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MBSR Week 2

Experience New Possibilities



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Changing Perceptions

Perception is key in mindfulness- how you see things (or don't see them) will determine in a large part how you respond. This week's session and practices will ask you to examine your perceptions, assumptions, and the way you view the world.

Much of the time our perceptions about a situation are a strong factor in determining the outcome of that situation and, more so, that most of our perceptions are conditioned and therefore often inaccurate or not applicable to the current situation in which we find ourselves. We will come to notice that it is how we perceive and react to difficult situations that is the foundation for stress, and typically not the stressor (event) itself.

Home practice – week 2

Note: Please bring comfortable clothing for a yoga / mindful movement practice next week!

1. Continue with the Body Scan meditation every day.
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. Complete the Calendar of Pleasant Events: Fill out an entry for each day and bring it to the next session. Use this opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations around one pleasant event each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, in detail (eg: use the actual words or images in which the thoughts came) the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.
4. Choose a daily activity and practice it each day as a mindfulness exercise: Examples of such activities: brushing the teeth, taking a shower, washing dishes, drinking coffee, putting on shoes
5. Read the additional materials.

My best wishes for week 2!



Mind traps

One major way that mindfulness helps with stress is by enabling you to observe the mind traps that may play a role in your stress or your reaction to stress. Mind traps are common mental habits that tend to exacerbate stress and pain. Once you come to recognize these traps, you can more easily avoid falling into them.

Habitual styles of thinking

Because these thinking patterns often occur unconsciously, it's helpful to become familiar with them so you can be mindful of when you might be falling into these traps. Read the following descriptions of various negative thought patterns below and check off any that you might engage in. The purpose of this exercise is not to judge yourself for the number of check marks but simply to increase our awareness of a style of thinking that may be operating to keep you stuck. With this increased awareness comes the opportunity and the ability to choose to look at the situation differently or to view your thoughts as simple events, rather than as facts.

Catastrophizing is a style of thinking that amplifies anxiety. In challenging situations, it expects disasters and automatically imagines the worst possible outcome. It's a what-if game and worst case scenarios. An example would be telling someone that it's raining pretty hard and they respond with "Yes, it seems like it will never stop. It's going to flood, and we are going to lose all our crops."

Exaggerating the negative and discounting the positive go hand in hand and contribute to anxious and depressed moods, as positive experiences are downplayed or not acknowledged while negative details are magnified. An example is when you say something positive, then use the word "but" to lead to a negative statement, such as "I'm doing better at work, but I'm still making mistakes." This discounts the positive and gives more power to the negative. Experiment with replacing "but" with "and" to give both aspects equal weight.

Mind reading involves convincing yourself that you know what other people are thinking and feeling and why they act the way they do, without actual evidence. For example, you may incorrectly assume that someone doesn't like you or is out to get you. Such interpretations tend to cultivate anxiety or depression.

Being the eternal expert is a recipe for heightened stress, as it necessitates being constantly on guard. When being wrong isn't an option, you're continually on trial to defend your opinions and actions.

The "shoulds" are an all too common thought pattern that can lead to guilt or anger in addition to stress. Shoulds involve having a list of unbreakable rules for yourself or others. If you break your rules for yourself, guilt often arises because you haven't lived up to your own expectations. If others break these rules, you're likely to become angry or resentful.

Blaming involves holding others responsible for your own pain or holding yourself responsible for the problems of others. With blaming, there's always someone or something outside of yourself that's the cause of your suffering and pain. However, you can't generally change others, and you may not be able to change circumstances. You can only hope to change yourself. If you perceive that the solution lies outside of you, you deprive yourself of the power to effect change.

All or Nothing Thinking (Dichotomous Reasoning): Thinking in black and white terms (e.g., things are right or wrong, good or bad). A tendency to view things at the extremes with no middle ground. E.g. I made so many mistakes. If I can't do it perfectly I might as well not bother. I won't be able to get all of this done, so I may as well not start it. This job is so bad there's nothing good about it at all.

Personalising: Taking responsibility for something that's not your fault. Thinking that what people say or do is some kind of reaction to you, or is in some way related to you. E.g. John's in a terrible mood. It must have been something I did. It's obvious she doesn't like me, otherwise she would've said hello.



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Emotional Reasoning: Mistaking feelings for facts. Negative things you feel about yourself are held to be true because they feel true.

E.g. I feel like a failure, therefore I am a failure.

I feel ugly, therefore I must be ugly.

I feel hopeless, therefore my situation must be hopeless

Tip: Mindlessly entertaining these thoughts and buying into them, can lead to increased stress, anxiety and depressed mood. When a thought pops into your mind, you can think of it as an event in the mind. You can become aware of it even as it arises and also notice as it eventually passes. In the same way you can sit by a stream and watch leaves float by or look up at the sky watching the clouds come and go, while practicing mindfulness you learn to become more aware of all the stuff that's in your mind without attaching to it. Just being aware of it as it comes and goes.

Adapted from: A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook . Bob Stahl, Elisha Goldstein

1 Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally, to things as they are. +1

2 There is nothing cold, analytical or unfeeling about [mindfulness]. The overall tenor of mindfulness practice is gentle, appreciative and nurturing.

Another way to think of it would be 'heartfulness'. +2

1 Williams et al The Mindful Way Through Depression (2007)

2 Jon Kabat-Zinn Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life,



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Homework Record Form – week 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.

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



Pleasant Experiences Calendar

What was the Experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings while they were happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
eg: Heading home from work - stopping and hearing a bird sing.	Yes	Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping, uplift of corners of mouth	Relief, pleasure, that's good+, how lovely (the bird), it's so nice to be outside+	It was such a small thing but I'm glad I noticed it.
Day 1:				
Day 2:				
Day 3:				
Day 4:				
Day 5:				
Day 6:				
Day 7:				

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



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Autobiography in Five Chapters

1.

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lostō I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

2.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

3.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there.
I still fall inō it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

4.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it

5.

I walk down another street.

-Portia Nelson



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If I Had My Life to Live Over

I'd like to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax, I would limber up. I would be sillier than I had been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Nadine Stair
85 years old
Louisville, Kentucky

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

The Summer Day

Who made the world?
Who made the swan and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
The one who has flung herself out of the grass,
The one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
Who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
Who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated
Eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearm and thoroughly washes her
Face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
Into the grass, how to kneel down into the grass,
How to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the field,
Which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else would I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver
from *House of Light*

9 dots

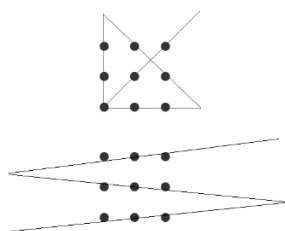
All geeks, nerds and puzzle folks are aware of the nine-dot problem, along with the lesson it is frequently used to present.

Here's a pencil. Here's a piece of copy paper with nine dots on it. Without lifting the pencil or folding the paper, connect the nine dots using four straight lines.

The narrator smiles as you try as hard as you can, unable to do it. Then he ends your frustration and points out you've been tricked by your own limits, because, of course, there's nothing in the rules that says you can't have the lines go beyond the edges of the nine dots.

The thing is, this isn't the end. This is the beginning of the cheating, and anyone who stops here, satisfied at his breakthrough, is missing the point.

Some innovators point out that because the dots and the pencil have width, it can actually be done with *three* lines. At this point, some people get uncomfortable because a lot of what we assumed (the edges of the nine dots, their magical zero width) is being challenged.



I think we can go far beyond this.

What revolutions do is change more than a few common conceptions. If you roll the paper into a tube, with the dots on the outside, you can go round and round and round (like an Edison music cylinder) and do the entire thing with just *one* line. Without folding the paper.

That's cheating! (You could also burn the paper and just call it a day at zero)...

Wikipedia is that sort of solution. So, in fact, are just about all of the innovative successes of the last decade. They took an assumed rule and threw it out. People who have been online for a while have seen this happen over and over, and yet hesitate to do it with their own problem. Not because it can't be done, but because it's not in the instructions. And the things we fear to initiate are always not in the instructions.

Article by Seth Godin



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Overcoming Obstacles in Meditation

Here are , ve obstacles that have been in people's way for thousands of years and the antidotes to get over them.

1. Doubt . The uncertainty about whether something will work or not often plagues many people in the beginning of their practice. The thought is, 'This can work for others, but it won't work for me.' Sometimes doubt is healthy, teaching us to look closely at things before we buy them. But the unhealthy doubt just takes us away from experience before it teaches us anything.

Antidote: We have to remember that thoughts are just thoughts; they're not facts (even the ones that say they are). When we notice this doubt slipping in, just take note of it, perhaps even notice the fear that is often underneath it, and then gently return back to the practice.

2. Restlessness . Let's face it, it's hard to sit still for a period of time when the mind can be so busy. We're trained from a young age to do, do and do some more. The mind may rebel a bit when learning how to be. You might catch it running through a million to-do lists and try and count the minutes until the end of the practice. This is all completely natural.

Antidote: It's important to recognize that restlessness and boredom are just sensations like any other. If you look deeply at restlessness or boredom, underneath it is often some form of anxiety or fear. But you don't need to investigate it to reduce its impact, just naming it as you recognize it can really reduce its impact. You might even try adopting a beginner's mind and getting curious about the sensation of restlessness. This is how you get back in the driver's seat.

3. Irritation . Getting irritated occurs for many reasons. Maybe we don't feel like we're having a good meditation experience or there's an annoying noise in the room or it's a secondary emotion that comes after feeling restless. In other words, we're irritated that we're so restless in the practice.

Antidote: While our urge is to resist the irritation, we have to remember the old adage 'what we resist persists.' The work here is to include it as part of the mindful experience. Our work is to recognize the irritation, allow it to be there and we can either investigate it deeper or watch as it naturally comes and goes.

4. Sleepiness . Being the sleep deprived society that we are, it's easy to feel a bit sleepy when we come down from our busy minds. Our body does what it naturally wants to do, go to rest. We also feel sleepy sometimes when an experience is overwhelming, so it's good to be curious whether the tiredness is telling you that you need more rest or that there's a feeling that needs to be expressed.

Antidote: If from time to time you fall asleep when meditating, consider it a good nap that you needed. However, if this is happening often you might try sitting in a more upright posture, standing up, having your eyes slightly open or maybe splashing some water on your face before starting.

5. Wanting . You'll notice when you practice that your mind may fall into a state of wanting to be somewhere else than where you are. Or maybe it's even more innocent of just wanting to get a bite to eat and so the mind starts drifting onto different food topics. Or before you even get to practice your mind wants to be somewhere else so you don't even get to practice. This state of mind can either stop us from practicing or ignite restlessness, irritation and others.

Antidote: If you notice this state of mind before you practice, you might consider what you can practice instead of what you can't practice. If the mind is busy wanting to be somewhere else during the practice, see if you can be easy on yourself, simply continuing to notice the thoughts straying and gently bringing your attention back.

Adapted from Uncovering Happiness by Elisha Golstein