

National Myositis Convention: Orlando September 2012

Mindfulness Meditation for the Management of Chronic Disease.

The purpose of meditation: Is to pay attention, the practice of paying attention, cultivates the ability to observe and focus, which leads to the ability to see more clearly without mind chatter and static to fragment attention and thinking. With Practice the ability to pay attention will create the ability to know one's self. To know oneself is difficult for most, as we are often playing rolls in our life, and act out of preconditioned thoughts and responses that reinforce our ability to always end up in the same place without much evolved progress. Many of us are unaware of how we feel, our feelings mostly blocked or dramatized by the brain. To get to know our feeling body is a powerful skill that enhances personal intimacy.

Meditation is like turning down the volume, on the business of the day, and the busyness of the mind. We often get tied up in regrets or wariness caused by past events, or worries about the future, all of which limit the amount of attention we are free to give the present moment. Meaning we are typically only half here, extending half an effort into our day to day moment to moment life situation. Too often we make lightning fast decisions based our past experience. Which is ok, however, if we want different results then we have achieved in the past, we must consciously slow things down enough to be aware of what we are setting ourselves up for, the same old thing that is not working, again without awareness.

The neural pathways of our decision making are literally burned into our nervous system. In order to get different results in life, health, happiness and ease we must be in the moment consciously, not automatically. Meditation is a training in consciousness, in self awareness, in learning our inner landscape. Meditation is used as a tool in the creation of better health, self management, life-career management or rehab or pain management. It helps you to focus better, listen better, have more body awareness. With practice we can actually develop a dialogue between mind and body. Meditation teaches you that it is ok to not be perfect, to accept as is, your health, and life situation, and with clear seeing, choose to create health happiness and ease, in the next moment.

Meditation helps to cultivate an inner calmness that summons the rest and restoration aspects of our nervous system, to consciously create a stronger immune system, calmer nervous system, better health and a stronger more focused mind. If we have experience with calming the mind and we know how to do it, we can do it any time we choose, we can calm our anger, our disappointment, our flare-ups of dis-ease, our pain. Meditation helps us to become aware of our reactive, and unconsidered actions and emotions. Instead of picking a fight, because it will release our angry energy, we can pause breath, feel the agitation, learn about it but not act out of it. Instead consciously decide what results you would want, then decide how to behave to get what you want. Conscious pro-action begets conscious results v/s the reactive knee jerk, that leaves us with regrets. Meditation promotes calmness, in the face of anxiety and depression. Helps us to be more aware of your values, what's important, helps us to make more enlightened decisions. Meditation can be used in a moment notice to stop, clear, your mind, refresh and relax the breath, re-energize, re-focus, re-center or ground, bring more

compassion towards ourselves, loved ones, and the situation at hand. Meditation with practice cultivates insightfulness, calmness, clearer seeing, conscious deciding, flexibility, more awake, more responsive and vibrant. We can learn to stop needless worry, rumination, fear, regret by calming the mind. Moving forward we can cultivate the ability to choose the mind's language, changing the negative terminology to a more compassionate and decidedly hopeful point of view which, in turn reaps a more positive result.

As the practice of calming and quieting the mind becomes more proficient one becomes skillful at applying the skill to all of life situations, the results are freeing and empowering. When quiet, you can hear and observe the voice within, sometimes paranoid, judgmental, critical, is seldom nice, this voice depresses the mind and body. A meditation practice cultivates enough awareness to catch this inner voice over and over again in self-debasing language that can further distress our health, and well-being. With cultivated awareness this voice can be retrained to act out of self-love VS self-loathing. When we become conscious of how the inner voice abuses us we can retrain it to be supportive and loving like the perfect partner, mother or friend. Loving support feels good in the body. The greater our self-love and appreciation the better functioning our immune system is. When we beat ourselves up, our immune system is not functioning, as the neuro-pathways are being used by neuropeptides and cortisol for protection against the negative emotions and protection from stressors.

Meditation cultivates the ability to feel agitation in the nervous system, to feel energy blocks and feel negative emotions like anger or impatience. Common sense would say that anger or impatience never feel good in the body, in fact if I look at someone who is angry or impatient I can see that they do not feel good. The longer one is unaware of how the unconscious reactions to negative emotion feel and how this feeling can stay with the body and cause a cascade of toxic neuropeptides that agitate the cells of the nervous system as well as upset the digestive system, cause an aching back or pain in the neck, headache etc. It's ok to feel the negative emotion. Consciously deal with emotions in a proactive way then let it go. Avoid rumination, cyclic thinking and storytelling, catastrophizing, and over-dramatizing our negative emotions and imaginations can be the worst thing for our health. If we can't change the situation, let it go now, if it's not an actual fact stop telling the story, if the bad thing is over stop retelling the horrible tale or suffer the consequences it plays with our comfort, peace, ease, health and happiness. Retelling an old story will trigger all the memories as they were, good or bad. If the story is tragic the nervous system will remember, and be triggered into a milder version of the original distress. Giving our attention to old memories, repeats the physiological impact and takes our attention away from the present, having a twofold negative impact.

There are so many types of meditations, the one-minute meditation, the three-minute breathing meditation, walking meditation, standing lying or sitting meditation. A most helpful for healing is the body scan meditation, or any meditation that reconnects you with your body. The best source of further info on the body scan meditation is with the book or audio book "Full Catastrophe Living: by Jon Kabot Zinn. Google his work as well as Google "free guided healing meditations" The selection available for free is impressive and very helpful. Download at will, and use the guided meditations to guide you back when the Myocitis, or life situations zap your energy and good feelings. Use meditation to balance and calm your nervous system which encourages your immune system to function in balance.

The following 4 week meditation module is from www.IMC.org. or the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City California. It is a meditation center near my home. This center has posted nearly 10,000 lectures, meditation classes, and healing programs on line, as audio files that can be downloaded for free. I encourage you to investigate this site and listen to the very valuable applicable and effective teachings...

Mindfulness Meditation (Week 1)

Insight meditation, or Vipassana, is one of the central teachings of the Buddha. It has continued as a living practice for 2500 years. At the heart of insight meditation is the practice of mindfulness, the cultivation of clear, stable and non-judgmental awareness. While mindfulness practice can be highly effective in helping bring calm and clarity to the pressures of daily life, it is also a spiritual path that gradually dissolves the barriers to the full development of our wisdom and compassion.

During the five-week introductory course, the basic instructions in insight meditation are given sequentially, each week building on the previous one. The first week focuses on the basics of meditation and on mindfulness of breathing. The second week discusses mindfulness of the body and expands the area of attention to include all our physical experiences. The third week introduces mindfulness of emotions. The fourth week addresses mindfulness of the mind and thinking. The fifth week focuses on the role of mindfulness in daily life and in deepening one's spiritual life.

Insight meditation is nothing more mysterious than developing our ability to pay attention to our immediate experience. We are often pre-occupied with thoughts about the past or the future or with fantasies. While sometimes such pre-occupations may be innocent and harmless, more often they contribute to stress, fear and suffering. Mindfulness practice is learning how to overcome pre-occupation so that we can see clearly what is happening in our lived experience of the present. In doing so, we find greater clarity, trust, and integrity. Mindfulness relies on an important characteristic of awareness: awareness by itself does not judge, resist, or cling to anything. By focusing on simply being aware, we learn to disentangle ourselves from our habitual reactions and begin to have a friendlier and more compassionate relationship with our experience, with ourselves and with others.

Mindfulness is the practice of being attentively present. It is called a practice in the same way that we say that people practice the piano. Being attentive is a skill that grows with practice. It develops best if we set aside any self-conscious judgments or expectations of how our meditation is developing. The practice is simply to relax and bring forth an awareness of what is happening in the present.

In order both to develop the skill and experience the joys of non-reactive presence, a daily meditation practice is helpful.

Mindfulness of Breathing

Insight Meditation usually begins with awareness of breathing. This is an awareness practice, not an exercise in breathing; there is no need to adjust the breathing in any way. We simply attend to the breath, getting to know it as it is: shallow or deep, long or short, slow or fast, smooth or rough, coarse or refined, constricted or loose. When we get distracted by thoughts or emotions, we simply return to the physical sensations of the breath.

Because of the mind's tendency to be scattered and easily distracted, we use the breath as a kind of anchor to the present. When we rest in the breath, we are countering the strong forces of distraction. We train the mind, heart, and body to become settled and unified on one thing, at one place, at one time. If you are sitting in meditation and your mind is on what you did at work today,

then your mind and body are not in the same place at the same time. Fragmented this way, we all too easily lose touch with a holistic sense of ourselves.

Mindfulness of breathing is a powerful ally in our lives. With steady awareness of our inhalations and exhalations, the breath can become an equanimous constant through the ups and downs of our daily life. Resting with, even enjoying, the cycles of breathing, we are less likely to be caught up in the emotional and mental events that pass through us. Repeatedly returning to the breath can be a highly effective training in letting go of the identification and holding which freeze the mind and heart. It also develops concentration.

Mindfulness Exercises for the First Week

You will get the most benefit from this course if you engage yourself with the practice during the week between our class meetings. During the first week please try the following three practices:

1. Sit one twenty-minute session of meditation each day. For this first week, focus on staying aware of your breath as described in the next section of the handout. Begin and end each sitting with, a minute of conscious reflection: At the start, clearly remind yourself that you are about to devote yourself to being mindful and present. Consciously let go of any concerns, remembering that you will have plenty of time to take them up again later. At the end, reflect on what happened during your meditation session. There is no need to judge what happened; you just want to strengthen your mindfulness through a brief exercise in recollection.
2. Choose one routine physical activity that you perform most days and experiment with doing it mindfully. This means doing just this one activity while you are doing the exercise - not listening to the radio at the same time, for example. It is also best to let go of any concern about the results or in finishing quickly. Remain in the present as best you can. When the mind wanders, simply come back to the activity. Activities you might choose include brushing your teeth, washing the dishes, or some routine act of driving or walking.
3. For one half-hour period during the week, maintain some regular attention of your posture as you go about with some normal activity. Without straining, assume a posture that is alert and upright. Notice what happens to your mood, thoughts, feelings, presence, and degree of mindfulness as you do this exercise.

Meditation Instruction: Mindfulness Of Breathing

Sit in a comfortable but alert posture. Gently close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths, and, as you exhale, settle into your body, relaxing any obvious tension or holding. Then, breathing normally, bring your awareness to your body, sensing for a short while how the body presents itself to you. There is no particular way to be; just notice how you are at this moment.

Then, from within the body, as part of the body, become aware of your breathing, however it happens to appear. There is no right or wrong way to breathe while doing mindfulness practice; the key is to simply notice how it actually is right now. Let the breath breathe itself, allowing it to be received in awareness. Notice where in your body you feel the breath most clearly. This may be the abdomen rising and falling, the chest expanding and contracting, or the tactile sensations of the air passing through the nostrils or over the upper lip. Wherever the breath tends to appear most clearly, allow that area to be the home, the center of your attention.

Keep your attention connected with the inhalations and exhalations, sensing the physical sensations that characterize them. Let go of the surface concerns of the mind. Whenever the mind wanders away, gently come back to the breath. There is no need to judge the wandering mind; when you notice that the mind has wandered, simply return to the breath without evaluation.

To help maintain contact between awareness and the breath, you may use a label or mental note. Softly, like a whisper in the mind, label the in-breath and out-breath, encouraging the awareness to

stay present with the breath. You can label the inhalations and exhalations as "in" and "out," or perhaps use "rising" and "falling" for the movement of the abdomen or the chest. Don't worry about finding the right word, just use something that will help you stay connected.

There is no need to force the attention on the breath; to strengthen your ability to become mindful and present, use the gentle power of repeatedly, non judgmentally returning and resting with the breath.

Mindfulness Meditation (Week 2)

Mindfulness of breathing is a wonderful beginning to cultivating awareness. It strengthens our ability to concentrate and steadies the attention on our present moment experience. It also weakens our tendency to get lost in reactive emotions and mental preoccupations. With time, attention to the breath helps us to develop a clear, non-reactive awareness that can then be turned to the full range of our human experience. As mindfulness develops, we begin to bring this awareness to other areas of our lives.

Mindfulness is an embodied practice. By practicing mindfulness, we learn to live in and through our bodies. Learning to be mindful of bodily experiences is one of the most useful aspects of mindfulness. It is much easier have a balanced, healthy awareness of the rest of our lives when we are in touch with our immediate physical experience.

During this week we expand the practice to include the body. Many people ignore their bodies. The busier a person's life, the easier it is to discount the importance of staying in touch with how the body feels. Many people may be attentive to their body, but it is from the outside in; that is, they are concerned about body image and appearance. Mindfulness of the body is attention from the inside out. We notice what the body is feeling, in and of itself. We give a generous amount of time to be with the felt sense of the body. Not only does this help the body relax, remaining mindful of the body is a safeguard from getting wound up with mental preoccupations.

Benefits of Mindfulness of the Body

Mindfulness of the body has several benefits. First, cultivating mindfulness of the body increases our familiarity with our bodies and with how the body responds to our inner and outer lives, to our thoughts and emotions, and to events around us. The Buddha saw the human mind and body as unified. When we suppress or ignore aspects of our emotional, cognitive, and volitional lives, we tend also to disconnect from the body, from the physical manifestations of our experience. Conversely, when we distance ourselves from our physical experience, we lose touch with our inner life of emotions and thoughts. The awakening of the body from within that comes with mindfulness can help us to discover, not only our repressed emotions, but also, more importantly, a greater capacity to respond to the world with healthy emotions and motivations.

Second, in cultivating mindfulness we are developing non-reactivity, including the ability to be present for our experience without turning away, habitually seeking or resisting change, or clinging to pleasant and avoiding unpleasant experience. All too often, our automatic desires, aversions, preferences, and judgments interfere with our ability to know what is actually happening. Learning to not respond automatically and unconsciously makes possible a deeper understanding of the present moment and our reaction to it, and gives us more freedom to choose our response. Being non-reactively present for our physical experience goes a long way in learning to do so with the rest of our lives.

Last, but not least, mindfulness of physical sensations helps us both to relax tension and to understand its causes.

Mindfulness Exercises for the Second Week

1. Continue your daily twenty-minute meditation session.
2. In the midst of your regular activities, devote two one-hour periods during the week to being mindful of your body. During this time, perhaps using a timer or some other cue to remind yourself, periodically check in with your body, maybe every five minutes or so. Notice, in particular, your shoulders, stomach, face, and hands. If you find tension in any of these places, relax.
3. Devote one meal to eating slowly and mindfully, paying attention to the tastes, textures, temperature, and other qualities of your food, and to the experience of your body eating. (When does your body tell you that have had enough?) If possible, take the meal in silence, with no other activities to distract you. You might want to put down your spoon or fork between bites. Whenever your mind wanders, or whenever you get caught up in reactions to what is happening, relax and come back to the simplicity of eating mindfully.
4. Start noticing when, how and by what, your attention becomes distracted or fragmented. Are there any common themes or patterns in the kinds of thoughts, feelings, activities, or pre-occupations where your mindfulness disappears? If you discover any, discuss what you find with somebody: a friend, relative, or colleague

Meditation Instruction: Mindfulness of the Body

During meditation, center your awareness primarily on the physical sensations of breathing. With dedication, but without strain, keep the breath in the foreground of attention. The idea is to be relaxed and receptive while alert and attentive. As long as other experiences such as bodily sensations, sounds, thoughts, or feelings are in the background of your awareness, allow them to remain there while you rest your attention with the sensations of breathing.

When a strong physical sensation makes it difficult for you to stay with the breath, simply switch your awareness to this new predominant experience. The art of mindfulness is recognizing what is predominant and then sustaining an intimate mindfulness on whatever that is. When the mind wanders and you lose the mindful connection with the sensation, gently and without judgment return your attention to the physical sensation.

As if your entire body was a sensing organ, sense or feel the physical experience. Simply allow it to be there. Drop whatever commentary or evaluations you may have about the experience in favor of seeing and sensing the experience directly in and of itself. Carefully explore the particular sensations that make it up - hardness or softness, warmth or coolness, tingling, tenseness, pressure, burning, throbbing, lightness, and so on. Let your awareness become as intimate with the experience as you can. Notice what happens to the sensations as you are mindful of them. Do they become stronger or weaker, larger or smaller, or do they stay the same?

As an aid to both acknowledging the physical experience and sustaining your focus, you can ever so softly label the experience. The labeling is a gentle, ongoing whisper in the mind that keeps the attention steady on the object of mindfulness. You should primarily sense directly the experience and what happens to it as you are present for it.

Be alert for when the focus of your attention moves from the physical sensations to your reactions to the sensations and your thoughts about them. If this happens move your attention back to the felt-sense of the sensations. Try to keep yourself independent of whatever thoughts and reactions you have. Relax.

Once a physical sensation has disappeared or is no longer compelling, you can return to mindfulness of breathing until some other sensation calls your attention.

Mindfulness Meditation (Week 3)

In mindfulness practice we keep our attention on the breath, unless some other experience is so strong as to pull us away from the breath; then we turn our attention to that other experience. One kind of experience that can pull us away is physical sensations, which we talked about last week; another is emotions.

No emotion is inappropriate within the field of mindfulness practice. We are not trying to avoid emotions, or to have some kinds of emotions and not others. We are trying to allow them to exist as they arise, without the additional complications of judgment, evaluation, preferences, aversion, desires, clinging, resistance or other reactions.

The Buddha once asked, "If a person is struck by an arrow, is that painful?" Yes. The Buddha then asked, "If the person is struck by a second arrow, is that even more painful?" Of course. He went on to say, that as long as we are alive, we can expect painful experiences - the first arrow. Often the significant suffering associated with an emotion is not the emotion itself, but the way we relate to it. If we condemn, judge, hate, or deny the first arrow, that is like being struck by a second arrow. The second arrow is optional, and mindfulness helps us avoid it.

An important part of mindfulness practice is investigating our relationships to our emotions. Do we cling to them? Do we hate them? Are we ashamed of them? Do we tense around them? Are we afraid of how we are feeling? Do we measure our self-worth by the presence or absence of an emotion? Can we simply leave an emotion alone?

Mindfulness itself does not condemn or condone any particular emotional reaction. Rather, it is the practice of honestly being aware of what happens to us and how we react to it. The more aware and familiar we are with our reactions, the easier it will be to have, for example, uncomplicated grief or straightforward joy, not mixed up with the second arrows of guilt, anger, remorse, embarrassment, or judgement. Emotional maturity comes, not from the absence of emotions, but from seeing them clearly.

Mindfulness helps us to be as we are without further complications. If we can be accepting of ourselves in this way, then it is much easier to know how to respond appropriately with choice rather than habit.

How To Attend Emotions

Generally, during meditation, keep yourself centered on the breath. If there are emotions in the background, leave them there; keep the breath in the foreground of awareness as if it were the fulcrum for your experience.

When an emotion becomes compelling enough to make it difficult to stay with the breath, then bring it into the focus of meditative awareness.

There are four aspects to the mindfulness of emotions. You don't have to practice all four each time you focus on an emotion. At different times, each is appropriate. Experiment to see how each can help in developing a non-reactive attention to emotions. The four are:

Recognition: A basic principle of mindfulness is that you cannot experience freedom and spaciousness unless you recognize what is happening. The more you learn to recognize the range of your emotions, including the most subtle, the more you will become familiar and comfortable with them, and the less you will be in their thrall.

Naming: A steady and relaxed labeling of the emotion of the moment, e.g., "joy," "anger," "frustration," "happiness," "boredom," "contentment," "desire," and the like, encourages us to stay present with what is central in our experience. Naming can also help us become calm and less

entangled with the emotion, less identified with it or reactive to its presence.

Acceptance: This does not mean condoning or justifying certain feelings. It means simply allowing emotions to be present, whatever they may be. Many people frequently judge and censure their feelings. Formal meditation practice offers us the extraordinary opportunity to practice unconditional acceptance of our emotions. This does not mean expressing emotion, but letting emotions move through you without any inhibitions, resistance, or encouragement.

Investigation: This entails dropping any fixed ideas we have about an emotion and looking at it afresh. Emotions are composite events, made up of bodily sensations, thoughts, feelings, motivations, and attitudes. Investigation is not analysis, but more a sensory awareness exercise of feeling our way into the present moment experience of the emotions. It is particularly useful to investigate the bodily sensations of an emotion, letting the body be the container for the emotion,. In a sense, the body is a bigger container than the thinking mind which is easily exhausted, and which tends to spin off into stories, analysis, and attempts to fix the situation - away from acceptance of the present moment experience.

Mindfulness Exercises for the Third Week

1. Lengthen your daily meditation session to 25 minutes. When you first sit down, notice the main concerns, feelings, physical sensations that may be pre-occupying you. Acknowledge them and remain attentive to any tendency to become lost in your thoughts concerning these experiences. Meditation proceeds easiest when we are willing to suspend - for the duration of the meditation - the need to think about anything.
2. At least once during the week "ride out an emotion." Sometime during the week when you are feeling a strong desire, aversion, fear, or other emotion, don't act on the feeling. Rather, bring your mindfulness to the feeling and observe the changes it undergoes while you are watching it. You might choose to sit, stand or walk around quietly while you do this study. Things to notice are the various body sensations and tensions, the changes in the feeling's intensity, the various attitudes and beliefs that you have concerning the presence of the emotion, and perhaps any more primary emotion triggering the feeling. If after a time the emotion goes away, spend some time noticing what its absence feels like.
3. Spend part of a day making a concentrated effort to notice feelings of happiness, contentment, well-being, joy, pleasure, and ease. Even if your day is primarily characterized by the opposite of these, see if you can identify even subtle and seemingly insignificant moments of these positive states. It can be as simple as appreciating the texture of a doorknob or a flash of ease in your eyes as you notice the blue sky after the fog has burned off. This is not an exercise for manufacturing positive states but rather discovering that these may be much more a part of your life than your preoccupations allow you to notice.
4. Spend part of another day noticing which feelings tend to pull you into a state of preoccupation. Sometimes there are patterns in the kinds of feelings that lead to becoming lost in thoughts. Common sources for distraction are desire, aversion, restlessness, fear, and doubt. Are any of these more common for you than the others? What is your relationship to these feelings when they appear? As you notice the patterns, does that change how easily you get pulled into their orbit? By clearly noticing their presence, can you overcome any of the ways in which these interfere with, or inhibit, whatever activities you need to do?

Mindfulness Meditation (Week 4)

Sometimes people think that the point of meditation is to stop thinking -- to have a silent mind. This

does happen occasionally, but it is not necessarily the point of meditation. Thoughts are an important part of life, and mindfulness practice is not supposed to be a struggle against them. It's more useful to be friends with our thoughts than thinking them unfortunate distractions. In mindfulness, we are not stopping thoughts as much as overcoming any preoccupation we have with them.

Mindfulness is not thinking about things. (It is not "meditating on" some topic, as people often say.) It is a non-discursive observation of our life in all its aspects. In those moments when thinking predominates, mindfulness is the clear and silent awareness that we are thinking. I found it helpful and relaxing when someone said, "For the purpose of meditation, nothing is particularly worth thinking about." Thoughts can come and go as they wish, and the meditators does not need to become involved with them. We are not interested in engaging in the content of our thoughts; mindfulness of thinking is simply recognizing we are thinking.

In meditation, when thoughts are subtle and in the background, or when random thoughts pull you away from awareness of the present, it is enough to resume mindfulness of breathing. However, when your preoccupation with thoughts is stronger than your ability to easily let go of them, then direct your mindfulness to being clearly aware that thinking is occurring.

Strong bouts of thinking are fuelled largely by identification and preoccupation with thoughts. By clearly observing our thinking, we step outside the field of identification. Thinking will usually then soften to a calm and unobtrusive stream.

Sometimes thinking can be strong and compulsive even while we are aware of it. When this happens, it can be useful to notice how such thinking is affecting your body, physically and energetically. It may cause pressure in the head, tension in the forehead, tightness of the shoulders, or a buzzing as if the head were filled with thousands of bumblebees. Let your mindfulness feel the sensations of tightness, pressure, or whatever you discover. It is easy to be caught up in the story of these preoccupying thoughts, but if you feel the physical sensation of thinking, then you are bringing attention to the present moment rather than the story line of the thoughts.

When a particular theme keeps reappearing in our thinking, it is likely that it is being triggered by a strong emotion. In that case, no matter how many times you recognize a repeated thought or concern, come back to the breath. If the associated emotion isn't recognized, the concern is liable to keep reappearing. For example, people who plan a lot, often find that planning thoughts arise out of apprehension. If they do not acknowledge the fear, the fear will be a factory of new planning thoughts. If there is a repetitive thought pattern, see if you can discover an emotion associated with it, and then practice mindfulness of the emotion. Ground yourself in the present moment in the emotion itself. When you acknowledge the emotion, often it will cease generating those particular thoughts.

Thoughts are a huge part of our lives. Many of us spend much time inhabiting the cognitive world of stories and ideas. Mindfulness practice won't stop the thinking, but it will help prevent us from compulsively following thoughts that have appeared. This will help us become more balanced, so our physical, emotional and cognitive sides all work together as a whole.

Mindfulness Exercises for the Fourth Week

1. For the remaining two weeks of this class, extend your daily meditation session to 30 minutes. For at least the first ten minutes, keep your meditation simple -- focus on the breath. To the best of your ability, when some other experience gets in the way of being with the breath, simply let it go and come back to the breath. After this ten-minute warm-up period, switch to more open mindfulness. This means continuing with the breath until something else

becomes more compelling. When physical sensations, emotions or thinking predominate, let go of the breath and focus your meditative awareness on these. When nothing else is compelling, come back to the breathing.

2. Spend some time reflecting on the assumptions, attitudes and beliefs you have about your thoughts. Do you usually assume that they are either true false, right or wrong? Do you identify with your thoughts? That is, do you think that what you think defines who you are? Do you believe that your thinking will solve your problems or that it is the only means to understand something? After you have reflected on this on your own, have a conversation with someone about what you have discovered.

3. Once during the next week, spend a two-hour period tracking the kinds of things you think about. Find some way to remind yourself every few minutes to notice what you are thinking. Are the thoughts primarily self-referential or primarily about others? Do they tend to be critical or judgmental? What is the frequency of thoughts of "should" or "ought"? Are the thoughts mostly directed to the future, to the past, or toward fantasy? Do you tend more toward optimistic thoughts or pessimistic ones? Do your thoughts tend to be apprehensive or peaceful? Contented or dissatisfied? This is not an exercise in judging what you notice, but in simply noticing. Most people live in their thoughts. This is a two-hour exercise in regularly and frequently stepping outside of the thought-stream to take up residence, albeit briefly, in a mindful awareness that is bigger than the thinking mind.

4. Once during the next week, spend a two-hour period giving particular attention to your intentions. Before we speak or act there is always an impulse of motivation or intention. Notice the various kinds of desires and aversions that fuel your intentions. For this exercise, you might choose a period where you can go about some ordinary activity in a quiet and mostly undisturbed way. You might even slow your activities down some so that you are more likely to notice and evaluate your motivations.

Sources for the information in this work shop are

1. **www.IMC.org** or the insight meditation center in redwood city, hundreds of mp3 lectures are available on line for free.
2. **MBSR:** Mindfulness Bases Stress Reduction is a medically bases mindfulness training program run out of hundreds of USA hospitals and community centers. The program originates in buddism, and has been adapted for the application and treatment of pain, chronic disease, depression and suffering. See the Book "the Full Catastrophe by Jon Kabat-Zinn Ph.D. There are also a number of Audio books available to guides ones progress. Also look for the MBSR program in your area.

Thank You for coming to this Workshop, do contact me if you have any questions, I am happy to help.

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