

# Course Handbook

## **-MBSR-**

### Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Mindfulness is about being fully awake in our lives. It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness of each moment. We feel more alive. We also gain immediate access to our own powerful inner resources for insight, transformation, and healing.

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D



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This handbook is based on the workbook of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, Mass. U. S. A.

Some texts of the program have been used, and I have noted them when that is the case.

Some texts have also been drawn from the handbook for the program Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression) developed by Dr. John Teasdale, Dr. Zindel Segal and Dr. Mark Williams.

Other texts have been supplied by teachers at the Institute of Mindfulness-based Approaches located in Germany and also from my own research.

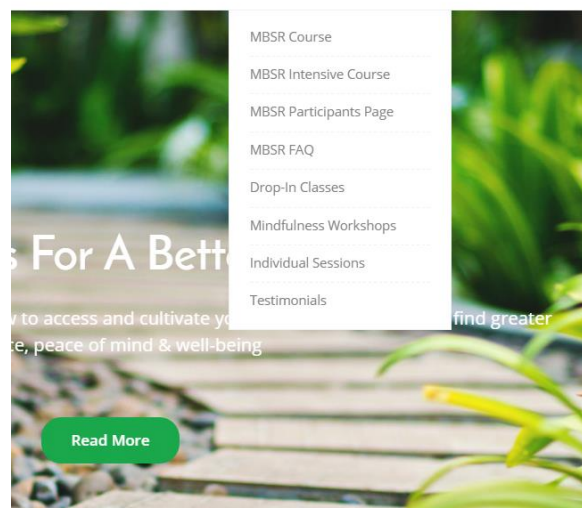
I've created a special page for the MBSR participants, where you can also find all recorded formal practices. Click right and download them on your favorite device:

**Website:** [www.themindfulbrain.net](http://www.themindfulbrain.net)

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## **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Course Workbook**

- This workbook contains material to back up the instructions and discussions that we will have on our course. Please read the relevant session's notes after each week. The home practice for each session is detailed in the beginning of that week's session notes.
- It can be useful to keep a note of your experiences as the course progresses and there's a space in the workbook for this. The notes you make are for your use only and there is no need for them to be seen by anyone else.
- If you are experiencing any difficulties in connection with the course, do please speak to the course leaders.

### **Home Practice is an Important Part of the Course!**

The mental patterns we will be working to change are likely to have been with us for some time. Such patterns are usually habitual and automatic, and we will only succeed in changing them if we put time and effort into learning new approaches.

Making the time to do home practice is a challenge that is part of this course and it is really worth doing so. A useful attitude to adopt is *'I'll give this a go with an open mind. At the end of the course I'll decide whether I've learned anything useful and what I can take away with me.'* In order for you really to know whether this approach can be a useful part of your life, you need to engage with it fully during these 8-weeks.

We will use part of each session to reflect on our experiences of the home practice during the week, discussing any difficulties that you may experience with the practice. Much of what we will learn on the course may be drawn from these experiences.

### **Facing difficulties**

A central aim of MBSR is to learn how to be more fully aware and present in each moment. This makes life more enjoyable, interesting, vivid and fulfilling. It also means facing up to whatever is present, even when it is unpleasant or difficult. Acknowledging and facing up to difficulties is, in the long run, the most effective way to reduce unhappiness.

On our course we will learn gentle and effective ways of facing difficulties and we'll be supported to do that.

### **Patience and Persistence**

Because we will be working to change deeply established mental patterns, the course will involve investing considerable time and effort, some effects of which may only become apparent later. It's like gardening . you have to prepare the soil, plant seeds, make sure they are watered and nourished . and then wait patiently for the results.



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# **MBSR Week 1**

## **Automatic pilot**

## 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. Our thoughts, feelings and sensations, as well as events in the world around us . many of which we may be only dimly aware of . can trigger habits of thinking that are unhelpful and lead to stress.

By becoming more aware, from moment to moment, of our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, as well as the world around us, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice. We do not have to go down the same old mental ruts that have caused problems in the past.

The aim of this course is to increase awareness so that we can respond to situations with choice, rather than react automatically. We do that by practising becoming more aware of where our attention is, and deliberately changing the way we pay attention, over and over again. Mindfulness is not about trying to get anywhere. Rather, it is simply a matter of being aware of where and how we are and allowing ourselves to be that.

To begin with, we consciously place our attention in 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

## Home practice – week 1

1. Practice the **Body Scan** meditation every day. Don't expect to feel anything in particular from listening to the audio registration. In fact, give up all expectations about it. Let your experience to be your experience. Don't judge it.
2. Record on the **Homework Record Form** each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.
3. Eat every day a whole meal or part of one as a mindfulness exercise. Or you may choose to eat the first 5 minutes of every meal as a mindfulness exercise
4. Read the additional materials.
5. Complete the 9-point exercise for the next class.

**My best wishes for the week 1!**



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### Homework Record Form – week 1

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/Date	Comments
Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	
Day 6	
Day 7	



## The 7 Essential Attitudes of Mindfulness Practice

The following attitudes are at the core of mindfulness practice and living. Learning to notice, cultivate and apply these attitudes, moment by moment and day by day, is what improves our ability to face fear, anxiety, panic and depression; decrease our suffering; and nurture our sense of peace and well-being. Although addressed separately for teaching purposes, they are interconnected and practicing one leads to increased awareness and understanding of the others.

1. **NON-JUDGING:** Mindfulness is compassionate, openhearted, choiceless awareness. It is cultivated by witnessing your own experience, without judgment, as the present moment unfolds. Judging separates us from direct experience of the unfolding of our lives in each moment. In practicing mindfulness, it's important to recognize the judging quality of mind and identify the judgmental thinking as it arises. It is equally important to not judge the judging! Simply notice when it is present. Remember . the goal is to simply notice, not to rid yourself of judging thoughts. That is an unrealistic goal. By noticing that judgment is present, we then have the opportunity to learn new ways to relate to it, choosing a response rather than reacting unconsciously.

2. **PATIENCE:** Patience is the ability to bear dif, culty with calm and self-control. It requires connection with your core, faith and courage. It also requires kindness and compassion for yourself as you bear the upset of a situation. Impatience often arises when ego, the self-centered part of self, rails against reality, wanting things to be different than they actually are. In contrast, the wise self recognizes the truth that things have a life cycle of their own, separate from your own wants.

3. **BEGINNER'S MIND:** To practice beginner's mind means to open to the experience of each moment as if meeting it for the , rst time. Remember and imaging your experience as a child . the , rst smell of a ' ower, the , rst drop of rain, the , rst taste of an orange. In truth, each moment in life is unique. You may have experienced the sunset a thousand times, but this particular sunset is different from the rest and will never be again. Practicing beginner's mind cultivates our ability to experience life in this way.

4. **TRUST:** A basic part of learning to meditate is learning to trust yourself and your feelings. You learn to trust that you can see clearly what is actually happening to you. You learn to trust your own knowing, your own authority, and don't need someone else to tell you what you feel and need. In this process, you discover what it really means to be your own person and to live life with authenticity.

5. **NON-STRIVING:** The bulk of human activity is spent %doing+ and trying to change things. This %habit+ frequently shows up in meditation. The ego mind wants more of what it likes and wants to get rid of what it doesn't like, and when it decides that you aren't the way you %should+ be, it even pressures you to change yourself! This pressure is felt as striving, or straining to be different, go somewhere else, or do something else. Since mindfulness involves simply paying attention, without judgment, to whatever is happening, it is different from this more typical activity of doing . it is about %undoing+, about learning to %be+ instead of do. 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.

6. **ACCEPTANCE:** The process of acceptance begins with the willingness to see things exactly as they are rather than the way that you think they should be. You have to see things as they are and yourself as you are . truly . in this moment if you wish to change, heal, or transform yourself or your life. Often to be able to accept what comes into awareness, you must pass through periods of intense feelings such as anger, fear, or grief. These feelings themselves require acceptance. Acceptance does not mean you have to like everything



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or take a passive attitude. It does not mean you have to be satisfied with things as they are, or that you have to stop trying to change things for the better. Rather acceptance simply means willingness to see things as they are, deeply, truthfully, and completely. This attitude sets the stage for acting in the moment in the most potent and healthy way, no matter what is happening. You are more likely to know what to do when you have a clear picture of what is actually happening than when your vision is clouded by your mind's self-serving judgments and desires or its fears and prejudices.

**7. LETTING GO:** Letting go, or nonattachment is another key attitude of mindfulness. Much of the time, we are practicing the opposite attitude, clinging to the way we want things to be, without even knowing it. Often, what you cling to most strongly are ideas and views about yourself, others and situations. These ideas that we cling to often shape our moment-to-moment experience in profound ways. When we start paying attention to our experience through meditation, we can discover which thoughts, feelings and sensations we are trying to hold onto. And we will also notice other things that we want desperately to get rid of. Clinging is driven by our likes and dislikes and our judgments. It is important to just let your experience be what it is, moment by moment. This letting be is actually a way of letting go. By not interfering, by just letting things be, you have a better chance to let go.

Adapted from Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D

## **Mindful Eating**

Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking, both inside and outside the body. Food is a powerful sensual experience that engages all our senses. We pay undivided attention to the colours, smells, textures, flavours, temperatures, and even the sounds (crunch) of our food. We become fully engaged in the present moment.

### **Eat slower**

Eating slowly doesn't have to mean taking it to extremes. Still, it's a good idea to remind yourself, and your family, that eating is not a race. Taking the time to savor and enjoy your food is one of the healthiest things you can do. You are more likely to notice when you are full, you'll chew your food more and hence digest it more easily, and you'll probably find yourself noticing flavors you might otherwise have missed.

### **Savor the silence**

Eating in complete silence may be impossible for a family with children, but you might still encourage some quiet time and reflection. Try introducing the idea as a game - "let's see if we can eat for two minutes without talking" - or suggesting that one meal a week be enjoyed in relative silence. If the family mealtime is too important an opportunity for conversation to pass up, then consider introducing a quiet meal or snack time into your day when you can enjoy it alone.

### **Silence the phone. Shut off the TV.**

Our daily lives are full of distractions, and it's not uncommon for families to eat with the TV blaring or one family member or other, fiddling with their iPhone. Consider making family mealtime, which should, of course, be eaten together, an electronics-free zone. I'm not saying you should never eat pizza in front of the TV, but that too should be a conscious choice that marks the exception, not the norm.

### **Pay attention to flavor**

The tanginess of a lemon, the spiciness of a sauce, the crunch of a pizza crust - paying attention to the details of our food can be a great way to start eating mindfully. After all, when you eat on the go or wolf down your





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meals in , ve minutes, it can be hard to notice what you are even eating, let alone truly savor all the different sensations of eating it. If you are trying to introduce mindful eating to your family, consider talking more about the ' avors and textures of food. Ask your kids what the avocado tastes like, or how the hummus feels. And be sure to share your own observations and opinions too.

#### Know your food

Mindfulness is really about restoring a relationship with our food. Even when you have no idea where the food you are eating has come from, try asking yourself some questions about the possibilities: Who grew this? How? Where did it come from? How did it get here? Chances are, you'll not only gain a deeper appreciation for your food, but you'll , nd your shopping habits changing in the process too.

### The Body Scan Meditation

The body scan has proven to be an extremely powerful and healing form of meditation. It forms the core of the practices that people train in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. It involves systematically sweeping through the body with the mind, bringing an affectionate, openhearted, interested attention to its various regions.

Experientially, we might describe what we are doing during a body scan as tuning in or opening to those sensations, allowing ourselves to become aware of what is already unfolding, much of which we usually tune out because it is so obvious, so mundane, so familiar that we hardly notice. And of course, by the same token we could say that most of the time in our lives we hardly know we are present, experiencing the body, in the body, of the body

It is not uncommon while practicing the body scan for the sensations in the body to be felt more acutely, even for there to be more pain, a greater intensity of sensation in certain regions. At the same time, in the context of mindfulness practice, the sensations, whatever they are and however intense, are also being met more accurately too, with less overlay of interpretation, judgment and reaction, including aversion and the impulse to run, to escape.

In the body scan, we are developing a greater intimacy with bare sensation, opening to the give-and-take embedded in the reciprocity between the sensations themselves and our awareness of them. As a result, it is not uncommon to be less disturbed by them, or disturbed by them in a different, a wiser way, even when they are acute.

Paraphrasing James Joyce, %Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body.+That may be an address too many of us share. Taking the miracle of embodiment for granted is a horri, c loss. It would be a profound healing of our lives to get back in touch with it. All it takes is practice in coming to our senses, all of them.

Adapted from Coming to Our Senses byJon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D

### **Nine Dots**

Connect up all these dots with four straight lines without lifting the pencil, and without retracing over (double back) any of the lines:



Source: The Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program Workbook (Center for Mindfulness)