



WEEK EIGHT



Mindfulness

Acceptance & Change

Looking Back, Looking forward

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” ~ Frankl

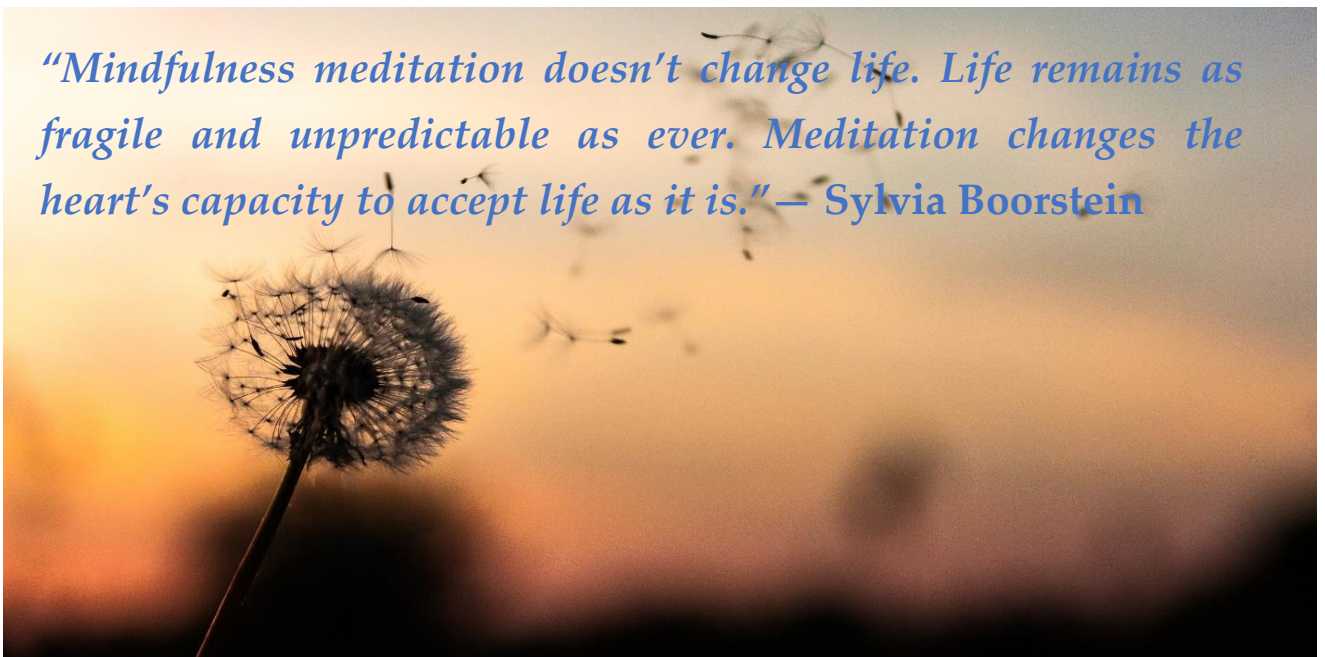
Week 8: Acceptance & Change

Over these 8 weeks changes inevitable have occurred. These changes may not be monumental or what you expected. Some may be subtle shifts – it's the small things that count like~ noticing that at times you are able now to find space in a busy day or perhaps you are a little more aware and mindful of your communication with others even kinder to yourself in difficult situations. Often it is the little subtle shifts that can prove the most profound as they indicate learning has been integrated, that they come from the *inside-out* rather than *top-down*.



A key theme of this courses approach has been the invitation of discovering for yourself whilst experiencing meditative practices, alternate ways of responding to life -ones that are not re-active, were we are not slavishly carried along in automatic pilot. We have also discovered that the first step in achieving this is to **acknowledge, accept and be open** to what is happening right now.

“Mindfulness meditation doesn't change life. Life remains as fragile and unpredictable as ever. Meditation changes the heart's capacity to accept life as it is.” – Sylvia Boorstein



Change & Acceptance

The advantage of awareness, acceptance and mindfully **responding** to situations rather than immediately running off pre-programmed 'automatic' **reactions** has been a recurring theme throughout this course. Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skilful action directed at achieving change in the inner and outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that may be very difficult, or impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that by carrying on trying to solve an

insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up ‘banging one’s head on a brick wall’, exhausting oneself and increasing one’s sense of helplessness. In these situations – **you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it –**

“Give me, the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference” ~ Reinhold Niebhr .

Going Forward- The Future (Decide what your routine pattern of practice will be over the net while & stick to it as best as you are able. Remember the breathing space can provide a way of ‘checking in with yourself’ throughout your day. Decide on a date when you will review what practices you are doing –Some suggestion may be:

Formal Mindfulness Practice

1. Remember to bring the 3-step Breathing Space into your daily routine.
2. Keep up the momentum and the commitment to your daily mindfulness practices (Alternating between mindful movement, sitting practice & body scan).
3. Keep using the CDs/downloads until you feel ready to practice using your own guidance.
4. Why not plan your own “Day of Mindfulness?”

Informal Mindfulness Practice

5. Remember to BREATHE
6. When you can, SLOW DOWN
7. When you must proceed quickly, then be mindful of the intention to move quickly, and of going fast
8. Re-visit the informal practice assignments from time to time; mindfulness of routine activities
9. Eat a meal mindfully once or twice a week
10. Appreciate the preciousness of each moment

Daily Mindfulness

- When you first wake up in the morning before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths, letting the breath "do itself."
- Notice your body posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths.
- When you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while walking or standing. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing to get to the next moment? Even when you are in a hurry, be aware of the hurrying.
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without having to agree or disagree, fall into liking or disliking, or planning what to say when it's your turn? Can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating it? Can you notice how your mind and body feel? Can you notice what is conveyed by your tone of voice? Is your speaking an improvement on silence?
- When you find yourself waiting in line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rising and falling of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them, and as you exhale, let go of any excess tension. Be aware of any tension stored in your body. Is there tension in your neck, your shoulders, your stomach, jaw, or in your lower back? Focus attention on your daily activities - such as brushing your teeth, brushing your hair, washing up, or putting on your shoes. Bring attention to each activity.
- Before you go asleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing for at least five full breaths.

Ref: Williams M., Teasdale J., Segal Z., Zinn J.K. 2007


Use Your Umbrella

A young woman, studying in India, undertook to develop love, kindness, and goodwill through her meditation practice. Sitting in her small room, she would fill her heart with loving – kindness for all beings. Yet each day, as she went to the bazaar to gather her food, she would find her loving – kindness sorely tested by one shopkeeper who would daily subject her to unwelcome caresses.

One day she could stand no more and began to chase the shopkeeper down the road with her upraised umbrella. To her mortification she passed her teacher standing on the side of the road observing this spectacle. Shame-faced she went to stand before him, expecting to be rebuked for her anger.

“What you should do,” her teacher kindly advised her, “is to fill your heart with loving kindness, and with as much mindfulness as you can muster, hit this unruly fellow over the head with your umbrella.”

Sometimes that is what we need to do! It would be easy enough to hit the man over the head with the umbrella. The difficult part is to do it with all the loving kindness in our heart. That is our real practice.

 Adapted from Christina Feldman & Jack Kornfield: *Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart*.

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