you are describing your own thoughts."

Example: "You disapprove" is not a description. "I think you disapprove" is a description.

"When you do X, I feel [or think] Y" is a good way to describe personal reactions to what others do or say.

Example: Saying, "When you raise your eyebrows and purse your lips like that [X], I start thinking you think I'm lying [Y]" is also a form of describing. Say to participants: "Putting it this way shows that you are describing your own thoughts, which you can observe."

Discussion Point: Discuss how describing a thought as a thought requires one to notice that it is a thought instead of a fact. Give examples of the differences between thinking, "You don't want me," and the other person's actually not wanting you; or thinking, "I am a jerk," and being a jerk. Get feedback. Get lots of examples. It is crucial that participants understand this distinction.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants times when others have misinterpreted their thoughts. Discuss how this feels.

Practice Exercise: Have participants practice observing thoughts and labeling them as thoughts. Suggest labeling them into categories (e.g., "thoughts about myself," "thoughts about others," etc.). Use the conveyor belt exercise described earlier in this chapter, but this time as thoughts and feelings come down the belt, have participants sort them into categories: "For example, you could have one box for thoughts of any sort, one box for sensations in your body, and one box for urges to do something (such as to stop describing)."

✓ **b. No One Can Observe the Intentions of Others**

Speaking about the inferred intentions of others is not describing and can cause trouble. This is so because (1) it is extremely difficult to read other people's intentions correctly; and (2) incorrectly characterizing others' intentions can be exceptionally painful, particularly when

they are socially unacceptable intentions. People often pay attention to the effects of what other people do and then assume that these effects were intentional.

Example: "I feel manipulated" translates into "You are manipulating me."

Example: "I am feeling hurt" translates into "You did that to hurt me."

Example: "When you tell me that you are going to quit school if I don't give you a better grade, I feel manipulated" is a more accurate example of describing.

✓ **c. No One Can Observe the Feelings or Emotions of Another Individual**

We cannot see the internal experiential components of emotions. We can, however, observe many components of emotions, such as facial expressions, postures, verbal expressions of emotions, and emotion-linked actions. But expressive behaviors can be misleading. The expressions associated with various emotions may be very similar, and because of this, we may often be wrong in our beliefs about the emotions of others.

Example: Many people sound as if they are angry or irritated when they are very anxious.

Example: People often withdraw from others when they are ashamed, leading others to say they are angry.

We may also often incorrectly assume that someone who does something must have wanted to do it, when the person may instead have felt coerced or afraid to say no. The same is true when thinking about things a person does not do: We may assume, "If you wanted to, you would have done it."

Example: To someone with an alcohol problem who has fallen off the wagon again, we may say incorrectly, "You just don't want to stay sober."

Example: If we call a person very late at night and he answers the phone, we may assume incorrectly that "He wants to talk to me."

Discussion Point: It is sometimes easiest to get this point across by asking participants to think of times people have "described" their thoughts or feelings incorrectly. Also ask for times when they have "described" others' emotions, thoughts, or intentions incorrectly. Highlight here the difference between inferences and descriptions based on observation.

Note to Leaders: Describing is similar to checking the facts, an emotion regulation skill. See Emotion Regulation Handout 8.

✓ **d. No One Has Ever Observed a Concept, a Meaning, a Cause, or a Change in Things**

Concepts and meanings are the results of our putting together in our minds a number of observations to make sense out of them. Causes and changes are inferred from observing the world and making logical deductions from our observations.

Example: Say to participants, "I see you hit a ball with a cue, and the ball moves; I infer that hitting the ball caused the movement. But I did not observe the 'cause,' because this is a concept, not something I can observe."

Conclusions and comparisons such as "more" or "less," or any differences between things, are also the results of mental calculations that occur in our minds.

Example: We see a person acting very irritable one day, and very calm the next day. We may say, "I see you are calmer than you were yesterday." Actually, the statement is based on comparing in our minds what we observed on one day with what we are observing today, and then forming a conclusion. But conclusions about things and how they have

changed are concepts, not things we can observe. We can, of course, observe the conclusions we draw in our own minds.

C. Describing Practice Exercises

Like the introductory exercises for observing practice described earlier, these are very brief exercises that can be done as you first start teaching describing. You can do one exercise and then share the experience, or you can do several of these sequentially and then share. You can weave the instructions and questions in as you cover the teaching points. These exercises do not need a setup.

- "Observe and then describe the first thought running through your mind."
- "Observe and then describe a picture on the wall or an object on the table."
- "Observe sounds in the room for a few minutes, and then describe the sounds you heard."
- "Observe sensations in your body, and then describe one or more of your sensations."
- "Observe your thoughts as if they were on a conveyor belt. As they come by, sort them by descriptive category into boxes—for instance, planning thoughts, worry thoughts."

✓ D. Review of Between-Session Practice Exercises for Describing

Mindfulness Handout 4b lists a number of ideas for practicing describing. It is important to go over some of these with the participants.

VI. MINDFULNESS "WHAT" SKILLS: PARTICIPATE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 4–4C)

Main Point: Participating, the third mindfulness "what" skill, is entering wholly into an activity.

Mindfulness Handout 4: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "What" Skills. This is the same handout as used in teaching the skills of observing and describing. Review the "Participate" section of the handout with participants.

Mindfulness Handout 4c: Ideas for Practicing Participating. Participants frequently have difficulty finding ways to practice participating. This is particularly true for socially shy individuals. This handout is brief and can be a useful source of ideas.

Mindfulness Worksheet 2, 2a, 2b: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice; Mindfulness Worksheet 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 4: Mindfulness "What" Skills: Observing, Describing, Participating; Mindfulness Worksheet 4a: Observing, Describing, Participating Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheet 4b: Observing, Describing, Participating Calendar. These worksheets are the same as those used in teaching the skills of observing and describing. Each asks participants to describe their participation practice. It is important to point out to participants in homework review that practicing skills during the week is the homework, not writing their descriptions of their homework experience.

✓ A. Participating: What Is It?

Participating is entering wholly and with awareness into life itself, nonjudgmentally, in the present moment. Participating is the ultimate goal of mindfulness.

Note to Leaders: Do not feel you have to go over all these points each time. Remember that you will be reviewing this skill multiple times and can review new points at later times.

B. Why Participate?

✓ ***1. The Experience of "Flow" Is Associated with Participating***

The state of "flow" is widely considered an optimal experience—incompatible with boredom, and associated with intense enjoyment and a sense of control. It is a critical characteristic of "peak experience."[47]

Example: Being fully immersed in an activity like skiing or running can give one a sense of maximum well-being or a sense of ecstasy.

2. Participating Is Incompatible with Self-Consciousness

When we "become what we are doing," there is a merging of action and awareness, so that we are no longer aware of ourselves as separate from what we are doing.

3. Participating Is Incompatible with a Sense of Exclusion

When we become what we are doing, we are no longer aware of ourselves as separate from what we are doing or from our environment. We lose awareness of the separation of ourselves and everything else. We forget ourselves, and thus forget ourselves as outside or inside.

4. In Participating, Effort Seems Effortless

In a state of flow, there is an effortlessness of action. We are absorbed in what we are doing, in what is happening. We are aware of a sense of movement, speed, and ease. Life and what we are doing become like a dance. Even great effort seems effortless.

5. In Participating, We Are Present to Our Own Lives and the Lives of Loved Ones

When we become what we are doing, we do not miss our own lives. We also do not miss being part of the lives of others. Compassion and love, toward ourselves or others, requires our presence.

6. Participating Is a Fundamental Characteristic of Skillful Behavior

To be experts in any task, we must practice and "overlearn" that task. Expertise in any activity requires mindful awareness of the task without the distractions of thinking about ourselves, others, or even the task. A person who thinks about running while running loses the race. In great acting, an actor becomes the role. A great dancer becomes the dance. In the Olympics, gymnasts let their bodies do the work.

✓ C. Participating: What to Do

Make one or more of these suggestions to participants:

- "Enter into present experiences. Immerse yourself in the present."
- "Throw yourself completely into activities."
- "Don't separate yourself from ongoing events and interactions. Engage completely; immerse yourself in the moment; become involved; join with; opt in."
- "Become one with what you are doing."
- "Let go of self-consciousness by acting opposite to it. Abandon yourself to the moment. Concentrate in the moment such that you and what you are doing become "merged" as if there is only now, only what you are doing."
- "Act intuitively from wise mind, doing just what is needed in each situation."
- "Go with the flow; respond with spontaneity."

Example: Observing and describing are like "stop, look, and listen." Participating is like walking across the street.

Example: Tell clients, "If it is raining, just play in the puddles like a kid would; enjoy the rain."

✓ D. Choosing When to Observe, When to Describe, and When to Participate

1. *Observing and Describing When Something Is New or Difficult*

Instruct participants: "Step back from participating in an activity when you are making errors or don't know how to do something. When you are participating, you are very aware, but you are not actively focusing your attention on yourself and analyzing the details of what you are doing. At times you must step back, slow down, and pay attention to what you are doing. In particular, when you notice there's a problem in your life, you need to step back and actively observe and describe both the problem situation and your responses to it. You can then figure out what's wrong, learn the skills needed to solve the problem, and return to participating."

Example: "You can only play the piano really well if you participate in the act of piano playing—that is, if you play fully. But if you've learned an incorrect technique, you may want to learn the correct version. To do so, you have to step back and observe and describe what you're doing wrong, then practice the correct way over and over until you're skilled. You can then stop observing and participate again."

Discussion Point: We step back from participating to understand and improve things. Share examples of participating (e.g., driving a car): "When you switch cars to one with a different way of driving, or if you go to England and have to drive on the left side of the road, you suddenly need to stop, observe, and describe." Elicit other examples from participants.

2. *Doing the Most Practice of the Most Difficult Skill*

Tell clients: "Practice most the mindfulness skill you find most difficult. Different people have trouble with different skills." Give these illustrations:

✓ *Example:* Some people participate all the time, and that's their problem. They don't notice that they're participating in a way that's driving others crazy. Other people have a lot of trouble with participating, especially people who are shy, socially anxious, or afraid of failing. All they do is stay on the sidelines and observe. Still others have busy, analytical minds. They also stay back from living in the moment, but instead of just observing, they are analyzing, thinking, and ruminating about each event as it occurs. Life is like a running commentary on the universe. Describing is in overdrive.

Discussion Point: It's important to emphasize practicing the skill that's hardest or most needed for each participant. Discuss with participants which "what" skill (observing, describing, participating) is their strength and which is their weakness. The one they find most needed is the one they should practice the most.

Discussion Point: Discuss the relationships among the three mindfulness skills. Remind participants: "When you are observing, observe; when you're describing, describe; when you're participating, participate."

E. Participating Practice Exercises

1. *Laugh Club*

Explain to participants that laughing can have very positive effects on health and happiness. Instruct all to start laughing with you and continue until you stop. Then start laughing, keeping it up for several minutes. (Do not worry if some refuse; it can be very difficult *not* to laugh when others are laughing.)

2. *Sound Ball*[44]

The game here is throwing and catching sounds. To throw a sound, a person brings his or her hands up, bends toward another person, and mimics throwing a basketball to the other person,

while at the same time making a sound ("uuuggggg," "zoopitydo," "luloulee," or any other nonsense sound). Generally, the sound is "thrown" in a drawn-out, sing-song voice. The person "catching the song" brings his or her hands up near the ears, bends back, and imitates the sound. That person then throws a different sound to someone else, and so on. Have everyone stand in a circle and practice the concept until everyone gets how the game is played. Then start the game. The idea is to throw and catch sounds as fast as everyone can.

3. Rain Dance

Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Instruct everyone that their task is to do whatever the person on their left is doing, changing what they are doing when the person to their left changes. Remind them not to look at you, just focus on what the person on their left is doing. Start by rubbing your hands up and down together. Once everyone, including the person on your left, is rubbing hands, you stop rubbing your hands together and start snapping your fingers. Follow this with the following moves: patting your thighs; stepping up and down; patting your thighs again; snapping your fingers again; rubbing hands together again; and standing still. This is called the "rain dance" because it sounds like rain in a forest.

✓ ### *4. Improvisation*

Improvisation can be a lot of fun and involves the practice of mindful participating with spontaneity. It also involves letting go of being separate from others and throwing oneself into the story plot that is unfolding as each person takes a turn. If you have an improv teacher who can come to teach a group class, or if one of your group leaders has experience with improv (or is willing to read up and experiment with it), this can be a very good way to increase participants' (and your own) mindful participation skills.

a. Improvisation 1

To begin this exercise, have group members sit or stand in a circle. Instruct participants that the idea of the mindfulness practice is for each person to become part of the community that is the circle of persons. The idea is to become part of the circle, advancing the community's story. The first person begins by saying a word to start a story. Each person says only one word as the story goes around the circle. Each person tries to respond as quickly as possible with a word that advances the story line that has been told by the time it gets to him or her. The idea is for participants to give up thinking ahead and let go of clinging to their own story lines when necessary. (Example: "A . . . boy . . . once . . . fell . . . from . . . the . . . sky . . . ")

b. Improvisation 2

Have participants stand in a circle. Use the same instructions as above, except instead of having each person say only one word, ask each person to say a phrase. (Example: "Once upon a time . . . there was a big bear. . . . The bear was ferocious . . . but the bear was also kind. . . . A little boy nearby . . . saw the bear . . . ")

5. Row, Row Your Boat in Rounds

Divide the participants into two, three, or four groups, and then sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" in rounds. Here are the words: (a) "Row, row, row your boat," (b) "Gently down the stream," (c) "Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily," (d) "Life is but a dream." While singing, the participants are to throw themselves into pantomiming the song: (a) rowing, (b) hands waving slightly up and down to signify moving down the stream, (c) hands up and head going from side to side, (d) hands together and head laid down on hands.

6. Dances

There are many circle folk dances that a group can do to music. Two easy dances are as follows.[48]

a. Shepherd's Dance

Standing in a circle, each person puts both arms out to his or her neighbors, right hand palm up and left hand palm down on the neighbor's palm. The dance is done to a count of 4, starting with (1) the left foot out and pointed straight forward, (2) left foot out pointed to the left, (3) then pointed out to the back, and then (4) back down on the floor next to the right foot. Then repeat with the right foot: (1) pointed to the front, (2) to the right, (3) to the back, and (4) back down next to the left foot. Then step (1) left foot to left, then right foot left and down next to the left foot; and repeat the same steps three more times for (2), (3), and (4). Repeat the two sequences over, and keep repeating until the music stops. This can be done to any music with a four-count beat. The music we use is the "Shepherd's Dance."[49] When we don't have this music available we have danced while we sang "We Shall Overcome."

b. Invitation Dance

What makes this next dance special is the instruction at the beginning. Before you start, suggest to participants: "Invite a person in your life (living or dead) to dance with you." Then, standing in a circle, have each person put both arms out in front of him or her, palms up in an inviting and willing posture. The dance involves two steps to the right and one step to the left: (1) right foot to right, left foot moves right and down next to right foot; and (2) repeat. Then (3) left foot to left, then right foot left and down next to the left foot. Tell participants: "When you are moving to the right, turn the hips and body toward the right. Then, when you are moving to the left, turn the left foot toward the left and bring the right foot down next to it, with hips and body toward the left. Repeat the sequence, and keep repeating until the music stops." This can be danced to "Red Rain" by Maria Farantouri (*www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVsHTWLYu9g*). (Start first step going right with beat at approximately 48 seconds in.) This dance can also be done with "Nada Te Turbe," a hymn that originated in the Taizé religious community in Spain, and that has a much easier beat to dance to. It is a Christian song in Spanish, but an English translation can be found on YouTube (*www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvfTVxgkWpo*). Any other music with a similar beat would work. I usually teach the dance first with "Nada Te Turbe" and then go to "Red Rain."

Note to Leaders: The idea of "inviting others to dance with you in your mind" came from my experience with this dance, where I always invite all the psychiatric unit inpatients in the world to dance with me. When I suggested this to my graduate students, they found it extremely moving, with many in tears. So be prepared for an emotional response to this. Be sure to have participants share their experiences after the dances.

7. Walking

Have everyone stand in a single-file line and then walk for some minutes at the pace of the leader. Instruct participants to space themselves approximately an arm's length from each other.

8. Backward Writing[50]

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pencil. Instruct them to hold the pencil in the nondominant hand, and then to write the alphabet backward from Z to A. A variation is writing with a different hand: Ask participants to describe their favorite vacation or memory by writing it down, using the hand they do not normally write with. Then ask them to discuss what they observed about their experience.

9. Origami

Bring in a simple set of origami instructions (the instructions for making a box are easy enough to follow). Hand out the flat pieces of paper, and ask the group to follow your lead with the

folds. Walk the group through the steps. When the origami creations are complete, you can discuss a couple of things with participants. First, you can discuss participants' ability to stay mindful, noticing of being judgmental or nonjudgmental, and so on. Second, you can discuss how the piece of paper that started as a square or rectangle has now changed form (different function, shape, etc.).

10. Changing Seats

In our groups (and treatment teams!), people tend to want to sit in the same place they always sit. Before beginning this exercise, wait until all group members are seated and settled. Give a general instruction to observe and be mindful of reactions to what is to come. Then ask everyone to get up and move to a seat on the opposite side of the room. Share in terms of awareness of willfulness, as well as resistance to change. Ask participants to share observations of what they see/experience differently in their new seats.

11. Balancing Eggs

This is an exercise learned from a Chinese psychiatrist who visited my clinic. Bring in a set of raw eggs at room temperature. Clear a space on a table (don't use a tablecloth). Give each person an egg. Instruct each person to hold the egg lightly with his or her fingers with the large end on the table, and then try to balance the egg in such a way that when the participant takes the fingers away, the egg stays balanced on its end. Continue until most participants get their eggs balanced.

Note to Leaders: It is important for you to practice this exercise before you try to teach it to participants. It takes more concentration and mindfulness than you might be expecting.

12. Calligraphy

Calligraphy is an expressive and harmonious form of writing. If you have a calligraphy teacher who can come to a group to teach a class (or calligraphy books to work from), practicing calligraphy can be a wonderful mindfulness practice, as it requires mindful concentration on the moment. To work with this in class, you will need supplies, such as paper, pens or brushes, and ink.

13. Ikebana

Ikebana is a disciplined form of Japanese flower arranging. As with calligraphy, doing it well requires mindful concentration and presence to the moment. If you have an ikebana teacher who can come to a group to teach a class (or ikebana books to work from), this is for many a mindfulness practice. You will also need a few flowers and leaves or branches.

14. Becoming the Count

Instruct participants: "Become the count of your breath. Become only 'one' when you count 1, become only 'two' when you count 2, and so on."

15. Tai Chi, Qigong, Hatha Yoga, Spiritual Dance

There are very many forms of mindful movement, including martial arts, yoga, and dance. Practiced with concentration and awareness of present movement of the body, each is a long-standing form of mindfulness practice.

16. Hand Exercise[44]

Have the group members stand around an oval or rectangular table. Each member is instructed to place his or her left hand on the table. Then each member places his or her right hand under-

neath the left hand of the person to the right. One person starts the sequence by picking the right hand off the table and quickly placing it back down. The person to the right quickly lifts up his or her right hand. The hand movements continue around the circle in sequence, until someone does a double tap. This move reverses the direction of the hand movements, and these continue in the reverse direction until someone does a double tap again. Anyone who picks up a hand too early or too late removes that one hand and leaves the other hand on the table (if the other hand was doing what it was supposed to do). The exercise continues until only a couple of hands are left.

17. Snap, Crackle, and Pop[44]

All group members are instructed to say "snap" when they cross their chests with their left or right arms and point either immediately left or right; to say "crackle" when they raise their left or right arms over their heads and point immediately left or right; and to say "pop" when they point at anyone around the circle (who need not be immediately left or right). Any one person starts by saying "snap" while simultaneously pointing either immediately left or right. Whoever receives the point says "crackle" while simultaneously pointing immediately left or right. Whoever receives the point says "pop" while pointing at anyone in the circle. That person then starts with "snap" and begins the sequence again. Anyone who misspeaks or misgestures, while trying to maintain a reasonably fast pace, is out of this portion of the exercise. These people then become "distracters" and stand outside the circle trying to distract their peers (verbally, without physical contact). The "snap–crackle–pop" sequence continues until there are only two people remaining in the circle.

18. Last Letter, First Letter[44]

To begin this exercise, have group members sit in a circle. The first person begins by saying a word. Then the individual to the right must say a word that starts with the last letter of the word the first person says. (Sample sequence: "bus," "steak," "key," "yellow," etc.) Tell participants: "As you continue around the circle, let go of any distractions. Notice any judgments you may have regarding your ability to think of a word quickly." Afterward, discuss observations with the participants.

✓ *19. Acceptance by the Chair*

Remind participants that the focus of participating is to experience one's unity with the universe. With all participants seated, ask them to close their eyes and then listen to you saying:

> *"Focus your attention on your body touching the chair you sit in. . . . Consider how the chair accepts you totally, holds you up, supports your back, and keeps you from falling down on the floor. . . . Notice how the chair does not throw you off, saying you are too fat or too thin or not just right. . . . Notice how accepting the chair is of you. . . . Focus your attention on your floor holding up the chair. . . . Consider the kindness of the floor holding you up, keeping your feet out of the dirt, providing a path for you to get to other things. . . . Notice the walls enclosing you in a room, so everyone going by does not hear everything you say. . . . Consider the kindness of the walls. . . . Notice the ceiling keeping the rain and winter cold and hot summer sun from beating down on you. . . . Consider the kindness of the ceiling. . . . Allow yourself to be held by the chair, held by the floor, and held by the walls and ceiling. . . . Notice the kindness."*

You might want to read the following poem by Pat Schneider.[51] It highlights the idea that love and acceptance are all around us. The point here is to let go of rigid ideas about where we can find love, acceptance, respect, and generosity.

The Patience of Ordinary Things*

It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience
Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?

✓ F. Review of Between-Session Practice Exercises for Participating

Mindfulness Handout 4c lists a number of ideas for practicing participating. It is important to go over some of these with participants.

VII. MINDFULNESS "HOW" SKILLS: NONJUDGMENTALLY (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 5–5A)

Main Point: "How" skills are *how* we observe, describe, and participate. There are three "how" skills: acting nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively. Nonjudgmentalness is letting go of evaluating and judging reality.

Mindfulness Handout 5: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "How" Skills. The "how" skills can be taught in one session. First give a brief overview of each skill: nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively. The key points are on the handout. You will need to spend more time on nonjudgmentalness the first time through the skills, as the concepts are difficult for most participants to grasp. They can also be difficult for skills trainers to grasp clearly, so be sure to review them carefully before you teach them. Nonjudgmentalness is fundamental to all mindfulness teaching and thus must be covered until participants understand what the practice is. It is important to pay attention to the nuances of this skill. Be sure to conduct practice exercises for nonjudgmentalness before moving to the next skill. You will have a chance to do further teaching on these skills during the review of homework practice. These skills are best learned through practice, feedback, and coaching.

Mindfulness Handout 5a: Ideas for Practicing Nonjudgmentalness. The first five practice ideas for nonjudgmentalness are organized in order from easiest to hardest. For individuals who are having difficulties reducing judgmentalness, these practice exercises can be assigned in order, one exercise per week.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice; Mindfulness Worksheet 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Calendar. These worksheets are the same as those used in teaching the "what" skills of observing, describing, and participating. Each asks participants to describe their mindfulness practice. When the worksheets are used for this skill, ask participants to practice the skills of observing, describing, and participating *nonjudgmentally*.

*From Schneider, P. (2005). The patience of ordinary things. In *Another river: New and selected poems*. Amherst, MA: Amherst Writers and Artists Press. Copyright 2005 by Pat Schneider. Reprinted by permission.

Mindfulness Worksheet 5: Mindfulness "How" Skills: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness. This worksheet provides space for recording only two practices of a "how" skill for the week.

Mindfulness Worksheet 5a: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheet 5b: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 5c: Nonjudgmentalness Calendar. Worksheets 5a and 5b offer different formats for recording how skills practice. Worksheet 5c is an advanced worksheet for the single skill of nonjudgmentalness. It is most useful when you are working with someone on replacing judgmental thoughts, statements, assumptions, and/or expressions with nonjudgmental ones. This worksheet can also be very useful for DBT treatment teams in working with typical judgmental thoughts and assumptions about individual therapists, skills training leaders, and/or individual therapy/skills training participants.

✓ A. Two Types of Judgments

There are two types of judgments: judgments that *discriminate* and judgments that *evaluate*.

✓ *1. Judgments That Discriminate*

To "discriminate" is to discern or analyze whether two things are the same or different, whether something meets some type of standard, or whether something fits the facts.

Some people are paid to compare things to standards or to predict consequences—that is, to judge. Teachers give grades; grocers put out "good" food or produce and discard "bad" food. The word "good" is also used to give children and adults feedback about their behavior, so they will know what to keep doing and what to stop.

Example: An expert jeweler discriminates whether a stone purported to be a diamond is really a diamond or not.

✓ *Example:* A U.S. Supreme Court judge discriminates whether an action or law violates the Constitution.

Example: A criminal court judge discriminates whether an action is against the law or not.

✓ *Example:* Judges in a spelling contest discriminate whether contestants' spelling is the same as or different from that in the dictionary.

Discriminations are necessary. Discriminating between a swimming pool with water in it and one without water is essential before a swimmer dives into it. A person who can discriminate is often called a person with a "good eye" (e.g., a butcher who can select the piece of meat that will be most tender when cooked). Discriminating the effects of angry versus conciliatory behavior toward other people is essential to building lasting relationships.

✓ *2. Judgments That Evaluate*

To "evaluate" is to judge someone or something as good or bad, worthwhile or not, valuable or not.

Evaluations are something we add to the facts. They are based on opinions, personal values, and ideas in our minds. They are not part of factual reality.

✓ *3. Letting Go of Evaluations, Keeping Discriminations*

Our aim in nonjudgmentalness is to let go of judgments that evaluate as good and bad, and to keep judgments that discriminate and see consequences.

"Good" and "bad," however, are sometimes used as shorthand for describing consequences.

✓ *Example:* When fish is slimy and old, and won't taste good if it's eaten, we say it is "bad." If it is rotten and will make us sick, we say it is "bad." If it is fresh and not contaminated, we say it is "good."

Example: When people hurt others or are destructive, we call them "bad." When they help others, we call them "good."

Example: If it rains on a parade and people are distressed, we call it "bad." If it is sunny and people are happy, we call it "good."

Example: We say that people have "good judgment" when they are skilled at seeing the consequences of their own behaviors or decisions.

But it is easy to leave out stating consequences and simply call other people or events "good" and "bad." When we use "good" and "bad," we often forget that we are adding something to reality. We forget that we are predicting consequences. We treat our judgments as facts. People also treat their judgments of us as facts.

✓ Discriminations can easily become judgmental as well. Discriminations can turn into judgments when we exaggerate differences between two things. That is, we describe what we believe to be factual rather than what we observe to be factual. Discrimination against various people or ideas is based on judging certain characteristics of the people or certain ideas as "good" or "bad." When we feel threatened by differences, it is easier to become judgmental.

Example: Black people are inferior to whites.

Example: Women are less worthwhile than men.

Example: Homosexuals are evil people.

4. The Nature of Evaluations

✓ Judgments that evaluate as good or bad are in the mind of the observer. They are not qualities of what the observer is judging.

We are judgmental when we add an evaluation of worth or value to what we have observed. "Good" and "bad" are never observed. They are qualities put on things by the person observing. If something can be worthwhile, valuable, or good in the eyes of one person or group, it can always be viewed as worthless, of no value, or bad by another person or group. An important mindfulness skill is *not* judging things in this manner.

✓ *Example:* Different cultures see different things as good and different things as bad. Different families have different values. Different schools have different rules for what is good behavior and what is bad behavior. The same is true in different companies.

✓ **Story Point:** Imagine that a tiger chases a man for dinner. What does the man think? "No, no! This is bad!" If the tiger catches the man and eats him, his family members might say, "This is terrible! This is bad!!" Or they might say, "He should not have been out there alone," "They [the guides on his safari] should have protected him and not let him out there by himself," or the like. What does the tiger say, however? The tiger says, "Yum, yum."

5. The Nature of Nonjudgmentalness

✓ Nonjudgmentalness is describing reality as "what is," without adding evaluations of "good" and "bad" or the like to it.

Discussion Point: Discuss the difference between discriminating and being judgmental. Elicit examples of when people have been judged as good or bad, and when something they have done has been judged as meeting a standard or not. For example, a person may get a B on a math test, but may not feel that the teacher is judging the person or the performance as "bad."

Discussion Point: Discuss when discrimination between characteristics of people leads to unjust behaviors—as, for example, in discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Knowing that two things are different may be an important discrimination, but it may be far more important to be an accurate judge of whether the observed difference makes a difference. Refusing to hire a man without hands as a pianist does not mean he cannot be hired as a tap dancer, for instance.

B. Why Be Nonjudgmental?

1. Judgments Can Have Damaging Effects on Relationships

Negative judgmentalness creates conflict and can damage relationships with people we care for. Very few of us like people who are judgmental of us. Judging others might get people to change temporarily, but more often it leads people to avoid or retaliate against those who judge them badly.

2. Judgments Can Have Negative Effects on Emotions

Adding judgments can have a huge impact on our emotions. When we add evaluations of "good" and "bad" to people or things around us, it can have a strong effect on our emotional responses to the persons or things we are judging. It is then often difficult to recognize that we have created the judgments, and thus have created the very events that can dysregulate our emotions.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Elicit from participants whether they have more difficulty judging themselves or judging others. Do they often feel judged by others? What about judgments they hear around them, or on radio, TV, or the Internet? (Notice if they are judging those who judge.)

✓ ### *3. Changing the Causes of Things Works Better Than Judging*

Everything that has happened in the universe has been caused. Changing the causes of things works better than judging things we don't like.

In other words, saying that things "should" not have happened, or saying that they are "bad" and "should" be different, is ineffective and does not change things. If we want drunk drivers off the road, we need to develop circumstances that cause them to stop drinking and driving. We may need stronger laws against drunk driving or more police patrols to enforce the law. We may also need to provide effective treatment for people with alcohol problems, and to persuade other people not to drive with people who are drinking.

Similarly, if we want people to vote for something we believe in, we have to give them a cause to vote our way. We will need to provide persuasive arguments that they will believe, or arguments against voting against our position. Or if we want a new dog to urinate outside instead of on our new carpets, we have to cause a new behavior to develop by training the dog.

✓ *Example:* Standing near a table, ask participants to imagine that on the table is a priceless heirloom—a white lace tablecloth that is 300 years old and has been in your family all that time. Then, holding a small object in your hand, ask them to imagine that what you are holding is a glass of fine red wine. As you continue dropping the object on the table, picking it up, and dropping it again, keep asking, "Should this glass of red wine spill on the table?" If they or you say yes, then put your other hand out and catch the object before it hits the table. Comment that if you don't want the glass of wine to spill on the table, you have to do something to cause it not to hit the table when it is dropped. If you or they then comment that the glass of wine would not drop on the table if you did not open your hands, comment that you would have to change the neural firing of your brain for that not to happen.

Discussion Point: If making demands does not change reality, why do we keep making them? The answer: Sometimes expressing our demands really does change reality. Getting angry, pouting, or crying out about the unfairness of what someone has done does sometimes make people change,

just to get us to stop acting so angry, stop pouting, or stop crying. Elicit from participants times this has been true for them. What are the positive consequences of this? What are the negative consequences? Discuss.

4. Nonjudgmentalness Is Fundamental to Mindfulness

Nonjudgmentalness is stressed in all mindfulness-based treatments (including Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention), as well as in all treatments that emphasize acceptance of others and of oneself and one's own behavior. It is central to all spiritual traditions of mindfulness.

✓ C. Nonjudgmentally: How to Do It

1. Let Go of Good and Bad

View and describe reality as "what is." Let go of evaluating people, their behavior, and events as good or bad.

Example: Let go of saying that a person or the person's behavior is either "bad" or "good."

Example: Let go of saying that a person or characteristic is "worthless" or "worthwhile."

Example: Let go of calling oneself a "bad person" or a "good person."

The goal here is to take a nonjudgmental stance when observing, describing, and participating. Judging is any labeling or evaluating of something as good or bad, as valuable or not, as worthwhile or worthless. Letting go of such labeling is being nonjudgmental.

✓ *2. Replace Evaluations with Simple Statements of "It Is," or with Descriptions of What Is*

The goal is not to replace "bad" with "good," to switch "worthless" for "worthwhile," or to make other similar replacements. If you are good, you can always be bad; if you are worthwhile, you can always be worthless. Second, changing a negative judgment into a positive judgment can obscure the negative consequences of an event. For example, saying that a rotten piece of meat is good instead of bad could cause someone to eat it and then get sick. The idea is to eliminate evaluations entirely.

Example: When buying a new house, rather than asking, "Is it a good house?", we might ask, "Is it a house I will like?" or "Is it a house that will last a long time without a lot of repairs?" or "Will I be able to sell it for more than I bought it for?"

Example: If we call a pillow a "good pillow," we are using judgmental language instead of saying, "I like this pillow."

But does this mean that we cannot say "Good job" to someone or use positive words to praise others? *No*, it does not! Positive judgments have far fewer negative consequences than do negative judgments. In general, once we reduce our internal judgmentalness, we can go back to using the phrase "Good job" and the like to mean specific things. For example, if I say, "Good job!" to one of my students after hearing her present her handling of a very difficult problem in therapy, I would usually mean "You responded to that very effectively." Saying, "Good job!" to a 3-year-old boy who has mastered a new task may mean "I am proud of you."

✓ *3. Let Go of "Should"*

Nonjudgmentalness involves letting go of the word "should." That is, it means letting go of being persons who define how the world should be, and letting go of demands on reality to be what we want it to be simply because we want it to be that way. When being nonjudgmental, we let go of saying and thinking that things should be different than they are. We also let go of saying that we ourselves should be different than we are.

✓ ***4. Replace "Should" with Descriptions of Feelings or Desires***

Nonjudgmentalness involves replacing "should" with describing how we feel or what we desire: "I want things to be different," "I want to be different than I am," or "I hope you will do this for me." An alternative is to replace "should" with "This is caused": "Everything is as it should be, given the causes of the universe."

✓ D. Getting the Concept of Nonjudgmentalness Across

✓ ***1. Nonjudgmentalness Does Not Mean Approval***

Being nonjudgmental means that everything *is* what it is, and that everything is *caused*. Rather than judging something as good or bad, it is more useful to describe the facts and then try to understand the causes. When things happen that are destructive, that we do not like, or that do not fit our values, we have a better chance of stopping or changing them if we try to understand and then change the causes. Yelling "Bad!" doesn't stop that many things. Even if we believe that there is an "evil force" or a "devil" in the world, understanding how it works and why it does what it does when it acts is a more effective strategy for getting change.

Discussion Point: Participants may believe that by saying something is not "bad," then they must be saying it is "good," and vice versa. This is true only if people have the dichotomy "good–bad" in their minds in the first place and use that to describe things. Elicit from participants all the times others have applied judgments to them when they felt their doing, thinking, or feeling was neither good nor bad.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants times when others have called them "bad" and expected immediate change, versus times when others have tried to help them understand the causes of their own behaviors and help them change. What are the differences?

✓ ***2. Nonjudgmentalness Does Not Mean Denying Consequences***

A person who stops judging can still observe or predict consequences. It is often very important to observe and remember consequences of behaviors and events, particularly when consequences are either destructive to things we value or highly rewarding to us. And it can be very important to communicate these consequences to other people. Saying, "This piece of meat is bad," is a shorthand way of saying, "It is filled with bacteria and may make you sick if you eat it." Saying, "This paint will look really good in my house," means "I will really like this color if we use it in my house." Behavior that is destructive to others or to ourselves can still be labeled "bad." Behavior that is constructive or helpful to others or ourselves can still be labeled "good."

Judgments are often easier than describing consequences of things. People often use judgmental statements as a shorthand for consequences all the time, and eventually forget what consequences they are referring to. When there are a lot of negative consequences to a behavior, it can be easier to use "good" and "bad" as shorthand all the time.

✓ *Example:* Saying a person has "good judgment" means that when the person makes decisions, the outcomes are ordinarily beneficial to the person and/or to others.

✓ *Example:* All societies judge murder as "bad," because the consequences of allowing people to kill others whenever they want to harms the community as a whole.

Example: In politics, one side says, "This is good, good, good," while the other side says, "This is bad, bad, bad." However, these are only personal evaluations.

It is easy to simplify "good" and "bad" events or behaviors to "good" and "bad" people.

Discussion Point: Discuss the difference between describing and judging. Judging is labeling something in an evaluative way as "good" or "bad." Describing is "just the facts." The facts may be that something is destructive or harmful, constructive or helpful.

Discussion Point: Get examples of the difference between judging and noticing consequences: "Your behavior is terrible," versus "Your behavior is hurting me" or "What you are doing is going to result in my getting hurt"; "I am stupid and bad," versus "I missed my appointment for the third time, and this is going to get me in trouble with my friends if I don't change."

3. *Nonjudgmentalness Does Not Mean Keeping Quiet about Preferences or Desires*

Asking for change is not judgmental.

✓ But preferences and desires often become judgments on reality as it is.

- Saying that things "should" change (simply on our say-so) is judgmental.
- Saying that things "should" be different puts a demand on reality.
- Saying that things "should" be different implies that there is something wrong or bad about reality as it is.
- Saying that things "should" be different implies that a consequence that is caused should somehow not occur. This would, of course, require changing the rules of the universe.

✓ The important point here is this: Who says so? If each person gets to determine what "should" be at any given moment, we could say that each person has the power to be "God" of the universe. This would, of course, be a mighty responsibility, as changing one thing to fit our preferences on a particular day might have unintended consequences for the entire universe.

✓ **Practice Exercise:** The following exercise is a good way to make the point that "shoulds" are indeed based on preferences. Ask a participant to tell you something that he or she thinks "should" be different than it is. Then ask, "Why?" Once the person answers, ask why that should be so. For example, if a person says, "People should love others more," you would ask, "Why should people love others more?" Then when the person gives an answer, you ask again, "Why?" For example, if the person then responds, "Because when people are more loving, there is less war," you would ask, "And why should there be less war?" For each answer the person gives, you continue to ask, "And why should that be so?" You do this even if the person says, "Because it is God's will." In that case, you ask, "And why should God's will be carried out?" Ultimately, you will get to a final answer: "Because I want it to be that way." At that point, you can point out that the person is turning his or her own wishes into a demand on reality. Even if the person's wish is shared by most people on earth, even if it would be valued by most people, even if it is praiseworthy and wonderful, it is still a preference turned into a command. Alas, reality as a whole does not work by our commands. Changing reality requires changing causes.

✓ Saying that one thing *should* (or *must*) occur in order for a second thing to occur is *not* judgmental.

✓ *Example:* Saying, "I should turn the car key if I want the car to start," "I should study if I want to make good grades," or "I should look for a job if I want to find a job" is not judgmental. The trick here is to avoid the implication that "to be a good person, I should turn the car key, study, or look for a job." It is also important to avoid the implication that "to be a good person, I should want to start the car, make good grades, or find a job."

✓ ### 4. *Values and Emotional Responses to Events Are Not Themselves Judgmental*

A person can like something without also saying that it is good or bad. For example, many people dislike certain foods without judging those foods "bad." Values are principles, standards, or qualities that are considered desirable and admirable. Things that we value are things we believe are important for our welfare or the welfare of society at large. Generally, we have an attachment to our values (i.e., positive emotional feelings about our values). This is why it can be so difficult when someone disagrees with our values. We feel threatened. It is easy to view such people as "bad." Wanting, desiring, or admiring something, however, is not itself judging. Hating or feeling disgusted by something is not necessarily judgmental.

Judgments are often shorthand for describing preferences.

Example: Saying that a room looks "bad" or a book was "terrible" is based on a personal preference in decorating or in reading material (or sometimes on a personal or community standard for how rooms should look or how books should be written).

Example: Saying, "I should get the job because I am more experienced," is really just my preference that they give me the job, or my value that more experienced people should get jobs over less experienced people.

We often forget that such judgments are shorthand and take them as statements of fact. When values and preferences are very important, we feel threatened by people who disagree with us. Being threatened can easily lead to our calling others "bad."

Discussion Point: Judging is often a way of getting out of responsibility. Explain: "If I don't like what other people are doing and want them to stop it, I can say, 'That is bad,' and I don't have to own up to the fact that the real reason they should stop is that I (and maybe others) don't like it, don't believe in it, or don't want the consequences." Elicit from participants times when others have tried to control their behavior by stating judgments as facts. Get examples of when they have tried that with someone else. Give your own examples here.

✓ ***5. Statements of Fact Are Not Judgmental, but Judgments Often Go Along with the Statements of Fact***

Many words have literal meanings that are not judgmental, but are almost always used as judgmental statements. A statement of fact may be a judgment because the fact is simultaneously being judged. For instance, "I am fat" may simply be a statement of fact. But if one adds (in thoughts, implication, or tone of voice) that being fat is bad or unattractive, then a judgment is added. A favorite judgmental word of participants I work with is "stupid," as in "I did a stupid thing," "I am stupid," or "What a stupid thing to say." Judgments often masquerade as statements of fact, so they can be hard to catch. Mental health professionals are very good at this sometimes. I once had a therapist try to convince me that calling a client "narcissistic" (for saying she felt more "real" when she was around me) was not a judgmental statement.

Discussion Point: Discuss the difference between a judgment and a statement of facts. Get examples of judgmental statements masquerading as descriptions of facts.

Note to Leaders: Some participants will believe that there really is an absolute "good" and an absolute "bad." You need to be dialectical here and search for a synthesis of different points of view. Do not expect participants to throw out judgments without a fight! Expect participants to bring up Hitler (or, more rarely, sexual abuse) as an example of "bad" with a capital B. Thus the next teaching point is important: Judgments have their place. Letting go of judging is an idea that will grow over time. Don't force it at the beginning. You can usually get more mileage out of focusing first on reducing self-judgments. (See Chapter 7 of the main DBT text for a more extensive discussion of these points.)

✓ ***6. Don't Judge Judging***

Emphasize to participants: "It is important to remember that you cannot change judging by judging judging."

E. Nonjudgmentalness Practice Exercises

As it is for developing the "what" skills (observing, describing, participating), practice is important for developing the "how" skills. You can do one exercise and then ask participants to share their experiences of it, or you can do several of these sequentially and then ask them to share.

1. *Any Participating Exercise*

When asked to participate in a task such as those described for participating (see Section VI, E), most people have judgmental thoughts either about themselves or others. Using participating exercises to practice nonjudgmentalness works best if you first start the exercise and then, after a few minutes, stop and ask people whether they are judging themselves. For example, are they thinking, "I look silly," or "I'm really stupid, I can't do this"? Almost always, when the exercise restarts, people find it easier to let go of judgments.

2. *Walking Slowly in a Line*

Ask participants to walk slowly in a line, either around in a circle indoors or single file outdoors. What almost always happens in this exercise is that people start judging the person in front of them or behind them, or they judge the person giving the instructions. As above, it is useful to stop in the middle and review who is already judging. Then start again.

3. *Describing Something That Is Disliked*

Ask each person to describe a disliked interaction with someone or a disliked characteristic of another person or of herself. Have participants practice describing these things without using judgmental words or tone of voice.

4. *Starting Over without Judgments*

During the session, stop anyone who uses a judgmental voice tone or judgmental words. Ask the person to start the sentence over and to drop judgmental words and voice tone. Do this every session, even when other skills are being taught, and individuals will ultimately get in the habit of being nonjudgmental.

F. Nonjudgmentalness Practice Exercises for Between Sessions

The following are individual practice ideas for participants who are having lots of trouble with judgmental thoughts. The practice exercises are listed in order from easiest to hardest. Check up on each assignment each week, and give the next assignment once the current exercise is mastered. Each suggestion is a daily practice that starts over on the next day. These exercises are also included in Mindfulness Handout 5a, along with other ways to practice nonjudgmentalness; it is important to go over this handout with participants. Ask participants to do the following:

- "Practice observing judgmental thoughts going through the mind. Remember, do not judge judging."
- "Count up judgmental thoughts each day. You can do this in one of several ways. You can tear up pieces of paper, put them in a pocket on one side, and move them to a pocket on the other side each time you notice a judgment. Or buy a golf or sports counter, and each time a judgment goes through, push the counter. Or record judgments on a cell smartphone each time one comes by. At the end of each day, write down the count, and start over the next day. Remember that observing and recording behavior can be an effective way of changing behavior."
- "Replace judgmental thoughts, statements, or assumptions with nonjudgmental ones." (See below for tips on how to do this.)
- "Observe your judgmental facial expressions, posture, and voice tones (both internal and external). It can sometimes be helpful to ask caring others to point these out."
- "Change judgmental voice tones and expressions to nonjudgmental expressions (and, if necessary, apologies)."

G. Tips for Replacing Judgmental Thoughts

See also the list under item 3 on Mindfulness Handout 5a.

- "Describe the facts of the event or situation—*only* what is observed with your senses." (For example, "The white fish is not fresh and has a fishy smell.")
- "Describe the consequences; keep to the facts." (For example, "This fish may taste rancid when cooked.")
- "Describe your own feelings in response to the facts. Emotions are not judgments." (For example, "I don't want to serve this fish for dinner.")

VIII. MINDFULNESS "HOW" SKILLS: ONE-MINDFULLY (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 5–5B)

Main Point: Acting one-mindfully, the second of the three mindfulness "how" skills, consists of focusing attention on the present moment and bringing the whole person to bear on one task or activity.

Mindfulness Handout 5: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "How" Skills. This is the same handout used in teaching the skill of nonjudgmentalness. Review the "One-Mindfully" section of the handout with participants. It is important to note that this skill encompasses two ideas: being completely present to the moment, and doing one thing at a time. Both have to do with focusing the mind.

Mindfulness Handout 5b: Ideas for Practicing One-Mindfulness *(Optional).* It is useful to have this handout available, as it gives a number of practice exercises for one-mindfulness.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice; Mindfulness Worksheet 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 5: Mindfulness "How" Skills: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness; Mindfulness Worksheet 5a: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheet 5b: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Calendar. These worksheets are the same as those used in teaching the skills of observing, describing, and participating, as well as nonjudgmentalness. Each asks participants to describe their mindfulness practice. For this skill, ask participants to practice one-mindfulness and then record their experience.

✓ A. One-Mindfully: What Is It?

✓ *1. One-Mindfully Means Being Completely Present in This One Moment*

One-mindfulness means, for "just this moment," being present to our lives and what we are doing. Like nonjudgmentalness, living one-mindfully is central to all mindfulness teaching and contemplative practices. It is central to both psychological and spiritual traditions of mindfulness.

a. The Past Is Over

The past is over; it does not exist in the present. We may have thoughts and images of the past. Intense emotions may arise within us when we think about the past, or when images of the past go through our minds. We may worry about things we did in the past or things others did. We may wish that our pasts were different, or wish that we were still in the past. But it is crucial to recognize that these thoughts, images, feelings, and wishes are occurring in the present.

Trouble starts when, instead of being aware of thinking about the past, we become lost in the past or in past thinking and imagining. We stop paying attention to what is happening right here and now, and instead focus our minds inadvertently on thoughts and images about the past. Our emotions now may be identical to the emotions we felt in the past, making us think that we are actually living in the past or that the past is living in us.

b. The Future Has Not Come into Existence

The same points can be made with respect to the future. It does not exist. We may have many thoughts about and plans for the future. Intense emotions may arise within us when we think about the future. We may have many worries about the future. Indeed, we may spend many hours and endless nights worrying about the future. But, as with worries about the past, it is very important to remember that our worries about the future are occurring in the present. Just as we can get lost in our thoughts and images of the past, we can get lost in ruminating about the future.

Living in the present can include planning for the future. It simply means that when we plan, we plan with awareness that we are doing it (i.e., we plan as a present-moment activity).

✓ ***2. One-Mindfully Means Doing One Thing at a Time***

One-mindfulness also means doing one thing at a time, with awareness. It is focusing attention on only *one* activity or thing at a time, bringing the whole person to bear on this thing or activity.

Research Point: This notion is very similar to an effective therapy for chronic worriers developed by Thomas Borkovec.[52] The essence of the therapy is "Worry when you are worrying." It involves setting aside 30 minutes each day to worry. Explain: "You go to the same place each day, and try to spend the whole time worrying. During the rest of the day, you banish worries from your mind, reminding yourself that you will attend to that particular worry during your worry time. There is a similar technique for fighting insomnia: writing down all the things you need to remember for the next day before you go to sleep, so you won't have to wake up to think about them."

B. One-Mindfully: Why Do It?

✓ ***1. The Pain of the Present Moment Is Enough Pain for Anyone***

Adding to a painful present moment all the pain from the past and all the pain from the future is too much. It is too much suffering.

Research Point: One of the reasons mindfulness is an effective treatment for physical pain is that it keeps us in the present. Ruminating about suffering in the past, and dreading suffering in the future, both increase the pain in the moment. The road to less pain is letting go of past and future pain, and suffering only the pain of the present moment.

✓ ***2. Multitasking Is Inefficient***

There is now quite a bit of research on multitasking (doing more than one thing at a time). Contrary to what most people believe, trying to juggle two things at once does not save time. In fact, it cuts down on the ability to do things quickly.[53–59]

3. Life, Relationships, and Beauty Pass You By

When life is led in mindlessness of the present, the present whizzes by. We do not experience many of the things we care about. We do not smell the roses.

C. One-Mindfully: How to Do It

✓ ***1. Be Present to Your Own Experiences***

Being present to our own experiences is the opposite of avoiding or trying to suppress our present experiences. It is allowing ourselves to be aware of our current experiences—our feelings, our sensations, our thoughts, our movements and actions.

2. Rivet Yourself to Now

The next step is to actively focus and maintain awareness of what we are experiencing now, what is happening now, and what we are doing now. This involves letting go of thoughts of both the past and the future. We spend much of our time living in the past (which is over), living in the future (which is not here yet), or responding to our concepts and ideas of what reality is rather than what it actually is. Thus a primary aim of one-mindfulness is to maintain awareness of the moment we are in.

✓ *Example:* "You are in a meeting and very bored. Rather than sitting and thinking about all the things you would rather be doing, throw yourself into listening. Focus on the present. This can stop you from being miserable."

Example: "When you are driving, drive. When you're walking, walk. When you are eating, eat."

✓ ### *3. Do Only One Thing at a Time*

Doing only one thing at a time is the opposite of how people usually like to operate. Most of us think that if we do several things at once, we will accomplish more; this is not true. The trick is to have our minds completely on what we are doing at the moment. This refers to both mental and physical activities.

✓ *Example:* "You have five dishes to wash, but you can only wash one at a time."

However, this does not mean that we cannot switch from one thing to another and back. Focusing on one thing in the moment does not mean that we cannot do complex tasks requiring many sequential activities. But it does mean that whatever we do, we should attend fully to it. Thus the essence of the idea is acting with undivided attention. The opposites are mindlessness (i.e., automatic behaviors without awareness) and distracted behavior (i.e., doing one thing while thinking about or attending to another).

Discussion Point: Discuss an example of doing two things at once, such as sitting in skills training and thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Explain: "A mindfulness perspective would suggest that if you are going to think about the past, you should devote your full attention to it. If you are going to worry about the future, devote your full attention to it. If you are going to attend class, devote your full attention to it." Get participants to come up with other examples (e.g., watching TV or reading while eating dinner).

D. One-Mindfulness Practice Exercises

Mindfulness Handout 5b lists a number of ideas for practicing being one-mindful. It is important to go over some of these with participants.

IX. MINDFULNESS "HOW" SKILLS: EFFECTIVELY (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 5–5C)

Main Point: Acting effectively, the third of the three mindfulness "how" skills, is doing what works and using skillful means.

Mindfulness Handout 5: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "How" Skills. This is the same handout used in teaching the skills of acting nonjudgmentally and one-mindfully. Review the "Effectively" section of the handout with participants. The key point here is that to reach one's goals, to reduce suffering, and to increase happiness, using effective means is critical. Willfulness (the opposite of the skill of willingness; see Distress Tolerance Handout 13: Willingness) and pride, however, often get in the way. The best way to teach this skill is to find a way to appeal to each participant's ultimate self-interest.

Mindfulness Handout 5c: Ideas for Practicing Effectiveness. Practicing effectiveness can be difficult if you do not have a situation where effectiveness is needed. This handout gives some ideas on how to practice.

Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b: Mindfulness Core Skills Practice; Mindfulness Worksheet 2c: Mindfulness Core Skills Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 5: Mindfulness "How" Skills: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness; Mindfulness Worksheet 5a: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Checklist; Mindfulness Worksheet 5b: Nonjudgmentalness, One-Mindfulness, Effectiveness Calendar. These worksheets are the same as those used in teaching the "what" skills, as well as nonjudgmentalness and one-mindfulness. Each asks participants to describe their mindfulness practice. For this skill, ask participants to practice the skills of effectiveness. To do this, participants need to be vigilant for situations where they are tempted to do something dysfunctional or ineffective. These are the situations where effectiveness is needed. Also encourage participants to write down times when they easily or even automatically act in an effective manner.

✓ A. Effectively: What Is It?

Acting effectively is doing what works to achieve our goals. The goal here is to focus on doing what works, rather than what is "right" versus "wrong" or "fair" versus "unfair." Generally, it is the opposite of "cutting off your nose to spite your face." Acting effectively means using skillful means to achieve our goals.

✓ B. Why Act Effectively?

Without the skill to use effective means, it is difficult to reach our goals, reduce suffering, or increase happiness. Being right or proving a point may feel good for the moment, but in the long term, getting what we want in life is more satisfying.

Example: "Yelling at the reservation clerk who says you do not have a reservation for a hotel room (when you know you called and made one) may make you feel good in the moment, but actually getting a hotel room (which may require skillful means) would be likely to make you feel even better."

C. Effectively: How to Do It

1. Know the Goal or Objective

Doing what works (what is effective) requires, first, knowing what our goal or objective in a particular situation is.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Not knowing what we want makes effectiveness hard. It can be very hard to know what we want when emotions get in the way. We can mistake being afraid of something with not wanting something, being angry at someone with not wanting to be close to the person, being ashamed of our own actions with not wanting to be around certain people. Discuss with participants when confusion over goals and objectives interferes with effectiveness. Elicit examples of when emotions have interfered.

2. Know and React to the Actual Situation

Being effective requires knowing and reacting to the actual situation, not to what we think the situation *should* be.

Example: Signs on the freeway tell people to drive in the right lane except to pass. People who tailgate slower drivers in the left lane, switch their lights off and on, or keep honking (instead of just passing from the right lane) are acting as if all people are willing to follow highway directions. All are not!

Example: A person wants to get a raise at work, but thinks the supervisor should know without being told that a raise is deserved, and so the person refuses to ask for it. In this case, the person is putting being right over achieving the goal of getting a raise.

Discussion Point: Get examples of participants' "cutting off their noses" to make a point. Share examples of your own here as well—the more outrageous or humorous, the better.

3. *Know What Will and Won't Work to Achieve Goals*

Effectiveness requires knowing what will and what won't work to achieve our goals. Much of the time, we know what is and is not effective if we are calm and can think about our options. At other times, however, being effective means asking for help or asking for instructions in what to do. To be more effective, some participants may need to improve their problem-solving skills (see Emotion Regulation Handout 12). An openness to experimenting, to staying aware of the consequences of what we do, and sufficient humility to learn from our mistakes are essential to effectiveness.

Example: "If you want people to remember your birthday, you can call to remind them beforehand, rather than letting them forget."

Example: "When the goal is to make someone happy, it is more effective to do what you know will make them happy than to take a stand and be 'right.' "

✓ *Example:* "When things are going wrong at the airport, it is more effective to talk calmly to the people who can help you than to yell at them. Yelling and making a scene can cause the reservations person to put you on a flight far in the future!"

✓ 4. *"Play by the Rules" When Necessary*

Effectiveness also involves "playing by the rules" when this is needed to achieve a goal. Playing by the rules is most important in situations where we are in a low-power position and what we want is important.

Example: Being an involuntary patient in a state hospital is a situation in which playing by the rules is vitally necessary. Staff members make the rules about when a patient gets privileges. Right or wrong, they have the power, not the patients.

Example: Other examples of situations that call for playing by the rules include being a prisoner in jail, an applicant for a bank loan, or a person going through security at an airport. In each situation, other people make the rules and can enforce them.

5. *Be Savvy about People*

Effectiveness often means being "political" or savvy about people. It is taking people where they are (rather than where they "should" be) and going from there. Different people are like different cultures. What works in one culture may not work in another. Focusing on what's "right" instead of what works is like trying to impose our own culture on another country when visiting.

Discussion Point: Get examples of when participants have imposed their own cultures or views on others. Also, when have others imposed in this way on participants?

6. *Sacrifice a Principle to Achieve a Goal When Necessary*

Effectiveness sometimes requires sacrificing principles to achieve a goal. In extreme situations (e.g., a concentration camp, where not playing by the rules would mean death), most people are willing to sacrifice their principles even if the rules are not fair. In real life, this is sometimes very hard. It can be especially hard just when it is needed most, with people in authority positions.

Discussion Point: Discuss with participants which "how" skill (taking a nonjudgmental stance, focusing on one thing in the moment, being effective) is their strength and which is their weakness. The one they have most difficulty with is the one to practice the most.

✓ D. Effectiveness Practice Exercises

Mindfulness Handout 5c lists a number of ideas for practicing effectiveness. It is important to go over some of these with participants.

X. SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

At the end of the Mindfulness module, summarize states of mind, the mindfulness "what" skills (observing, describing, participating), and the mindfulness "how" skills (taking a nonjudgmental stance, focusing on one thing in the moment, being effective). If you have used supplemental skills (see Sections XI–XVI, below), they should also be summarized. Remind participants that they need to continue practicing mindfulness skills throughout all of the skills training modules (and beyond).

XI. OVERVIEW: OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON MINDFULNESS (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 6)

Main Point: There are many possible approaches to mindfulness, and many possible outcomes that can be obtained from the practice of mindfulness. This set of handouts can be taught in their entirety, or you can select specific skills to fit the individuals you are working with. Mindfulness Handout 7a highlights the role of spirituality in mindfulness practices for both leaders and participants. The handout is meant to promote discussion; there is no worksheet for it.

Mindfulness Handout 6: Overview: Other Perspectives on Mindfulness Skills. Review this handout quickly unless you plan on skipping the handouts associated with each topic (Mindfulness Handouts 7–10).

Worksheet: There is no worksheet associated with this handout.

✓ A. Mindfulness: A Spiritual Perspective

Mindfulness as a psychological practice is a derivative of mindfulness as a spiritual practice.

B. Skillful Means: Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind

"Skillful means" is a set of skills for balancing being present to the moment with doing what is needed in the moment, and for working toward goals while at the same time letting go of attachment to achieving goals.

C. Wise Mind: Walking the Middle Path

"Walking the middle path" is a set of skills highlighting the importance of finding the synthesis between opposites, rather than condemning one side or the other.

Note to Leaders: The content of these mindfulness skills from another perspective and of Mindfulness Handouts 6–10 can be woven into your teaching of the core mindfulness skills (Mindfulness Handouts 1–5) or can be covered separately. These skills can be taught in any order. The content easiest to integrate into core mindfulness skills is that of Mindfulness Handout 7. It does not necessarily add new content to Mindfulness Handout 1; it simply extends the list of goals. These goals, taken together, can be presented as psychological goals and spiritual goals. The concepts of being mind and doing mind are prominent in

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy and similar treatments. If you are treating individuals who have family members in adolescent DBT, then teaching Mindfulness Handout 10 makes sense, since walking the middle path (finding the synthesis between opposites) is an important skill in adolescent DBT.

XII. MINDFULNESS PRACTICE: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 7)

Main Point: Mindfulness can be practiced for spiritual, psychological, medical, and/or humanistic reasons. The practice of mindfulness is very old, arising initially from spiritual practices across many cultures and spiritual practices. Its modern-day presence is found in the contemplative prayer and meditation practices common across the wide array of spiritualities in our times.

Mindfulness Handout 7: Goals of Mindfulness Practice: A Spiritual Perspective *(Optional).* This is an optional handout. Depending on the group you are teaching, it can be added after Handout 1: Goals of Mindfulness Practice (and reviewed *very* quickly), or it can be taught after participants have been through mindfulness teaching one or more times. If added to Handout 1, mention the list of outcomes here as outcomes many mindfulness practitioners speak about. Pay just enough attention so that participants have a good idea of what many believe the benefits of mindfulness practice may be, particularly for spiritual individuals. *Do not* let this handout interfere with teaching the "what" and "how" mindfulness skills.

Worksheet: There is not a new worksheet for this handout. Assign Mindfulness Worksheet 1 if needed.

Note to Leaders: Be sure to read my rationale for inclusion of a spiritual perspective at the beginning of this chapter. You do not need to be spiritual yourself to teach this skill. However, I suggest not teaching it if none of your skills training participants are spiritual or have an interest in spirituality. Find out by asking. Your task in teaching this skill is to assist participants in grounding their mindfulness practice firmly within their own spiritual practices. Remember not to confuse spirituality with religion. See discussion at the beginning of the chapter on this topic.

✓ A. The Goals of Mindfulness Practice from a Spiritual Perspective

- To experience ultimate reality—the transcendence of boundaries and the ground of our being, which leads to an awareness of our intimate wholeness with the entire universe.
- To grow in wisdom of the heart and of action.
- To experience freedom by letting go of attachments.
- To increase love and compassion toward ourselves and others.

Each of these goals is discussed in detail below.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Ask participants to read Mindfulness Handout 7 and check off on the handout each goal that is important to themselves. Discuss participants' goals. Use the teaching notes below to address questions that arise about goals or to make teaching points.

B. Experience Ultimate Reality

1. Our Minds Are Spacious

Our minds are spacious; that is, there is no boundary enclosing our minds.

- ***Spacious mind is the opposite of rigidity and inflexibility.*** Flexibility[60] is one of the hallmarks of emotional well-being.[61–66] Emotion regulation, problem solving, and coping with stressful life events require a flexible repertoire of responses that a person can use as the situation requires.

- ***Spacious mind is empty mind.*** This type of emptiness is experienced as liberating and joyful rather than painful and constricted. "Empty" in this sense does not mean being empty-headed. It is an acceptance of the fact that everything in the universe is in a state of continual change. Thus nothing is permanent (although we experience much in the universe as permanent). Even the self is continuously changing. "Emptiness" also means being empty of "self" or "ego." It is the process of emptying ourselves of attachments and of letting go of clinging.

Note to Leaders: "Emptiness" is a concept that can be difficult to understand. It is best left to more advanced teaching, after you have worked with wise mind for some time. Although the term "emptiness" is used extensively by Buddhist writers, particularly in Zen, it is also an important concept in Christian and other religious writings.

Practice Exercise: Instruct participants to close their eyes, and then to examine what is going on in their minds and ask themselves, "Where are the boundaries of my mind?" or "Can I see the walls around my mind?" Afterward, ask them to share and discuss observations.

Practice Exercise: Following the exercise above, ask participants to walk around the room for a few steps and then stop. Ask, "Where did walking go?" Discuss how thinking, desiring, wanting, and so forth are behaviors of the mind (and of the body also). "Where does walking go? Where do my thoughts, desires, urges, and so on go?" These questions have the same answer.

- ***In spacious mind, everything comes and goes.*** If we watch our minds for a while, we can see this. What was in our minds 5 seconds, 5 minutes, or a year ago is not in our minds now. Thoughts, feelings, and desires may come into our minds over and over and over. But they also go out of our minds over and over and over.

Practice Exercise: Instruct participants to close their eyes and then to observe their minds for a few minutes. Ask them to observe thoughts coming and going, feelings and sensations coming and going. Then ask: "Where do thoughts go? Where are thoughts coming from?"

- ***Spacious mind is still.*** If we practice mindfulness long enough, uncluttered by our constant inner chatter, ruminations, thoughts, and images, we will gradually develop a clarity within which our thoughts and emotions come and go. We will experience the stillness of our minds.
- ***Under high emotional arousal, our minds become constricted and inflexible.*** Feeling constricted and mentally inflexible can be extremely painful and scary. We cannot change this experience through willpower or by mental command. Trying to suppress, deny, or avoid this experience makes it worse. In wise mind, all of us are sometimes constricted and inflexible. Because everything in our mind comes and goes, this sense of being constricted and inflexible also comes and goes.

✓ C. We Are Each Intimately Connected with the Entire Universe

We cannot be separate from the universe even if we try to be. We are connected to even the farthest star in the universe. Mindfulness is a path to experiencing this connection. *Everything in the universe is interconnected*. This is a major finding of modern physics. It is also a tenet of all major religions and spiritual paths. Given this reality, each of us is also interconnected with the entire universe.

✓ - ***There are no outsiders in the universe.*** If everything is interconnected, then it logically follows that the universe is *one* with many parts. Therefore, although we can feel like outsiders and we can be treated as outsiders, in reality there are no outsiders and no insiders.

✓ - ***We are connected even if we don't experience the connection.*** The floor touches the door to outside; the door touches the porch or sidewalk; the sidewalk touches the street; the street

goes so many places; and so on and so on. If we close our eyes and do not experience something right in front of us, does that mean it has disappeared from the universe and is no longer connected to us? Opening our eyes, we see that it is still there.

- ***It is very easy to experience ourselves as isolated, alone, and unconnected when troubles arise.*** If we have not experienced being loved or cherished by others, it can be extremely difficult to experience our connections to others. This is particularly true if others have not stayed connected to us. We lose the reality that we are intimately connected to the entire universe.
- ***The experience of being unconnected, of being an outsider, or of not fitting in can be extremely painful.*** Fear and shame are common emotions here. We cannot change this experience at will; trying to suppress it is also not effective. Mindfulness practices of mindfulness of current emotions and mindfulness of current thoughts can be very helpful here.
- ***The absence of a sense of connection can also be due to beliefs that life must go the way we want it to if we are to be content.*** Practicing radical acceptance and willingness (distress tolerance skills) can be very helpful here.
- ***All of us sometimes feel alone and unconnected.*** Some people, however, feel unconnected, like outsiders, and alone almost all the time. They may be physically alone and treated as outsiders much of the time. In contrast to others who have been chosen as life partners or best friends, they may be unchosen. They may have no family or friends to love and cherish them. Thus their experience may fit the facts of their everyday experience, and these facts should not be denied or downplayed. However, it is still true that in reality no one is unconnected, outside, or alone in the universe.
- ***Some people are quite content being alone and feeling like outsiders, and don't care if they fit in or not.*** (Of course, these people as well are really not alone and are not outsiders.) More than likely, this feeling of contentment is due to these people's having not been judged and not judging themselves as inadequate or unacceptable for being the way they are.
- ***The absence of a sense of connection may be due to inadequate awareness of the present moment.*** Sometimes people are very connected but just don't experience or see it. This may be due to being too busy to notice (i.e., "not taking time to smell the flowers") or to having a habit of inattentiveness to everyday life.
- ***Finding connection and building a sense of inclusion take much more work for some people than for others.*** Say to participants: "The fact that you are not an outsider in the universe does not mean that you are not an outsider in the community that you are in or that you want to be in. You may not be alone in the universe, but you may be alone in your home. The universe as a whole may love and cherish you, but there may be no person who loves and cherishes you enough to call you on the phone or want to live with you."
- ***The absence of a sense of connection may be due to having a very rigid idea of what it means to be connected, loved, or included.*** This tendency is quite common in situations where one person makes up the rules, so to speak, for what counts as being connected, loved, or included.

Example: A person may be loved by a very forgetful person, but feel unloved if the person forgets his or her birthday.

Example: A person may be loved by a significant other with very different taste. This person may feel misunderstood or unloved upon receiving a gift from the significant other that he or she does not like.

Example: A person may have expectations about how a friend should express affection. This person may expect to be always picked up from the airport, or to be able to borrow money indefinitely, and may feel rejected when these events don't happen.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Ask participants about their own feelings of being unconnected, being outsiders, being alone, or not fitting in. Ask each person whether such experiences set off emotions of shame or of fear or other emotions. Ask what is most likely: that these feelings of being unconnected are due primarily to (1) life experiences of being judged; (2) life experiences of being physi-

cally alone, not included, or ignored much of the time; (3) being unaware of present-moment connections; and/or (4) something else entirely.

Note to Leaders: It may be critical to help participants develop a sense of lovability, inherent acceptability, and connection. The goal here is to transform their experience of being outsiders to an experience of insider status. Although many are treated as outsiders by their families or communities, no one really is an outsider—since if we are actually "one," there are no outsiders and no insiders.

It can also be very important to connect participants' own spiritual or religious beliefs to this view of our connection to the universe. Quotations that might help follow.

Many authors have written about our intimate connection to the entire universe. Here are just a few examples:

Lord Byron, the poet, wrote: "Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?" (p. 530).[67]

Henry Miller, the novelist, wrote: "We invent nothing, truly. We borrow and re-create. We uncover and discover. All has been given, as the mystics say. We have only to open our eyes and hearts, to become one with that which is" (p. 57).[68]

Charlene Spretnak, a writer on women and spirituality, has noted: "There are sacred moments in life when we experience in rational and very direct ways that separation, the boundary between ourselves and other people and between ourselves and Nature, is illusion. Oneness is reality. We can experience that stasis is illusory and that reality is continual flux and change on very subtle and also on gross levels of perception."[69]

✓ D. Grow in Wisdom

When we are in wise mind, we gain access to our inner wisdom. The practice of mindfulness over time leads to increases in wisdom and wise action.

1. Wisdom Is Practical

Wisdom is practical; that is, it is concretely beneficial to life and well-being. Wise mind is a way to access good judgment and skillful means. Good judgment is figuring out what is needed in any given moment, and skillful means is doing what is needed.

2. A Wise Person Is Balanced

A mark of wise mind practice is a growing sense of greater integration. In the stillness of wise mind, we can find harmony, balance, and quieting of extreme emotions.

3. Wisdom Involves Both the Heart and the Brain

In wise mind, there is wisdom of the heart as well as of the brain. Thus, in wise mind, we access our capacity for intuitive knowing, and develop sensitivity and a capacity to "read hearts." In wise mind, we have depth of understanding, in addition to good judgment and application of existing knowledge (as noted above).

✓ E. Experience Freedom

Mindfulness practice enables us to free ourselves from the demands of our own desires, cravings, and intense emotions.

1. Freedom Is the Ability to Want Something We Lack and to Find a Life Worth Living without It

We need the ability to have a tragic and sad past, or a present that is not what we would want, and still have a sense of liberation and freedom. The idea is not to suppress feeling, wishes, and desires, but to live with them as friends.

2. *The Drive to Stop Pain No Matter What Is the Opposite of Freedom*

Much of life involves managing situations that are painful but cannot be solved immediately. Although it is easy to think that we can just get rid of pain through positive thinking, ignoring pain, or suppressing pain, the fact is that these strategies often do not work. Our use of these strategies is usually based on the delusion that we cannot stand the pain. We feel compelled to do something to stop the pain. We are slaves to our incessant urges to escape from the present moment.

3. *When We Are Free, We Have a Sense of Liberation and Absence of Constraints*

We are free to be who and what we are. We are free to change. Freedom is the falling away of desperation and limits.

✓ F. Increase Love and Compassion

Finally, mindfulness practice enables us to increase love and compassion toward ourselves and others. Compassion is one of the hallmarks of being in wise mind. It is difficult to find any discussion of wise mind or of experiencing reality as it is, of religious or spiritual awakening, or of wisdom or enlightenment without a corresponding discussion of love and compassion.

1. *Wise Mind Lets Go of Judgmental Thinking*

Tell participants: "As you settle more often in wise mind, you will find that you become more tolerant and more likely to radically accept yourself and others, as well as less likely to judge, criticize, and reject yourself and others."

2. *Wise Mind Is Loving*

The outcome of wise mind is a greater capacity for love—love of others and love of oneself.

3. *Wise Mind Is Compassionate*

Say to participants: "Compassion makes much more sense once you realize that you and the universe are one. Cutting off your arm is cutting off your friend's or your neighbor's arm. Hurting others is hurting yourself."

Discussion Point: Elicit participants' reactions to these points and discuss. The last point in particular can be difficult for participants to understand; the interconnectedness of the entire universe is a conceptual idea but not an experienced reality for many.

XIII. WISE MIND: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 7A)

Main Point: Spiritual words and concepts are often universal beliefs that, depending on one's own religion, are stated in vastly different words. It is important to see the commonalities across various practices and cultures. It is also important to be able to select the part of a practice that conforms to one's own beliefs and practices.

Mindfulness Handout 7a: Wise Mind from a Spiritual Perspective *(Optional)***.** Depending on the group you are teaching, this optional handout can be added after Mindfulness Handout 8: Practicing Loving Kindness to Increase Love and Compassion (and reviewed *very* quickly), or it can be brought out if the topics covered come up in a discussion of mindfulness at some other point. Similar to Mindfulness Handout 7, this handout can be useful for spiritual and/or religious participants and their families, particularly those who are uncomfortable with mindfulness or the term "mindfulness" due to its association with Buddhism.

Worksheet: There is no worksheet for this handout.

A. Wise Mind as Contemplative Practice

In the widest meaning, the experience of wise mind can be viewed as a contemplative experience. Contemplative practices are associated with all of the major religions, as well as with naturalist/humanistic contemplative practices.

✓ *1. Wise Mind as Unity with the Sacred*

The experience of wise mind, from these perspectives, is the experience of unity with the sacred when entered into wholly and completely. "The sacred" here is referred to in various traditions as "the divine within," God, the Great Spirit, Yahweh, Brahma, Allah, Parvardigar, "ultimate reality," "the totality," "the source," "our essential nature," "no self," "emptiness," "the core of our being," "the ground of being," "our true self," and countless other names.

2. Wise Mind Experiences as Spiritual Experiences

Such experiences are often termed "spiritual" or "enlightenment" experiences. "The well within" as a metaphor for wise mind (see Figure 7.1) intentionally opens into an underground ocean so as to accommodate these beliefs.

✓ B. Wise Mind as "Going Home"

Wise mind can be considered "going home" or "going to our true home." When we are out of wise mind, we can feel lost. The loneliness we feel is homesickness.

1. Wise Mind as True Self

Wise mind is sometimes considered to be our true self. From this perspective, we are each one with ultimate reality. Just as wise mind is our true home, it is our true self as well.

2. Seven Characteristics of Spiritual Experiences

Seven characteristics of deep spiritual or mystical experiences are as follows:

- ***Experiential.*** The experience involves direct, unmediated experience of reality.
- ***Unitary or nondual.*** The experience is characterized by awareness of nonduality and nonseparation—of no distance between oneself, the ultimate reality, and all other beings.
- ***Ineffable or nonconceptual.*** What is experienced is ungraspable and incomprehensible. It can only be communicated with metaphors. It is compared with going into the "cloud of unknowing."[10, 29, 70]
- ***Giving certitude.*** In the midst of the experience, certainty is total, undeniable, and clear.
- ***Practical.*** The experience is concretely beneficial to one's life and well-being.
- ***Integrative.*** The experience is psychologically integrative, establishing harmony of love, compassion, mercy, kindness, and quieting of extreme emotions.
- ***Sapiential.*** The experience leads to wisdom, enhanced capacity for intuitive knowledge, the capacity to "read hearts," and the ability to discern the motives of others.[71]

✓ *3. "The Dark Night of the Soul"*

The inability to access wise mind can be experienced as "the dark night of the soul," described by St. John of the Cross in his book of the same name.[72] The dark night of the soul is a metaphor for a depth of loneliness and desolation.

XIV. PRACTICING LOVING KINDNESS (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 8)

Main Point: Anger, hate, hostility, and ill will toward ourselves and others can be very painful. The practice of loving kindness is a form of meditation that involves reciting specific positive words and phrases repeatedly, to cultivate compassion and loving feelings as an antidote to negativity.

Mindfulness Handout 8: Practicing Loving Kindness to Increase Love and Compassion *(Optional).* Although this is an optional handout, it can be very useful in a number of ways. As presented here, loving kindness is a meditation aimed at increasing love and compassion for others. As such, it would also fit well with a number of skills in the Interpersonal Effectiveness module (e.g., see Interpersonal Effectiveness Handout 6). It can also be used as an an opposite action for anger and hate as well as disgust aimed at self and others (see Emotion Regulation Handout 10). Because loving kindness involves some imagery, it can also be used as a skill to improve the moment (see Distress Tolerance Handout 9).

Mindfulness Worksheet 6: Loving Kindness. Review this worksheet with participants. The worksheet gives participants an option to describe two incidents of practicing loving kindness. Remind them that they can describe other times on the back of the page. Instruct participants to check off which individual(s) they send loving kindness to. If they send loving kindness to more than one person while practicing, then they should check more than one person for the practice episode. Remind them to practice on people, including themselves, toward whom they want to increase or continue a sense of loving kindness. The series of warm wishes the participant used should be listed next. Remind participants that they can use the script in Mindfulness Handout 8, or they can make up their own. Review also how to rate loving kindness practice. Note that the ratings are for how effective the participants' practice was in increasing love, compassion, and connection, as well as increasing wisdom and a sense of happiness and personal validity.

A. Loving Kindness: What Is It?

✓ ***1. A Practice of Mentally Sending Warm Wishes***

Say to participants: "Loving kindness is the practice of mentally sending warm wishes to yourself and to others. Loving kindness is very similar to praying for people, except that rather than praying for their welfare, you are wishing for their welfare. Warm wishes can be sent to yourself, to others you know, to people you don't know, and to all beings everywhere. The wishes can be for any positive outcome, such as for happiness, safety, health, contentment, love, and so on."

2. An Ancient Spiritual Meditation Practice

Loving kindness is an ancient spiritual meditation practice developed originally as a Buddhist practice (*metta* meditation), but it is compatible with all spiritual traditions. The aim of the practice is to increase love and compassion for self and others.

3. A Form of Visualization

Tell participants: "Loving kindness can also include visualizing the persons you are sending wishes to—that is, calling up images of them in your mind."

B. Loving Kindness: Why Do It?

1. Ill Will, Hate, and Anger toward Self and Others Can Be Wearing

Strong negative emotions can be corrosive psychologically; they can also have negative physical effects, such as raising blood pressure and increasing risk of heart attacks.[73–75]

2. Loving Kindness Reduces Self-Hate

Hating oneself is extremely painful. Loving kindness focuses on reducing self-hate. Tell participants: "Besides being painful all by themselves, hate, anger, and disgust directed at yourself make it much more difficult to take good care of yourself. Self-hate can lead to an attitude that you don't deserve positive events, soothing, or even your rights to be upheld. In turn, this attitude can complicate depression, increase feelings of inadequacy, and decrease feelings of worth and efficacy."

3. *Ill Will, Hate, and Anger Interfere with Interpersonal Effectiveness*

Say to participants: "It is much more difficult to live, work, and negotiate with persons you have difficult relationships with. Loving kindness can help you improve these relationships."

✓ ### 4. *Daily Loving Kindness Practice Increases Positive Emotions*

Research Point: Data suggest that a daily practice of loving kindness works to increase daily experiences of positive emotions (including love, joy, gratitude, contentment, hope, pride, interest, amusement, and awe), and to decrease negative emotions.[76] The practice of loving kindness increases social connectedness,[77] and mounting research suggests that it has potential as an effective psychological intervention. Neuroimaging studies suggest also that loving kindness practice is associated with increased activation of brain areas involved with emotional processing and empathy. Over time, these positive emotions predict both increased satisfaction with life and reduced depressive symptoms.[78] In addition, daily practice of loving kindness can also increase self-acceptance and improve relationships over time.[79]

Note to Leaders: There is preliminary but potentially significant research indicating that loving kindness meditation may not be as useful for individuals with a high tendency to brooding rumination.[80] These individuals may do better with a mindful focus on breathing.[81] I would suggest encouraging participants to try both and letting them decide which practice is best for them.

✓ C. Loving Kindness: How to Do It

1. *The Core Component: Sending Loving Kindness toward Ourselves and Others*

✓ The content of loving wishes can vary. The script provided in Mindfulness Handout 8 is a common one, but there are also many other versions—for example, "May I live with ease" ("May John live with ease"), "May I be safe and protected" ("May John be safe and protected"), "May I be healthy and whole" ("May all beings be healthy and whole"), "May I be filled with joy" ("May all beings be filled with joy"), and so on. Generally, however, only four or five wishes for each person should be made, as it is hard to remember many others.

✓ ### 2. *Select Wishes That Are Sincere*

Sincerity is a key point. Tell participants: "If your wish is not sincere, from your heart, then it can become like saying a mantra where the words themselves mean very little. Once the words lose meaning, your mind can repeat the words even while you think of other things. So it is important that the wishes have real meaning for you. Don't repeat only one wish over and over. Instead, go through a brief list of meaningful wishes, and then start over."

Discussion Point: Ask participants what positive wishes they would like to make to themselves and others.

✓ ### 3. *Start with Wishes for Self or a Loved One*

Suggest to participants: "Start by practicing only on yourself or only on someone you already love until you understand how to do the practice. The standard way is to start with wishes for yourself, because it is hard to love others when you don't love yourself. Generally, it is easier to go next to a person you love or a friend. Practice repeatedly with one person until you feel a sense of loving kindness and/or compassion, and then move to the next person. Then it can be useful to send wishes to a person you are having difficulties with or are angry at. End with all living beings." Positive results have been found with very brief loving mindfulness practices; lasting changes, however, are more than likely to require a consistent regimen of practice.

Note to Leaders: It is important to remind participants to practice only on people they want to increase love and compassion for.

4. Try to Let Go of Tension or Tightness

Say to participants: "Try to let go of any tension or tightness after each round of wishes, but do not worry if you find it hard to relax. Simply let go as much as possible."

✓ #### *5. If Thoughts or Distractions Intrude, Just Notice Them and Gently Return to the Practice*

Tell participants: "When thoughts take you away from loving kindness, notice it and make a wish for your own happiness, and then continue. Remember that mindfulness practice is not about forcing your mind to stay focused, but rather about noticing when your mind is distracted by thoughts, emotions, sounds, or other sensations, and then gently bringing your mind back. You can say, 'My mind has taken a walk. I think I will come back home to loving kindness.' Let go of judgmental and critical thoughts. Let go of perfectionism."

Note to Leaders: Note that the instructions here are almost identical to previous instructions for observing mindfulness practice.

XV. SKILLFUL MEANS: BALANCING DOING MIND AND BEING MIND (MINDFULNESS HANDOUTS 9–9A)

Main Point: In everyday life, wise living requires us to balance working to achieve goals (on the one hand) with, *at the very same time*, letting go of attachment to achieving goals (on the other hand).

Mindfulness Handout 9: Skillful Means: Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind *(Optional)***; Mindfulness Handout 9a: Ideas for Practicing Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind** *(Optional).* Both of these optional handouts can be particularly useful for participants who have read about or participated in one of the mindfulness-based forms of CBT.[4, 82] The concepts of doing mind and being mind were taken from these approaches. Handout 9 integrates these concepts with that of wise mind. Handout 9a lists practice exercises. The handouts may be particularly useful for individuals who tend toward overdoing. Generally, these handouts are useful with individuals who have already gone through mindfulness training several times.

Mindfulness Worksheet 7: Balancing Being Mind with Doing Mind. Review this worksheet with participants. It is almost identical to Mindfulness Worksheet 3: Wise Mind Practice, but it also lists the practice exercises given in Handout 9a. If you have taught a different practice exercise, ask participants to write that exercise on their worksheet so that they will remember what it is. Review where participants have questions. As on Worksheet 3, for each exercise there are four boxes. Instruct participants to check off one box for every day they practice the indicated exercise. If they practice more than four times in a week, tell them to put extra checkmarks outside the boxes. Review also how to rate wise mind practice, if you have not done so already. Note that the ratings are for how effective their practice was in getting into their own wise mind. These are not ratings of whether or not the practice calmed them down or made them feel better. Also note that at the bottom, the worksheet asks participants to list any and all *wise* things they did during the week.

Mindfulness Worksheet 7a: Mindfulness of Being and Doing Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 8: Mindfulness of Pleasant Events Calendar; Mindfulness Worksheet 9: Mindfulness of Unpleasant Events Calendar. Each of these worksheets is a calendar that asks participants to record their mindfulness practice each day. Review the worksheets you plan to assign to participants. Each worksheet asks participants to attend to the present moment, noticing their sensations, moods, feelings, and

thoughts during their mindfulness practice and also as they are writing their practice down. The calendars focus on mindfulness during frazzled moments (7a), pleasant events (8), and unpleasant events (9).

✓ A. Skillful Means

Each person has the capacity for skillful means. "Skillful means" is a term in Zen; it refers to any effective method that aids a person to experience reality as it is, or, in DBT terms, to enter fully into wise mind.

✓ B. Doing Mind and Being Mind

"Doing mind" and "being mind" are states of mind that in their extremes can get in the way of skillful means and of wise mind. Doing mind focuses on achieving goals; being mind focuses on experiencing. The polarity between them is similar to that between reasonable mind and emotion mind.

✓ C. The Need for Both Doing Mind and Being Mind

Without aspects of both being mind and doing mind, it is difficult if not impossible to lead a balanced life. Once we let go of balance and, instead, live at one extreme or the other, we start seeing reality from that extreme perspective. We become biased, and experiencing reality as it is becomes elusive.

Note to Leaders: The concepts of doing mind and being mind are drawn from the mindfulness-based treatment manuals. For those in skills training who have experienced multiple episodes of major depression, it may be useful to give them information on Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy as an evidence-based treatment for depression and the self-help book based on it.[82] For those with addictions, Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention may be useful, and for those with chronic physical pain, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction may be of value.[3, 4]

✓ D. Doing Mind

✓ *1. Doing Mind Focuses on Achieving Goals and Doing What Is Needed*

Say to clients: "When you are in doing mind, similar to reasonable mind, you view thoughts as facts about the world. You are comparing where you are now to where you want to be in the future. You compare your own behavior and that of others now and in the past to what you want it to be. In its extreme form, doing mind is relentlessly task focused, climbing to the top with ambition. At this extreme, doing mind is driven mind."

Doing mind is necessary for getting work done, for meeting goals, for planning, and for evaluating whether we are living our lives according to our values. Processing incoming information and using the information to help us achieve both immediate and long-range goals is clearly important.

✓ *2. Too Little Doing Mind Can Interfere with Achieving Important Goals*

Deficits in doing activities can be destructive. This is particularly true for those individuals who spend many of their waking moments "zoning out," sleeping, or living lives of leisure or lethargy that ignore their very real needs. Many individuals resort to drugs in order to mobilize themselves to work toward goals. Cocaine, amphetamines, and high levels of caffeine, for example, are used by many to produce an artificial state of doing mind.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Elicit from participants their own experiences of doing mind. Ask how many always feel the need to be doing something; feel guilty if they are not productive; and/or fill their time with activities, activities, activities to keep from having nothing to do.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants addictive behaviors that they cannot stop—that they spend far too much time planning for or doing.

Discussion Point: Ask what artificial means participants have used to produce doing mind. What helps them to produce short-term doing mind naturally when they need it?

3. Too Much Doing Mind Can Become an Automatic Mode of Being

When we spend too much time in doing mind, we start living our lives on automatic pilot. We act out of habit and do not notice when the situation or context has changed and something else is needed. It can be very easy to make both little and big mistakes.

- ***Problems with doing occur when we become addicted to "doing."*** Workaholics are caught in doing mind. They work excessively, caught in always doing something. They feel an intense drive to always be doing something productive and, alas, they do not enjoy work. We could call them "doing-aholics." Perfectionists are also caught in doing mind.
- ***People with any types of addiction are caught in doing mind.*** The addictive activity is so compelling that although the persons may be in the present (forgetting about the long-term harm their addiction is causing), their awareness of the present is rigidly focused on just the one addictive activity. Out of awareness are the wider universe; the people whom they love and who love them; and the responsibilities and promises they are forgetting.
- ***In doing mind, we lose sight of the value of the present moment,*** because we look at the present and the past in terms of how close or far we are from some future goal. We are immersed in activity, losing sight of all else happening around us, like a workaholic who never stops to smell the roses.

E. Being Mind

1. Being Mind Is "Beginners' Mind"

Say to participants: "In being mind, you are open and curious about the moment you are in. Thoughts are viewed as sensations of the mind, arising and falling, coming and going. You are focused on immediate, moment-to-moment experiencing with an open mind; you accept that each moment is as it is. You let go of evaluating the past and the present. There is only 'just this moment.' In its extreme form, being mind focuses on immediate, moment-to-moment experiencing, with no thought of goals or of consequences of current action or absence of action."

2. Too Little Being Mind Can Interfere with Living Life to Its Fullest

- ***Being mind is "nothing-to-do, nowhere-to-go" mind.*** Tell participants: "When there is nothing to do and nowhere to go, being mind is the place to be. Being mind is the path to spacious mind, to awareness or our connection to the entire universe—the floor that touches our feet and the furthest star in the universe. Being mind is like lying in the grass on a warm sunny day, head in your arms, lotion on your body, just feeling the warm sun beating down. Or it is like lying on your back on a cool summer evening, gazing at the sky and watching the stars. It is watching the clouds going by. Or it is simply attending to a touch on the arm or a smile from someone you know."
- ***Being mind is being present to one's life.*** Many people find at some point that they have missed a lot of their own lives. Almost always, this is a very sad realization. It is like having a garden full of beautiful roses but never stopping to smell them. Appreciating life requires experiencing life.
- ***Deficits in being mind can be as destructive as deficits in doing mind.***

Generally, a deficit in being shows up as an excess of doing: Individuals spend many of their waking moments comparing themselves to others, or comparing their progress in life now to what they expected it to be or wanted it to be. Many individuals find these incessant compari-

sons so difficult that they try to escape with drugs. Opiates in particular bring about a state of artificial being mind that provides an escape from the anxiety and shame that doing mind run amuck can sometimes create.

Discussion Point: Elicit from participants their own experiences of being mind. What artificial means have they used to produce being mind? What helps them to produce being mind naturally when they need it?

Discussion Point: Discuss the pros and cons of both types of mind. Draw from participants their experiences of doing mind and of being mind.

✓ ***3. Too Much Being Mind Can Be Indulgent and Self-Centered***

An excess of being mind can be focused on personal experience at the expense of others and their needs, and of what needs to be done in the moment. Say to participants: "When this happens, being mind can be destructive if there is something that needs to be done or somewhere you need to go. Sitting in meditation, lying around on the beach, or watching the clouds go by is all well and good. But it won't do when you are driving somewhere and need to follow a map; when you have a weekly budget and need to plan, buy, and cook meals for the week; when homework needs to be done; or when e-mail needs to be answered."

Example: "Someone who just sits on the couch meditating all day never gets any work done and is stuck in being mind. 'Now, now, now' can interfere with planning for the future for yourself and for those you love and/or are responsible for."

F. Review of Practice Exercises for Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind

Mindfulness Handout 9a lists a number of ideas for bringing being mind into everyday doing mind life. There are also exercises for increasing doing mind when needed. It is important to go over some of these with participants.

XVI. WISE MIND: WALKING THE MIDDLE PATH (MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 10)

Main Point: The "middle path" is a synthesis of extremes. Ordinarily, when we are at an extreme on any continuum, we are in danger of distorting reality.

Mindfulness Handout 10: Walking the Middle Path: Finding the Synthesis between Opposites. This handout can be useful for participants who need to work on balancing the priorities in their lives. It is also compatible with an adolescent skills training module, Walking the Middle Path. Generally, like the previous handout, this handout is useful with individuals who have already gone through mindfulness training one or more times. With individuals for whom the main focus of treatment is on interpersonal relationships, however, Handout 10 can be important in its own right, independent of other mindfulness handouts.

Mindfulness Worksheet 10: Walking the Middle Path to Wise Mind. Note that the worksheet lists several polarities that could be out of balance. The first polarity is emotion mind versus reasonable mind. If you have not reviewed Handout 10, you can still use this worksheet if you wish; you can simply tell participants to work on the first polarity only, or you can very briefly describe what is meant by each polarity without going into too much detail.

Mindfulness Worksheet 10a: Analyzing Yourself on the Middle Path. Review the instructions for each step. At Step 1, instruct participants to think through whether they are out of balance on each of the three polarities. They should put an X in the middle if they are not out of balance, or put an X toward the end where they are most of the time. At Step 2, remind participants that they need to be very specific

in describing what they do that is too much (i.e., too extreme) or too little. This may take a fair amount of coaching and review if you have not already taught the mindfulness skill of describing. Step 3 is very important: What is out of balance for one person may not be out of balance for another. Remind participants that being out of balance means living in a way that knocks them off their center, out of wise mind. At Step 4, be sure participants know how to be very specific when they commit to making changes in the next week. Remind them to be realistic in what they write down. Review also how to rate their practice.

Mindfulness Worksheet 10b: Walking the Middle Path Calendar. This worksheet offers opportunities for recording daily practice in a different format from that of Worksheet 10. It can also be used in conjunction with Worksheet 10a.

✓ A. Wise Mind: The Middle Path between Extremes

In wise mind, we replace "either–or" with "both–and" thinking, in an effort to find a synthesis between positions. Wise mind is all of the following things.

✓ *1. A Synthesis of Reasonable Mind and Emotion Mind*

A person who uses facts and reason alone ignores values and the feelings of others; in essence, this person lets go of empathy in making a decision. This is the person who insists on taking the shortest route on the highway because it is more efficient, ignoring everyone else's desire to enjoy the scenery even if it is not as efficient. A person who is ruled by emotions is mood-dependent, ruled by the current mood. This is the person who refuses to take the scenic route because he or she is angry at everyone else and is not in the mood for being civil.

✓ *2. A Synthesis of Doing Mind and Being Mind*

The middle path combines doing with being. The key here is to do what is needed with awareness. Skillful means is doing what is needed to be effective, while at the same time experiencing fully the uniqueness of each moment in the moment.

The middle path between doing and being has been written about for thousands of years and across many cultures. In 2400 B.C., the Egyptian sage Ptahhotep wrote: "One that reckons accounts all the day passes not a happy moment. One that gladdens his heart all the day provides not for his house. The bowman hits the mark, as the steersman reaches land, by diversity of aim. He that obeys his heart shall command."[83]

This is similar to the proverb "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Some writers have added a second part to this proverb: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; all play and no work makes Jack a mere toy."

✓ *3. A Synthesis of Intense Desire for Change and Radical Acceptance*

The middle path also involves radically accepting the present without suppressing an intense desire for something else. The middle path from this perspective includes simultaneously passionately throwing your entire self into working toward goals, while at the same time letting go of having to achieve your goals.

✓ *4. A Synthesis of Self-Denial and Self-Indulgence*

All of us at times need to deny ourselves something we want. At times, however, indulging ourselves can be good for the soul. The middle path here combines moderation with satisfying the senses, self-care, and pleasant events. The point is that either extreme—self-denial or self-indulgence—can interfere with finding wise mind.

Note to Leaders: When you are making the points above, it can be very useful to draw a balance beam on a whiteboard with each of the polarities written at either end. See Mindfulness Handout 10 for examples. If a whiteboard is not available, give out Handout 10.

✓ **Discussion Point:** Elicit from participants areas where they believe that they are out of balance in their own lives. Discuss these points.

Discussion Point: Balance is not always a 50–50 split. What is out of balance for one person may not be out of balance for another. As noted earlier, being out of balance means a living style that knocks each person off his or her own center, out of his or her own wise mind. Elicit from participants times when something was out of balance for them but not for others. How did that feel?

B. Dialectical Abstinence

In working with people with addictions (to use of alcohol/drugs or to other behavioral patterns), the synthesis of opposites is referred to as "dialectical abstinence." In dialectical abstinence, the person strategically shifts between 100% absolute abstinence "in the moment" (so long as the person refrains from addictive behaviors) and relapse management (should the individual lapse or relapse).

- ***In every moment that the individual is abstinent*** (from drugs or dysfunctional behaviors), every cell in the individual's body is committed fully to absolute abstinence from the addictive behavior. Each move is intended to get the individual further and further down the road away from a life with the addictive behavior, and closer to a life worth living without the behavior.
- ***In every moment after a person has relapsed***, the individual radically accepts the relapse and focuses on getting back up, so to speak; he or she applies all the skills necessary to get back into abstinence.

See Distress Tolerance Handout 17 for more information on dialectical abstinence.

C. Summary of Other Perspectives on Mindfulness Skills

Summarize both core and supplemental mindfulness skills that have been covered.

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