



Mindfulness Meditation

When we become aware and note what is happening inside ourselves we begin to understand the habitual internal dialogues we are constantly having with ourselves. Mindfulness meditation puts us into direct contact with who we are by doing the following:

Slowing down the internal chatter

As we begin to see what is going on in slow motion we begin to see life frame by frame. We can see the imperceptible building blocks of each thought/feeling/impulse.

Providing Choice

It opens a gap of clarity in our experience, a gap between impulse and action, so that we can make choices about whether we want to go down one avenue or another.

Understanding

One of the key components of wisdom is understanding. Knowing how something works allows us to free ourselves from its dominance.

Directions

Find a quiet space wherever you are and become comfortable. Notice your body relaxing. The simple act of noticing already orients you toward mindfulness.

Let yourself become aware of whatever is there. Simply notice it. You will become aware of being pulled in one direction or another. Perhaps you'll feel inclined toward getting more involved with what you are observing, or you may be repelled by what you are observing. You might go blank. Whatever happens, just notice.

The second most helpful skill to practice in mindfulness is to make simple labels about whatever it is you are observing. If a previous conversation arises, simply notice it and gently label it, "talking." Breathe and relax; notice "talking." The old story will probably

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not immediately disappear, especially if you are used to thinking about it, or if there is a heavy emotional charge to the subject. In that case, just keep noticing and labeling. Remember that engrained habits take time to change.

If you are unable to shift out of the intensity of the subject, you may want to try some form of concentration practice (such as metta) in order to give your mind something else to focus on.





Mindfulness Meditation For Trauma Survivors

Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation

- ✦ Builds an observing self
- ✦ Acts as an uncovering technique that reveals unexamined aspects of who you are
- ✦ Allows you to identify and name previously un-nameable thoughts/feelings
- ✦ Decreases identification with what's happening (different from dissociating)
- ✦ Moves you from a sense of chronic vulnerability to one of greater equilibrium
- ✦ Generates relaxation—a feeling of being at rest

Cautions of Mindfulness Meditation

- ✦ Not everyone is ready to use an uncovering technique. Too much may come up too quickly.
- ✦ If too much comes up at once, it can bring on regressive states.

Practice Suggestions

1. Practice only for a short time in the beginning, start with 1-3 minutes. Notice what happens.
2. If it was a helpful experience then practice again either later in the day or the next day. If you feel comfortable with it, increase your time a minute or two when you feel right about it.
3. If the experience was not helpful or restful, and you feel comfortable trying again, wait till the next day.
4. If you don't want to try again, no problem. Next week we'll practice another form of meditation that may work better for you.

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5. Take a mental scan of the state you were in when you tried to practice. Were you calm? Agitated? Nervous? Watchful? Were you in a younger feeling-state? Bring your observations to group next week.
6. Anyone who undertakes a spiritual practice knows how difficult it can be to set one up. There are things that help, though. Try some of these suggestions, and see what works and what doesn't.
 - ✦ Determine which is better for you: Morning or evening?
 - ✦ Set aside distractions: Turn off phone, put cat in another room, etc.
 - ✦ Try reading something inspiring before you start.
 - ✦ If your body is agitated, try going for a short walk, or stretching before you begin.
 - ✦ However you sit, do what you can to keep your body relaxed.





Mindfulness Practice

Throughout the next weeks we will practice watching and naming what goes on inside ourselves. One thing we'll really want to notice is what keeps us from being more aware of that internal process in any given moment.

For instance, when we start to judge and negatively evaluate what is happening, we tend to leave this here and now moment and go to the past. The past moments are full of thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, impulses, from the past when we learned to feel bad or wrong about what was going on. The result is that now we become afraid, negative, and/or judgmental when we come close to anything resembling those experiences. Practicing staying in the here and now helps to keep us grounded and oriented toward where we want to go.

Optional Reading

Chapter 4, *Practicing Mindfulness in Sacred Practices* by Nancy Napier How to Meditate, Kathleen McDonald, 2005

Reflections

Try to notice, with bare attention, when you find yourself being harsh to yourself, criticizing, judging yourself. Some people find it helpful to keep a list of times when you do that.

What was the here and now situation/context in which it occurred?

Mindfulness Practice

Is there anything familiar in what happened? What's familiar may be located in a tone of voice, a gesture, the feeling that comes up inside of you. What there and then moments are the familiar experiences anchored in? Just notice. Practice a non-judgmental observing as much as you can.

