



WEEK ONE

WAKING UP to AUTOMATIC PILOT

“Mindfulness is a quality of Human consciousness characterized by an accepting awareness of and enhanced attention to the constant stream of lived experiences. Being Mindful increases engagement with the present moment and allows for a clearer understanding of how thoughts and emotions can impact our health and quality of life.”

~ (Mindfulness Research Centre, 2009)



SESSION ONE: AUTOMATIC PILOT

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

more likely to have our “*buttons pressed!*” Image: balancedwisdom.com

Events around us and thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the mind (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old/conditioned habits of thinking that are unhelpful, and lead to stress or worsening mood! By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of *greater freedom and choice*; we do not have to go down the same old “*mental ruts*” that may have caused problems in the past. The aim of this program is to increase awareness, so that we *can respond to situations with choice rather than react automatically*. We do that by practicing becoming more aware of where our attention is, and deliberately changing the focus of attention. Why challenge the Automatic Pilot mode?

“The present is the only time that any of us has to be alive – to know anything – to perceive – to learn – to act – to change –to heal” ~ (Jon Kabat –Zinn)

Raisin(g) Awareness: Stepping out of Autopilot

To begin with, we purposefully placed attention to eating the raisin- this helped us explore how to step out of our conditioned responses or automatic pilot. A participant once called this exercise ‘Raisin(g) Awareness’ firmly grasping the intention behind this unusual activity.

The Body Scan



We then consciously place our attention to different parts of the body, using each part of the body as a focus to anchor our awareness in the moment. We train ourselves to place our attention and awareness in different places at will, thus enabling us to enter more deeply into our present experience. The process of entering more deeply into our current experience is the aim of the Body Scan exercise, which forms the main home

practice exercise for next week. Image: Mindfulnessatwork.ie



Kabat-Zinn's Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness

“Meditation practice isn't about trying to throw ourselves away & become something better. It's about befriending who we are already.” (We Can Still Be Crazy, Pema Chodron)

Since mindfulness involves paying attention, without judgment, to whatever is happening, it is different from everyday doing – it is about “non-doing,” about learning to “be” instead of “do.”

Mindfulness is about truly coming home to your experience and allowing whatever is happening to happen, bringing clear and compassionate awareness to it as it happens. The paradox of meditation is that the best way to achieve your goal is to let go of striving and instead, focus carefully on seeing and accepting things as they are, moment to moment. This is challenging for many, as through cultural conditioning we have developed attitudes of blame, judgement, impatience, intolerance, unkindness. It can be upsetting when we first begin to recognise these attitudes within ourselves. They only become obvious when we begin to purposefully pay attention to our inner mental landscape. This internal chatter/self-talk which often tends to be self-critical and critical of others! To counteract these harsh habits of mind we deliberately cultivate mindfulness attitudes.

Mindfulness Attitudes are alike an antidote to these biased ingrained attitudes. It is important to remember that Mindfulness does not mean we suppress our feelings- rather that we become aware of them as they arise and treat them with friendliness. Thus, we can own our feelings, rather than acting them out! The Mindfulness Attitudes we are now bringing to our Practices are those same attitudes we often willingly show to those we love- yet now we are learning to ‘befriend’ ourselves:

- 1. Non-Judgment:** Noticing the stream of a Judging mind- taking the stance of impartial witness to your own experience. It means that we approach situations with openness- “It is a subtle sense of caring that has its roots in non-judgment and flowers into an affectionate, compassionate quality, a sense of openhearted, friendly presence & interest” (Kabat-Zinn)
- 2. Patience:** Letting things unfold in their own time.
- 3. Beginners Mind:** Receptive to possibilities- Setting aside assumptions with a sense of exploration & curiosity: Seeing afresh as though for the first-time
- 4. Trust:** In YOURSELF- in your own intuition & authority. Making mistakes encourages learning whilst trusting & honouring your feelings means taking responsibility for your own well-being.

5. **Non-Striving:** Paradoxically, Mindfulness is no special state of being to be reached, meditation has no goal except inviting you to be yourself- So, the best way to achieve your goals is to back off from striving!
 6. **Acceptance/allowing:** This is not a passive resignation rather it is a willingness to see things as they are. We often waste energy & time denying what is factual. Forcing situations into the way we want them to be. This cultivates tension, stress and discontent and ultimately hinders positive change.
 7. **Letting Go/Be:** Not easy to embody but it is a way of accepting change. Allowing thoughts, feelings & experience to arise & pass away. Often the mind can have a strong hold - it can help to direct attention to what this 'holding' feels like in the body, using the breath or posture as an anchor.
- **Compassion & Kindness:** Cultivating patience, non-judgement & non-striving requires bringing kindness to the self. Compassion towards ourselves can have a very healing effect enabling us to extend compassion towards others.
 - **Generosity & Gratitude:** Befriending who you are!



“Loving-Kindness towards ourselves doesn’t mean getting rid of anything. It means that we can still be crazy, we can still be angry. We can still be timid or jealous or full of feelings of unworthiness...The ground of practice is you...that’s what we come to know with tremendous curiosity & interest.” (Pema Chodron)

Body Scan Practice- Tips

In the body scan we are exploring and developing a friendly interest in our body and sensations as well as our thoughts and feelings. It is about growing into an intimacy with and acceptance of ourselves. *So, everything that comes up during the body scan, i.e. restlessness, boredom, irritation, joy, relaxation, are all our valuable teachers!* So, even if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things, keep focusing on the wrong bit of body, don't feel anything... these are your experiences in the moment, just be aware of them. As we pay attention, we notice what is arising and we allow whatever arises to be there, with an attitude of openness, curiosity and acceptance.

Mind Wandering- Multiple times, the mind will wander away, following trains of thought into past and future. *This is not a mistake.* Each time you notice that this has happened is a moment of presence, of waking up, of mindfulness. So, just note where your mind has gone to, noting the thoughts as passing events and then bring the mind gently back to the body scan. You may become frustrated as you realise how unruly the mind is! So- See if you can bring *patience and kindness* to yourself and to the frustration in these moments.

Difficult Sensations may arise so you can *use the anchor of the breath*, or in the weight of the body in contact with the earth to steady yourself. If you wish, you can gently turn towards the difficult sensations and if difficult thoughts or feelings arise we recognise that when we are caught up in thoughts we are not present- not in the body at this moment, and so we gently either return to the guidance or to your chosen anchor, (attending to the breath, or the weight of the body). We might notice how difficult thoughts or feelings can be reflected in areas of tightness or discomfort in the body. If you wish, you can gently “lean into” these areas, breathing into them or around them, exploring the physical sensations that are here. Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: "OK, that's just the way things are right now". If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, the upsetting feelings will only distract you from doing anything else. As best you can, be aware, be non-striving, be in the moment, accept things as they are –

This is not a forceful practice. We are cultivating gentleness and patience as we are developing awareness of our body and our experience.

Coconut

Bear with me I
want to tell you
something about
happiness
it's hard to get at
but the thing is
I wasn't looking
I was looking
somewhere else
when my son found it
in the fruit section
and came running
holding it out
in his small hands
asking me what
it was and could we
keep it it only
cost 99 cents
hairy and brown
hard as a rock
and something swishing
around inside
and what on earth
and where on earth

and this was happiness
this little ball
of interest beating
inside his chest
this interestedness
beaming out
from his face pleading
happiness
and because I wasn't
happy I said

to put it back
because I didn't want it
because we didn't need it
and because he was happy
he started to cry
right there in aisle
five so when we
got it home we
put it in the middle
of the kitchen table
and sat on either
side of it and began
to consider how
to get inside of it

By Paul Hostovsky

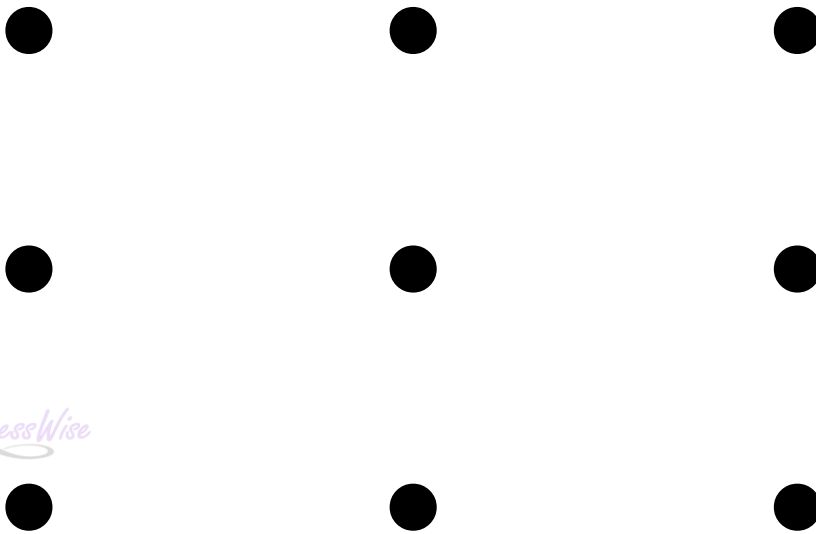
Week 1: HOME PRACTICE

1. Practice the Body Scan everyday with the CD.
2. Complete the nine-dot exercise for the next class (notice any responses you have while doing it)
3. Eat one meal as part of a mindfulness exercise. Or you may choose to eat the first 5 minutes
of every meal as a mindfulness exercise.
4. Choose one ROUTINE ACTIVITY in your daily life & make a deliberate decision to bring moment-to-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it i.e. (waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering etc.). Simply zero in on knowing what you are doing as you are doing it.



Nine Dots Exercise

Instructions: Placing your pencil on the page only once, draw four straight lines that pass through all of the dots without lifting your pencil from the page.



Home Practice Record—Session 1

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

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

(From Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2013). Copyright by The Guilford Press.)