

# Mindfulness Meditation Group

## Week 8 Trust

When we cultivate a trusting quality of heart and mind, we can better navigate the waters of challenging emotional times. When we feel lost, or grieving, angry or afraid, we trust that we will make it through – even if we’re not sure how or when. We’re safe in our own care. We treat ourselves kindly, as a loving parent would nurture their beloved child.

-Mary Jane Ryan



## Generosity

“But I give best when I give from that deeper place; when I give simply, freely and generously, and sometimes for no particular reason. I give best when I give from my heart.”

-Steve Goodier

## ***Trust***

Trust is a feeling of confidence or conviction that things can unfold within a dependable framework that embodies order and integrity. We may not always understand what is happening to us, or to another, or what is occurring in a particular situation; but if we trust ourselves, or another, or we place our trust in a process or an ideal, we can find a powerful stabilizing element embracing security, balance, and openness within the trusting which, in some way, if not based on naiveté, intuitively guides us and protects us from harm or self-destruction.

The feeling state of trust is important to cultivate in mindfulness practice, for if we do not trust in our ability to observe, to be open and attentive, to reflect upon experience, to grow and learn from observing and attending, to know something deeply, we will hardly persevere in cultivating any of these abilities, and so they will only wither or lie dormant.

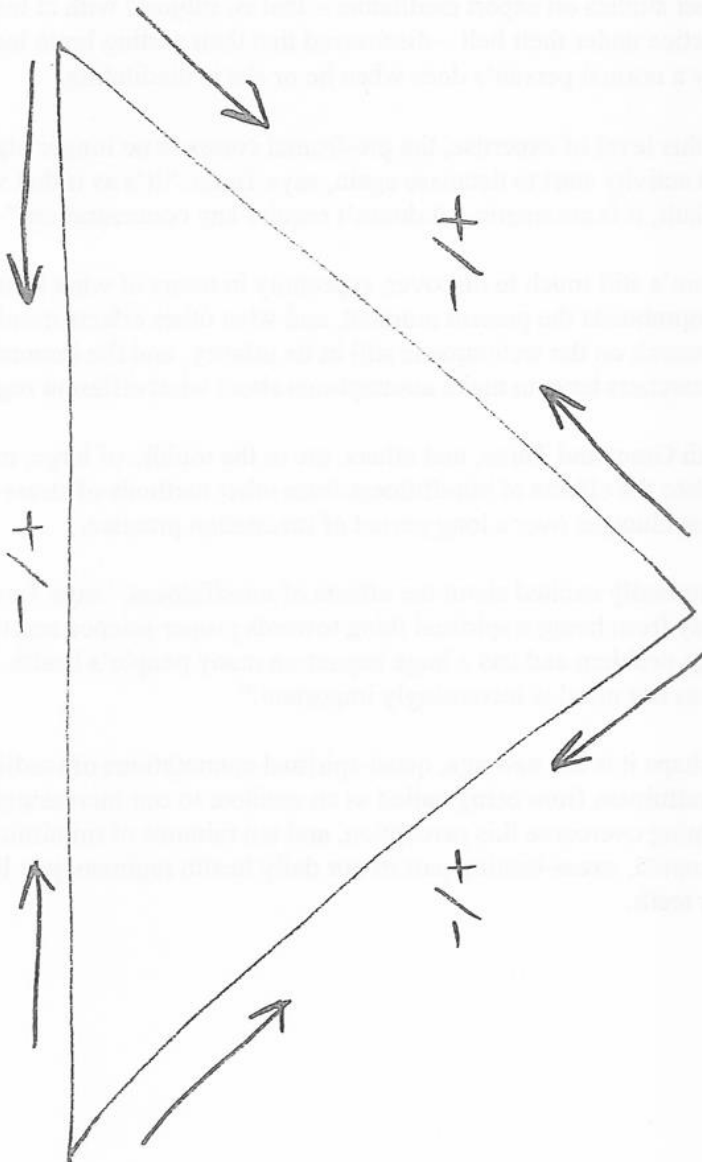
Part of mindfulness practice is to cultivate a trusting heart. Let's begin by looking deeply into what we can trust in ourselves. If we don't immediately know what there is to trust in ourselves, maybe we need to look a little deeper, to dwell a little longer with ourselves in stillness and in simply being. If we are unaware of what we are doing a good deal of the time, and we don't particularly like the way things turn out in our lives, perhaps it's time to pay closer attention, to be more in touch, to observe the choices we make and their consequences down the road.

Perhaps we could experiment with trusting the present moment, accepting whatever we feel or think or see in *this* moment because this is what is present now. If we can take a stand here, and let go into the full texture of now, we may find that this very moment is worthy of our trust. From such experiments, conducted over and over again, may come a new sense that somewhere deep within us resides a profoundly healthy and trustworthy core, and that our intuitions, as deep resonances of the actuality of the present moment, are worthy of our trust.

FEELINGS/  
EMOTIONS

THOUGHTS

Body  
SENSATIONS



# Breaking Out of Stress Reactivity

It is important to remember that it is largely your perceptions of events which determine how stressful they will be for you, and that your unconscious thoughts and beliefs often play a major role in those perceptions. Your stress, therefore, is often made worse by your automatic ways of reacting to potentially threatening situations. It is important, then, to move from *mindless reaction* to *mindful recognition* of what pushes your stress buttons, and if possible, to develop an awareness of why this happens.

This heightened awareness has the potential to drastically change whatever stressful situation you may find yourself in, just by your being aware of what is actually happening to you. The more rapidly you get in touch with your stress reaction, as it is happening, the more effectively you will be able to utilize mindfulness to short-circuit that reaction, or recover from it more quickly. *This is what mindfulness training enables you to do*, to develop a reliable calmness and awareness which you may call upon whenever you become stressed.

## Handling the Stress Reaction

The following are suggestions for how you might utilize mindfulness to deal with your stress reactions. Over time, you might develop your own unique and creative methods of bringing mindfulness to bear in stressful situations.

1. Allow yourself to become aware, as soon as possible, that you are experiencing your characteristic symptoms of stress. You might even say to yourself, “Okay, now I’m becoming stressed out, right now!” Try not to suppress your thoughts and feelings, but allow yourself to have them, cradling them in mindfulness. *This is staying centered in the moment* (just as you do in the sitting meditation).
2. Tune in to your body (remember the body scan!), scanning for tension in your face, neck, shoulders, etc., perhaps allowing the breath to flow into and out of any tense areas. Are your hands clenched? Try mindfully opening them.
3. Most importantly, anchor yourself in your breathing. This is what you have been training yourself to do. It can take only a moment, just a few mindful breaths can do it, and it doesn’t matter if you are by yourself or surrounded by people. Remember, beneath the agitation of the surface there can be a stillness, a reliable calmness which can always be a resource for you.
4. As you become more calm, check in with your thoughts and feelings to see how reactive you are being in the moment. Try to become aware of the larger picture and to more creative ways of responding to whatever is happening in the moment. (remember the nine-dot puzzle. What would happen if you tried going outside of the boundaries, coloring outside the lines?)

Even with the use of mindfulness, it is inevitable that you will become stressed. Eventually, however, mindfulness can allow you to perceive stressors as challenges and opportunities for personal growth. And if one thing is for certain, life will provide you with plenty of such opportunities.

Remember, you can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf!

# Guided Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation

The first instruction for metta meditation is to sit comfortably. Be physically comfortable; relax; be at ease in your body. Be mentally comfortable; be at ease in your mind; relax, don't try to force anything or make anything special happen. Don't try to contrive certain feelings. Just relax. Be at ease. Sit comfortably.

Imagine that you are out in a big wide open field, just planting seeds; seeds of intention.

We begin metta meditation by opening to directing the sense of loving care, of friendship, of kindness, of connection, to ourselves.

See if you can find three or four phrases that express what you wish most deeply for yourself; not just for today or the short term, but in an enduring way, a very deep way. What would you wish most for yourself?

The traditional phrases are four in number, and they are: may I be free from danger, or may I live in safety. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.

We'll spend some time with each phrase.

Let each phrase emerge from you heart and connect to it; simply connect to it, without trying to force any special feeling or make anything happen. Allow it to come up. Be with it. This is the power of intention in the mind; let it work.

Cherish each phrase; connect to it.

It's as though you're holding something very precious and fragile in your hand, like an object made of glass. If you clutch it too tightly, it will shatter and break. If you become negligent, if you just let you hand fall open, it will fall off and break. Hold it, cherish it, stay connected to it. Not too tightly, not too loosely.

May I be free from danger, may I live in inner and outer safety.

Danger here refers both to inner and outer danger; inner danger from being completely lost or swamped in tormenting mind states; and outer danger in the obvious way.

May I be safe and protected from inner and outer harm.

May I be truly happy and deeply peaceful.

Simply rest your mind in the awareness of your wish to be happy, which is rightful, appropriate. You, like all beings everywhere, simply want to be happy.

May I be healthy.

May I have love and compassion for myself.

May I love myself completely, just the way I am.

May I live with ease, free from daily struggle.

May I be free from suffering.

May I be free from danger; may I be happy; may I be healthy; may I live with ease.

If you find your attention wandering, you don't need to judge that. You don't need to try to figure out how your mind made those connections, how you ended up thinking about what you've been thinking about. You don't have to analyze, you don't have to elaborate on the thoughts. If anything arises in your field of awareness, other than these phrases and the feelings that may come with the phrases, see if you simply let go, bringing your attention back to the phrases.

The next expansion of the field of our metta is toward someone that is known as the "benefactor" – that is somebody who has been good to us, taken care of us, been generous to us, helped us – or somebody who is quite inspiring for us, who reminds us of our own full capacity as human beings. To be loving, to be compassionate, to be aware.

If there is such a person in your life, somebody comes to mind, you can either bring forth an image of them, a visualization, or maybe say their name quietly to yourself. Get a feeling for them as though they were here in front of you.

Remember the good that they've done for you or their good qualities. And begin offering them lovingkindness through the phrases, through the intentions. May *you* be free from danger, may you be happy, may you be healthy, may you live with ease.

If there is no one who comes to mind who serves as a benefactor, then you can simply continue with yourself – directing the feeling of lovingkindness toward yourself.

We further open our hearts to include a friend, a good friend. Remember metta itself means friendship. If you think of a friend, once again you can visualize them, say their name – bring them here. And include them in this power of intention, of friendship, of lovingkindness. See if you can wish them just what you've wished for yourself.

Remember that this person also just wants to be happy.

The next person whom we choose is the one that is known as the "neutral" person – someone we don't have a strong liking for or a strong disliking for. If you can think of such a person, once again, contemplate the fact that all beings everywhere want to be happy. This person, as well, even though we don't know them perhaps very well, we don't understand their particular conditioning, we do know this: that all beings everywhere want to be happy. And so we wish for this person the happiness, the freedom, the love, the joy that we would wish for ourselves.

Again, if you can't find a neutral person, you can continue on with yourself or with a friend.

The next person that we choose is a difficult person. We suggest that you don't begin right away with the most difficult person in your life – the one who has hurt you the most grievously, who has done the most harm to you, where there's the most anger, fear, or conflict. But rather start with someone who is mildly difficult – who is irritating or annoying you. Only very slowly and gradually do we work to incorporate the more and more difficult people.

Remember that when we offer friendship or we offer lovingkindness it is not at all in the sense of condoning everyone's actions and saying that it doesn't matter how much I got hurt really. It's not about pretending or feeling something other than what we're actually feeling.

It is about recognizing and understanding our oneness, our non-separateness.

And to offer this person lovingkindness, loving care, does not diminish us in any way. But rather brings us back in touch with our deepest and most perfect capacity to love, which is an enormous strength; it is not a weakness.

Sometimes as we work with a difficult person, we suggest that if it is difficult, and it often is, that you visualize yourself along with that person. So rather than running into the feeling that you're abandoning your own needs and you're not going to take care of yourself and you'll just be hurt again, you are in effect saying – “May *we* be happy, may we be peaceful, may we be free from danger;” putting yourself in there as well on an equal footing with this person.

If you find feelings like anger, grief, difficult feelings coming up, don't try to force your way through them. It might be time to feel the pain of those states and direct some lovingkindness toward yourself. Before going back once again to see if you can include this person in your field of loving care.

If the feelings, like anger for example, that come up, are very intense, then you can, for a little while, just drop the phrases. Open to the feeling itself; be aware of it all; use all the tools of mindfulness to create space around it. And only a little bit later move on, move back, to sending metta.

We move from there, from sending metta to the difficult person, to sending metta to all beings everywhere, without distinction, without exclusion. We open to a sense of the boundlessness of life. The traditional categories are many in number. Just as a way of opening us and opening us to a sense of the boundlessness of life, the magnitude of life.

So we say “May all beings be free from danger. May they or may we be happy, be healthy, live with ease. May all living beings, all creatures, all individuals, all those in existence, be free from danger, be happy, be healthy, live with ease. We open and we open, recognizing our inevitable connection with all beings everywhere. That there's no limit.”

All parts when taken together make up the whole.

We then finish by directing the force of lovingkindness, of friendship, of loving care, to all beings everywhere, without distinction, without exception, without exclusion, and without separation.

You can gently open your eyes. Feel the various sensations in your body, your heart space. And see if as you get up, begin other activities, you can have the mind rest in these phrases.

Continue to extend, to offer, to open, the power of lovingkindness throughout the day.

# A List of Ways to Practice Mindfulness

Here is a list of ways to practice mindfulness in your daily life. Choose one and give it your wholehearted attention.

1. When you wake up in the morning, notice your breathing before you get out of bed. The quality of our breath tells us a lot about our state of being. When the breath is slow and steady we are calm and peaceful. When the breath is constricted we are tense.
2. Before you get out of bed, notice your thoughts. What was your first thought upon waking? This practice helps us get in touch with what is on the mind.
3. When possible, eat silently. Before you eat, consider all the people involved in providing the food on your plate – farmers, truck drivers, people in supermarkets. Offer gratitude for all these people.
4. Notice your environment: sunlight, rain, the wind, trees, sights and sounds. On your way to work, school, an appointment or your daily errands, be mindful of driving your car, walking, sitting on the subway, arriving at your destination, your state of mind and your thoughts. Are you in the present moment or thinking ahead to what you will be doing next? Notice your body, and let your breathing help you relax your shoulders, soften your face.
5. Notice when you can stop the pressure of pushing to get where you are going and simply enjoy the process of getting there.
6. Practice mindful, conscious breathing throughout your day: at work, while sitting down, at your desk, at your computer, while speaking on the phone and in person.
7. Allow yourself to be calm and peaceful. Use daily cues as reminders to be mindful: the doorbell, the telephone, sounds on your computer, turning on a light, checking your watch or a clock for the time.
8. Approach meals with mindfulness.
9. As you leave your daily activities, take a moment to appreciate what you have accomplished and consider how you have interacted with others.
10. Consider your trip home as a transition time between your daily activities and your time at home.
11. Become aware of your breathing, smile, notice the quality of your thoughts and feelings.
12. Approach your homecoming and the people you come home to, with peacefulness and kindness.
13. You can use conscious breathing – awareness of the breath – as a foundation to encourage mindfulness in all of your daily activities, just as you use it as the foundation for your sitting and walking meditation practices.
14. Eat meals without doing anything else. Eat them sitting down, rather than standing up or in your car or on the run.
15. As you go to bed and prepare for sleep, breathe, become aware of your body and relax, and let go of daily activities and of your anticipation of tomorrow.



# **Everyday Mindfulness**

## **Mindful Breathing**

1. Count your breaths. This will help you focus your attention, and it will also help you calm your mind when you're distracted by thoughts.
2. Focus on the physical experience of breathing. Observe the rising and falling of your breath as you slowly inhale and exhale. Pick a point of focus (i.e. – as the breath enters/exits your nose, the rise and fall of your stomach).
3. Be aware of any distracting thoughts that arise while you are breathing. Allow the thoughts to float past without getting stuck on them, like in the Leaves on a Stream meditation. Letting go of the thoughts will allow you to refocus your attention on your breathing and help you further calm yourself.

## **Mindfully doing tasks**

1. Focus and shift your attention among your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviors, in order to be mindful of your present-moment experience.
2. Let go of thoughts and judgments that come up by allowing them to float past. This will help keep you from getting distracted and will help you stay grounded in the present moment.

## **Remember the Seven Attitudes of Mindfulness!**

## 7 Holistic Benefits of Mindfulness

*"Miracle is not to walk on water. Miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive." – **Thich Nhat Hanh***

Mindfulness is the gift of Buddha to the mankind 2500 years ago. Mindfulness is the English word trying to indicate the meaning of “Sati”, a word from the Pali language, spoken by the Buddha. Other words pointing to the sense of “Sati” are attention, awareness, conscious awareness, presence of mind, present centeredness, etc. However, the only way to comprehend the real meaning of mindfulness is to practice mindfulness meditation.



It is Sati or mindfulness that provided the foundation of the practice of Vipassana meditation that transformed an ordinary human, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, into a Buddha – an absolutely pure and enlightened being. So the practice of mindfulness has actively existed throughout the centuries among the true disciples of Buddha, although the West began taking interest in it only in recent decades after seeing its potential in psychotherapies.

Mindfulness is the non-judgmental awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. When practiced in the form of Vipassana meditation it leads to development of insight – reason why Vipassana meditation is also called insight meditation. Here “insight” means experiential understanding of one's own being.

The practice of mindfulness, say through Vipassana meditation, helps you develop the following seven basic mental qualities that provide foundation for insight.

### 1. Being Non Judgmental

Mindfulness involves becoming an impartial witness (an observer) of the ever-flowing stream of experience – inner as well as outer – and of the ways you habitually react to everything. You train not to get involved in what is going on. This mental attitude of a witness helps correct the usual, and almost automatic, habit of labeling every experience. If there is pleasant feeling associated with an experience it is labeled good and if unpleasant, bad. All this labeling comes from the past learning, memories and experiences. When you train not to label you automatically keep the influence of past away.

Mind has a tendency to lean towards learned habitual patterns – some of which may be counterproductive or limiting. The practice of mindfulness involves becoming aware of the process of experiencing as it is happening right now, and it is done from the attitude of non-judgmental exploration. Hence it is ideal for discovering conditioned patterns. This gives you freedom and space to adjust your conditioned behavior and attitudes. The practice of mindfulness is truly unique in helping you break bad habits.

Just think about it: You are not a judge appointed by some divine order, so why don't you stop judging everybody – including yourself?

### 2. Acceptance

Mindfulness, being an art of seeing things as they actually are, helps you accept yourself as you are – with all your shortcomings and vulnerabilities. When you deny or resist certain realities of your being you not only waste

a lot of energy but you also create internal tension. Likewise when you try to distort certain realities just to make yourself look better you create illusions that only entangle your mind.

Acceptance in true honesty is the first step towards change – it is also an integral part of healing. When there is healing there is change – for the better.

Just think about it: Why can't you accept yourself as you are – what is the problem?

### **3. Compassion**

Mindfulness invites you to embrace all your experience unfolding in the present moment, regardless of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Although challenging, it also relieves you from all that habitual analyzing and resolving as well as rationalizing and manipulating. Being in intimate contact with experience (as opposed to thinking about experience) by actually feeling the sensations as they manifest within the body, you develop a sense of gentle compassion and a willingness to forebear all your internal distress, fear and anguishes.

Since you begin to accept yourself with all your shortcomings, you also become more accepting and tolerant towards others. Now you are more compassionate and less critical towards everyone.

Just think about it: Only a strong mind can be compassionate to its own vulnerabilities.

### **4. Letting go**

An essential element of the practice of mindfulness is non-attachment – you merely watch your thoughts, feelings and situations. You try not to connect to them whether through liking or through disliking. Normally you try to hold on to certain pleasant feelings and want to get rid of those that are unpleasant. But when you train mindfully to stay detached, you let every perception – thoughts, feelings or emotions – pass. So the art of letting go is built into the practice of mindfulness – you don't have to make any extra effort to let go of things that you always wanted to but could not. Mindfulness does it all almost effortlessly.

Training in mindfulness makes the meaning of “letting go” very explicit – the only thing you actually want to “let go” is your conditioned tendency to hold on to the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant. With further practice you also begin to see how this tendency perpetuates your difficulties.

Just think about it: A weak mind wants to cling to everything – either through attachment or through aversion.

### **5. Patience**

Patience is a form of wisdom to realize that things take their own time to unfold. Becoming impatient does not move things faster – only you become miserable and make yourself irritable to others. Mindfulness trains you to acknowledge and stay with the tendency of impatience. It helps to calm the agitated mind when you know that you can't rush. If you have done everything you could do then why impatience – result is bound to come.

*“O time! Thou must untangle this, not I; It is too hard a knot for me to untie!” – Twelfth Night*

Just think about it: The world does not revolve around your wishes. So why not do your best and let the fruits come when the time is ripe?

### **6. Non Striving**

Mindfulness encourages you to be who you are – it focuses on “being” rather than “doing”. In normal living you think that you have to react to everything in order to achieve something, which is not necessarily true. Now you focus on the process of observing reality as it is unfolding every moment as opposed to looking for some progress or result. The very act of searching for progress implies dissatisfaction with the current situation.

The apparently simple act of “being”, rather than struggling against the reality, provides a peaceful way of living that allows new possibilities to emerge. It also creates an increasing sense of ease with the way things are.

Just think about it: Can you really be someone other than who you actually are?

## **7. Mental Clarity**

Practice of mindfulness trains you to stay with a sense of exploration as if you are seeing everything for the first time. You stay alert with the attitude “Let me see what comes up next”. You view every thought or feeling with a sense of exploration and discovery without being biased by the past experiences, preconceptions or cluttered thinking.

It allows you to see issues, events and problems in new ways and as a result, many things get resolved on their own as you withdraw your emotional involvement.

Just think about it: How often have you wished to have a clear mind so that you could concentrate and do things reflecting your full abilities?

# Mindfulness Resources

## FREE APPS (for both iPhone and Android):

- Mindfulness Coach
- Calm
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- Mindshift
- Breath2Relax
- Headspace

## ONLINE GUIDED MEDITATION:

- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center  
<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>
- Youtube Channel by Jeremy Woodall  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcBnqlwZfTc>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw4tJrkjpfk>
- Living Well mindfulness exercises  
<http://www.livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/>