

MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION WORKBOOK

DANSK CENTER FOR MINDFULNESS



AARHUS
UNIVERSITET

MINDFULNESS

BY LONE OVERBY FJORBACK

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MINDFULNESS

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PREFACE

I have had the pleasure of teaching Lone Fjorback in our Center for Mindfulness Oasis professional practice programs for a number of years, and feel great confidence in her capacity for communicating the essence of mindfulness in her own teaching. This book will be a gift for anyone who wants to understand and practice mindfulness, in order to find healing in the middle of a busy and stressful life.

Lone has been practicing mindfulness personally for over twenty years, and has been committed to finding a way to bring her practice into her work as a physician, psychiatrist and researcher. She teaches not from abstract ideas and theories, but from her deep integration of this practice into every aspect of her life. Her presence is compassionate and straightforward, kind and direct. I recommend this book to anyone who wishes to experience Lone's unique approach to teaching mindfulness with heart and a clear mind.

Melissa Blacker, MA, Director, Oasis Professional Education and Innovation Associate Director, Stress Reduction Program Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, University of Massachusetts Medical School, USA.

The original meaning of doctor is teacher, and patient means to bear suffering. So a doctor can teach a patient to bear suffering, which is an original definition of mindfulness. In practice, mindfulness is an awakening and being your own best friend. Yoga and mindfulness meditation can unite the body, thought and feeling, so that we say yes to life, right now.

Lone Overby Fjorback

INTRODUCTION

Life is beautiful. And life is terrible. We all have our struggles. We all share in common the desire to be happy, to love and be loved. But as individuals we experience unique problems and challenges. Things that get on your nerves and things that get on my nerves are not the same. It's a peculiar fact that people are liable to circumvent or get hung up on the same issues over and over. Sometimes for whole generations.

I hurt most when I see unhappy people. It is a strength and a weakness. A strength because I truly want to help others by increasing their joy and diminishing their pain. A weakness because when I fail, a sense of powerlessness opens old wounds.

Yoga, meditation and mindfulness have healed those wounds. I learned yoga and meditation at the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School. I participated in my first meditation course in 1989 with the school's founder, Swami Janakananda. Immediately after this, I com-

pleted my first three-month retreat. I lived at the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School in Aarhus for four years and I also taught there.

When I practise yoga and meditation I enter a state of increased awareness. I become more present in the now, without having to think about it. I become happier, purposeful and free of apprehension. I am cleansed by yoga and meditation and this allows me to experience the world as it happens around me, rather than be trapped in my own thoughts, feelings and bad habits. I become more empathetic and forgiving of other people, of myself.

I have seen other people share this experience in the countless number of classes I have held or participated in. People arrive in surly and obstinate moods. But if they give themselves enough time, if they stay sitting long enough, something happens. Something or other lets go and a person emerges who is peaceful, awake and attentive. A person who is here and now. I later learned that this is called a state of mindfulness.

I want to help others with this process. I am a doctor, a psychiatrist and a cognitive therapist. I have learned how to use yoga and meditation as part of patient treatment at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in the USA. The school was founded by professor Jon Kabat-Zinn.

It is clear that when I work in the hospital that in some cases thoughts, feelings and physical symptoms lead to illnesses such as anxiety, depression and functional disorders. The latter being an illness where the body exhibits physical symptoms.

Many people suffer and it is absurd that we create so many problems for ourselves. We forget to value the life

we have. And none of us escape the major and serious problems associated with the fact that everything changes, nothing remains and we all must die.

Without doubt, a person can lead a very fine life without yoga, meditation or mindfulness. But yoga, meditation and mindfulness is my speciality and I want to pass on my expertise. The concepts behind mindfulness are not something I, Jon Kabat-Zinn or Swami Janakananda have concocted. They are based on ancient knowledge found in most cultures and they attempt to answer the question: How can I live and be me without creating more problems than which already exist?

In my current PhD, I am studying the impact of Mindfulness Therapy on patients with severe chronic stress disorders. Almost 100 patients have now undergone Mindfulness Therapy and this book is based on the course material that was used for the treatment. We know that mental health can be achieved by practice just as physical health can be achieved by exercise. And we know we can learn to take responsibility for our own well-being. This book should be used as a practical guide to how this can be done.

One of the Mindfulness Therapy participants explained that he had become extremely happy when he learned that he had been selected to undergo treatment. He had been ill for about five years and he said it felt as if he was a drowning person at sea who had suddenly been pulled into a lifeboat. What surprised him though was that he was immediately given a pair of oars and told he had to row himself to shore. To take responsibility for your own life is a task no-one else can do for you. We arrived alone and we depart alone. It is our responsibility to get the best out of that reality. When life does not go the way we expect it to or the way we want it to, we easily blame ourselves.

I hope that the state that you are currently in can be used to motivate you do something else. Mindfulness is based on the approach that there is more right with you than there is wrong, despite the challenges you face or the problems you are experiencing. Many people tend to think that there is something wrong with them as a person when they suffer. But suffering, like joy, is an inescapable part of life.

Mindfulness practice is not a miracle cure. It is mental practice that strengthens your ability to accept life and to exist in the present. Mindfulness requires persistent practice in the same way you have to practice for a marathon, but unlike physical practice, mental practice does not have limitations. As the practice progresses it becomes clear to us how often we make things difficult for ourselves. You might be wondering how long does the practice of mindfulness take? It's a life-long practice.

The Mindfulness Therapy course consists of a single 3.5 hour meeting, held once a week for nine weeks. During the course we will have trained our ability to observe our bodies and minds. First we practice in how to be in contact with our bodies, then contact with our thoughts, emotions, behavioural patterns and relationships. Gradually we work to gain greater acceptance. We start every meeting with practical exercises followed by a dialogue about the specific experiences during the exercises. During the course the participants will learn how symptoms develop into illnesses and how the way we perceive symptoms and illnesses impacts our health. Participants also carry out 45 minutes practice at home every day.

This book is based on the Mindfulness Therapy course and contains a chapter about the techniques that can be specifically used to tackle stress, anxiety, depression, OCD, pain and functional disorders. All of the instruc-

tions and directions are voluntary; you sense what is best for you.

You can make an individual programme or a group programme. I urge you to follow the programme exactly. A period of daily practice is important but you do not have to complete the course in the assigned nine weeks. You can take longer if you wish. As you read a chapter you may choose to practice with the daily exercises proposed in that chapter. When you are ready, you can then read the next chapter and work with the daily exercises. You can also read the book from cover to cover and carry out the exercises at a later point. Chapter 7 is set apart from the other chapters, because it is written as a mindfulness retreat, i.e. a whole day you have set aside to immerse yourself in the exercises. You can also read the book from cover to cover and carry out the exercises at a later point when you have more time and when you feel you are ready.



= EXERCISE
AVAILABLE
ON CD

WWW



= EXERCISE
AVAILABLE
ONLINE

I am very grateful to my family, friends, patients, Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School, Centre for Mindfulness and the Research Unit for Functional Disorders, Aarhus University Hospital for the opportunity to learn and share this work, which has made a significant difference in my life. The book also includes a CD with guided versions of the book's exercises. These exercises are also available at www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness. Exercises in the book which are also available on the CD/online are marked with a CD or on-line icon in the margin.

Lone Overby Fjorback

WEEK 1

AGENDA:

- WHY MINDFULNESS?
- SMALL MEDITATION
- AWARENESS, MEDITATION, NOW
- ONE STEP AHEAD OR ONE STEP BEHIND
- JON KABT-ZINN AND MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION
- MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY
- MINDFULNESS THERAPY
- MEDITATION: WHY MINDFULNESS?
- YOGA: MOUNTAIN POSE
- THE RAISIN EXERCISE
- BODY SCAN
- DISCUSSION ABOUT BODY SCAN
- IMPORTANT ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES
- SYMPTOM REGISTRATION
- HOMEWORK

Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the wounded place. That's where the Light enters you.

Rumi

The wounded place is like a stone. Some of those who came before us went around it, while others fell over. We can now place it in the right place and make the way easier for those who have yet to come. Working with mindfulness involves conquering happiness, discovering the magical moments and gaining the strength to be there where the light can enter.

Lone Overby Fjorback

WEEK 1

WHY MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness practice strengthens your ability to exist in the present and to accept yourself and others. Mindfulness practice can help if you want to be more present in the now, and if you want to learn to be yourself in a good and constructive way – also when life is difficult. Mindfulness practice can make it easier for you to better administer your time, and to focus on what you think is important.

Mindfulness is all about waking up to life, the life you have right now. Not the life you have already lived or the life that may arrive in the future. But waking up to life in the present moment, in a way where you greet yourself affectionately.

Mindfulness has roots in Buddhism. According to Buddhism, humanity's craving for eternal happiness and its simultaneous attempts to avoid pain, leads to frustration, suffering, anxiety and depression. We feel pain because nothing lasts. We all become ill, we decline and we die. And the mind tricks us into believing that life is happening in a much nicer place somewhere else.

SMALL MEDITATION

Sitting in a comfortable sitting position, ideally with your back straight, free of the chair's backrest if you prefer, you may want to look around the room. When you are ready, you can either close your eyes or focus at a point in front of you. Notice how your body breathes. Breathe naturally. Do not alter your breathing. Your body will breathe for you. It has done this your entire life. The only difference is that you now feel it. Feel the air enter and exit from your body. See if you can let everything else fall away and stay focused on your breathing. Every time you find that your attention has drifted to somewhere else, refocus on your breathing. Sit like this for 5–10 minutes.

What did you experience? Were you focused on your breathing all of the time?

Awareness

Mindfulness practice allows you to work with awareness. You notice what happens. And you accept it. In the small meditation you may have noticed that it is not always pleasant thoughts or feelings that arise. Mindfulness means accepting that you see what there is. This does not mean you necessarily like what you see,

Mindfulness practice strengthens your ability to exist in the present and to accept yourself and others.

but whatever you see; accept. In the small meditation shown above, you practice your concentration. You might find it difficult but you cannot do anything wrong. When you realise your concentration is somewhere else, all you have to do is refocus.

What is meditation?

Meditation is the act of consciously concentrating. It originated in India but it is practised in many cultures. Nordic peoples once practised “the darkening”, where they sat still during the sunset. Christian tradition shares many of the maxims that are found in Buddhism, e.g. that you should not worry because “each day has enough trouble of its own”. When you are very still, for example during meditation, you discover your mind generates a constant stream of judgemental thought. How good life would be if only ...

Now

Mindfulness is being aware of the now. But being in the now isn't much fun if you use the actual moment to complain about things: “Why does my neck hurt?”, “Why do I have to use an hour to drive to work for a job I didn't choose?” or “I just need to get through this year and maybe the next.” There are many examples. This is just the way the mind works. The mind constantly throws up ways in which things could be better. Mindfulness is about being in the now without being judgemental. Many people constantly judge themselves or the situation they are in: The stupid computer, the irritating weather, the ridiculous lack of time, ambitious colleagues, thankless children, selfish parents ...

Mindfulness is about being part of the present moment, in a way where you treat yourself with love and affection. To be in the now is a fundamental part of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Taoist teaching. In other words, meditation does not turn you into a Buddhist.

One step ahead or one step behind

Many of us fail to take proper care of ourselves. We alternate between crashing around, doing too much or becoming completely drained of energy. We constantly fill our lives with content; food, talk, hectic activity, work, TV – anything to avoid the pain that is also part of being human.

You can test how long you can sit still without scratching your neck, turning around or doing something or other. See how long you can sit still by yourself. You will quickly discover that thoughts arise – like why even bother to sit still? You may discover a basic restlessness, but if you sit long enough, you may also discover a basic spaciousness or acceptance. Impatient thoughts or restlessness are not wrong. But many of us are always one step ahead or one step behind, and we repeatedly miss the precious moment in our lives.

Mindfulness means waking up to life, right now. A lot of people live in the future or the past. We speculate over the things that have happened or we worry about what may happen. We plan and fantasise about how life could be or look for someone to blame for the things that happened and the way they happened. And we usually end up blaming ourselves. It is easy to be part of the now when life is exactly the way you want it. But life is almost never exactly the way we want it. In fact, sometimes when our lives might be considered perfect, we become bored and long for something else.

Mindfulness is about being in the now – whether you like it or not. When you realise you are not in the now, you can use your senses to consciously bring your focus back to it. You can hear, taste, see, feel or smell the moment that is now. Or you can experience the thoughts running through your head, the feelings you have and what is happening in your body. You can experience the moment in a way where you embrace

Many of us are always one step ahead or one step behind, and time and again we miss the precious moment in our lives.

yourself with kindness. Do not just obey thoughts and feelings, but observe them with warmth and ease. When you have a good relationship with yourself, you often stop repeating the same old routines. You take care of yourself and are able to see the richness of every single moment.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

In 1979, biologist and researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn taught anatomy at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He was an ardent practitioner of yoga and meditation and he thought that what he had learned through yoga and meditation could benefit patients. He developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme and founded the Center for Mindfulness, a stress clinic based at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMASS), in Massachusetts USA. MBSR uses mindfulness meditation to manage stress, pain and chronic illness. Jon Kabat-Zinn describes MBSR in detail in his book *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (Delta, 1990). The title refers to Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Zorba the Greek* (originally called *Alexis Zorba*), which was made into a film by Michael Cacoyannis in 1964. In the novel *Zorba* is asked if he has been married. He answers: "Wife, house, children ... the whole catastrophe!"

In other words, life consists of more than just happiness. Everyone experiences elements of 'catastrophe'. For a lot of people it is a regular experience. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme is an intensive course in mindfulness meditation. Unlike ordinary yoga and meditation classes, course participants are encouraged to talk about what they experienced during the meditation. This helps the individual to realise that he or she was not the only one who felt pain, boredom, shame, anxiety, etc. Scientific studies have shown that the programme can reduce symptoms

of stress, anxiety and depression and can increase course participants' physical and psychological well-being,

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

At the end of the 1990s, a group of psychologists studied at Kabat-Zinn's Center for Mindfulness. They developed an independent programme called Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, for the prevention (non-treatment) of depression in people who had previously suffered from clinical depression.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy is described in "The Mindful Way through Depression Freeing Yourself from Chronic unhappiness"(Guildford Press 2007). Scientific studies have shown that the programme can reduce the risk of depression recurring by 50%, in patients who had previously experienced three or more episodes of depression. These results have meant that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), which is part of the British National Health Service, now recommends Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for the prevention of recurring depressions (NICE, October 2009).

Mindfulness Therapy

As part of my PhD, I have developed and tested a therapy programme called Mindfulness Therapy for Bodily Distress Syndrome. Bodily Distress Syndrome describes physical symptoms which do not result from any known physical or psychological disorder. Symptoms range from well-known general symptoms such as periodic headaches or shoulder pain to chronic long-term illness. Individuals may be diagnosed with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic whiplash, chronic tennis elbow, chronic stress, chronic pain, burn-out or other symptoms that do not have a medical explanation. I chose to use the term Mindfulness Therapy because it is a treatment that doctors can offer to their patients. A lot of evidence suggests that yoga and mindfulness can

help to remedy imbalance in the nervous system which may otherwise be the source of many of the symptoms.

Mindfulness Therapy follows Jon Kabat-Zinn's programme but also includes teaching in and the management of Bodily Distress Syndrome. The initial conclusions of the PhD work show that patients are willing to actively work to improve their health if they just learn the appropriate techniques and the programme can reduce physical symptoms, pain and hypochondria. Many patients say the programme has provided them with the knowledge of what is wrong with them and what they can do. Furthermore, meeting others with the same disorder was a positive experience. The patients felt they were understood and respected, and they had summoned the courage to manage symptoms in a new and non-judgemental way.

MEDITATION: WHY MINDFULNESS?

Sitting in a comfortable position, when you are ready you can either close your eyes or look at a point in front of you. Focus your attention on how your body breathes. After a few minutes of focusing, ask yourself: Why am I reading this book? Ask yourself the following questions several times: What is it I want to work on? What do I want to change? What do I want for myself? You can sit like this for 5–10 minutes. Try to be open to the answers that arrive.

If you wish, write some of the answers down.

MOUNTAIN POSE

Stand (or sit) with your feet positioned in parallel, with your knees slightly bent (so they are not overstretched). Tilt your hip slightly forward, chest pointing upwards and your head balanced on your spinal column. If you imagine a fixed weight is hanging from your tailbone, it will point down to the ground. Feel the way your body breathes. Lift your arms or shoulders, perhaps just a little, and feel your breathing. Lower your arms or shoulders again. Focus on them as you do so. Execute a sideways bend on each side. As you very slowly and carefully bend, notice how the side of your body stretches. Return to your starting position and feel your breathing.



WWW



Yoga

Very young children move around with perfect poise. When they stand or sit they support the spine's natural curve, which in turn provides plenty of space for the stomach and allows for free and unhindered breathing. In Western cultures the spines of the majority of five and six-year olds have already started to compress, shutting their stomachs in. They begin to hide themselves and forget their natural dignity. Posture affects the mind and yoga is an excellent way of maintaining contact with the body.

The mountain posture exercise that you have just carried out aims to teach you how to have natural posture and how to create space for your body. You can do it standing up or sitting down. Some yoga instructors tell their students to imagine it as if they were a monarch who is sitting or standing.

In Western cultures the spines of the majority of five and six-year olds have already started to compress, shutting their stomachs in. They begin to hide themselves and forget their natural dignity.

RAISIN EXERCISE

Taking a single raisin and looking at it as if you had never seen one before, become conscious of your impressions about the raisin. Does it remind you of something? What does it make you think about? See if you can describe your thoughts about the raisin. The raisin did not just appear of nowhere. It has a history. Be conscious of any thoughts or feelings associated with the raisin. What do you feel in your body? Can you describe the raisin without thoughts or feelings? What do you see? Bring the raisin to your ear. Is there a sound? Touch the raisin to your lips. Feel the raisin on your lips. Place the raisin in your mouth. Notice if you feel you want to chew it. Feel the raisin in your mouth. Roll it on your tongue. Bite softly on the raisin and experience its taste. Swallow the raisin and be conscious of your body, which is now one raisin heavier.

What did you experience? Do you normally eat in this fashion?

The raisin exercise

The raisin exercise is an eating meditation where you consciously concentrate on eating. Many of us forget to taste and experience food because their attention is elsewhere. You can have a completely different and even more intense eating experience if you consciously concentrate on the food you are eating. You may think focussing or not focussing on a raisin is a trivial matter. But a lot of us go about our day and forget to see our children or our loved ones or hear what they are saying. It is a curious and serious matter that we do not experience our most beloved ones.

BODY SCAN

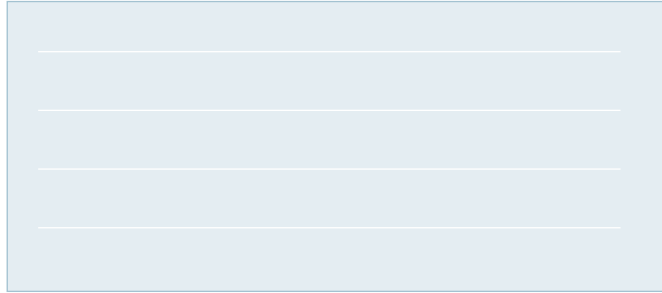
Lie on your back with your arms at your sides, your legs uncrossed, your feet splayed apart. If you do not like this position, choose another one that you prefer. Your body's position is not the most important factor here. The energy you put into the exercise is more important. Make sure you are wearing loose-fitting and comfortable clothing, especially around the stomach area. Breathe freely and naturally. View the exercise as an opportunity to receive positive energy and attention. This is your gift to you, where you are completely accepting of who you are. Do not try to change anything. Just give your body as much attention as possible. Be curious about your experience. See your thoughts and feelings. Try to let go of judgemental thoughts, and feel yourself and your body as precisely as it is. Let yourself be you, and to feel what you feel. And also when you are not feeling anything. Start with your breathing. Feel your breathing at your stomach. Precisely as you examined the raisin, focus on your breathing at your stomach. If you wish, place your hand on your stomach and feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe in and out. Lay your arms by your sides again. Now move your focus to the toes of your left foot. Feel the big toe, little toe and toes in between. You may find it helps to imagine that you are breathing in all the way down to the toes of your left foot. And you can take a deep breath in and let go on the exhalation. Then you can move your attention on to the sole of your left foot. In the same way, you scan your whole body. The top side of your left foot, ankle, lower leg, knee, thigh, right foot, leg, pelvis, lower back, middle of your back, upper back, stomach, thorax, both arms simultaneously, fingers, palms, back of your hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arms, shoulder, throat, neck, face, top of the head, side of the head and back of the head. Finally, be aware of your whole body at once.

What did you notice? What was your experience? Were you aware of your thoughts and feelings? What did your feel in your body? If several of you are doing this exercise, discuss your experiences with each other.



WWW





Body scan is a meditation exercise, where you direct your attention to different parts of your body. You scan your body.

Body scan

Body scan is a meditation exercise, where you direct your attention to different parts of your body. You scan your body. It is a way of becoming comfortable in your body. You can learn the limits of your body by being aware of your body right now. Sometimes you find calmness, sometimes not. If there are parts of your body that you consider too hurtful, you can instead concentrate on your breathing. It is best that you stay awake, even though this can be quite a challenge. To stay awake during the meditation open your eyes, lift a forearm or even stand up.

Invitation

*Come, use your senses
knowing your thoughts and
feelings, and sense who is
doing so.*

*Discipline who is doing so to
face reality always back to
this moment.*

*Make this moment into an
experience see it without
the usual filter
and you will know your
way.*

Lone Overby Fjorback

Important attitudes and approaches

The art of mindfulness practice is to let the exercise work on you. The biggest prejudice against meditation is that you sit still, feign happiness, are self-centred and do not care about the world around you. Sooner or later you will experience restlessness, pain or unpleasantness during the exercises. But if you sit long enough you will also find a basic spatiality. In meditation (as in life) you will experience restlessness, boredom, anxiety, pain, sorrow, happiness, intense joy, irritation, anger or drowsiness.

A lot of people search for theoretical knowledge about the exercises when they first try mindfulness meditation. A lot of people ask questions like “What’s it all about?”, “Why should I do it?” or “How do I do it?”. Your attitude is very important. If you are too negative you may give up very quickly and miss the opportunity to gain new knowledge or new methods to improve your well-being. If you are too positive and your expectations are too high, you may become disappointed because your problems failed to instantly disappear. The best result is achieved if you treat the exercise with natural scepticism. Follow the instructions as well as you can. And wait until the whole programme is completed before you judge whether it worked or not. Mindfulness practice will help you to be non-judgemental, to have patience, to have confidence, to have a fresh mind, to be non-striving, to be accepting, able to let go, to make decisions and to have self-discipline.

TO BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL

We have a constant stream of conscious and unconscious judgemental thought running through our heads. Judgemental thought is thought where you criticise yourself, others or your situation for being the way it is.

The mind constantly proposes reasons for why the present moment is not good enough. Your mind creates sto-

The mind constantly proposes reasons for why the present moment is not good enough.

Perhaps you are often so wrapped up in your own thoughts that you miss out on the richness of life.

ries about others, for example, “She’s like that because” Or you compare your situation with others, for example, “Why don’t I have perfect health?” The mind generates thoughts about what you like or dislike, what you want or do not want. This may be about something you seek or wish to avoid, materially or physically, or the feelings or thoughts you want to have or want to avoid. You might think: “I should be happy. I am a thankless person because I’m never completely happy.”

Your thoughts easily pull you down if you do not treat yourself with affection. Instead of trying to eradicate the world of irritating moments, you can learn to see your thoughts and accommodate your feelings and experience the world. You can open your eyes to the world that is right now instead of being lost in a fantasy. It is not an easy task but you can start by noticing when you are having judgemental thoughts. Do not judge yourself because you have judgemental thoughts. Just be aware of them. For example, when you are sitting still in a meditation, after a while your thoughts may become quiet and you may experience another consciousness.

TO HAVE PATIENCE

A lot of people say they do not have the patience to meditate. But the practice actually teaches you how to be patient. During mediation it is normal that you start to think about when the session will be over. If you think time is always racing ahead of you, then meditate and you will experience time as if it is standing still. In meditation nothing happens and that is the whole point. You learn to sit by yourself where nothing happens, and gradually you accept this.

A lot of people want to move faster than they are able to. But in mindfulness practice you must not force anything. You have to progress at your own tempo. Allow yourself to have the experiences you have. Be open in

each present moment. Completely accept each moment as if it were the changing of the seasons, which like the moment you have no control over. You can give yourself to meditation and try to be as close to your own experience as possible. You can have the same attitude, for example, in your everyday life. Give yourself to your everyday life and experience as much as possible.

TO HAVE TRUST

Try as much as possible to have trust in yourself and in your feelings in meditation. Every time you attempt to copy others you will end up moving in the wrong direction. The only thing you can hope for, is to be yourself. You are practicing to take responsibility for who you are. You are learning to listen and to trust yourself. You are learning to give yourself time to listen – and not just to act on the first impulse.

TO HAVE A FRESH MIND

Having the ability to notice the small things in everyday life means a lot. Perhaps you are often so wrapped up in your own thoughts that you miss out on the richness of life. When was the last time you looked up at the stars in the night sky? Or really listened to another person? The mind tricks you into thinking you know more than you do. “I don’t have to look up. I know what the stars look like,” you may think. Or: “I don’t have to listen to what my partner says. I’ve heard it all before.” Meditation can help you to see everything as if it was for the first time. When you have a fresh mind you are open to positive experiences. You free your mind so you can see the world, instead of only seeing what you expect to see.

Psychiatrist and meditation instructor Mark Epstein, gives an example of how you can miss out on a really huge moment in his book *Thoughts Without a Thinker* (Basic Book, 2004). He described that after a meditation, he looked at his two-month old daughter and she

Meditation requires a lot of effort. Meditation is about doing nothing. The sole aim of meditation is that you be yourself.

smiled at him. It was the first time that he had noticed her love coming back. Up until then he had been too occupied in proving his efficiency at being a good father.

TO BE NON-STRIVING

Meditation requires a lot of effort. Meditation is about doing nothing. The sole aim of meditation is that you be yourself. Perhaps you are thinking: "I am already myself." Try less and be more. You must not try to change anything or enter into a specific state. Experience and accept where you are right now. This does not mean that you may not have any ambitions or that you cannot be envious of what others do or achieve. But thoughts are not truths and you can just as well accept your thoughts (and also your envy) and let them pass without making them into a big deal. You can neither control your surroundings nor how life turns out but you can learn to accept the present moment, with love and affection for yourself.

TO BE ACCEPTING

Acceptance frequently come after you have experienced denial, anger and grief. Naturally, there are stages in a healing process when you come to terms with experiences and with things as they are. At the beginning of great life changes we usually enter denial, for example, with illness, redundancy, divorce or other forms of loss. This is followed by anger that it is us who have been struck low, and below the anger, lies grief. Acceptance means that we see things as they are, feel the anger and grief and concede: It is what it is. The most important question is: And what now?

Many of us use energy to deny or to oppose the facts. When you complain about the weather you know that – despite the facts of climate change – you have no influence over the weather. Like a lot of other things you are forced to accept the weather.

On the other hand, acceptance doesn't mean you sit in the rain and do nothing. But it is only when you have really accepted a situation that you can begin to be able to relate to it constructively. You can relate to yourself and the challenges life brings in an affectionate and constructive way.

TO LET GO

Many of the great meditation instructors say that the most important thing in meditation is to learn to let go. You can let go when you discover your thoughts are revolving like a needle stuck in a groove. You do not have to hold onto your thoughts. Permit yourself to let your thoughts be.

Every time you fall asleep, you let go, so the feeling will be recognisable. But you cannot force yourself to fall asleep. You can only create the right conditions for sleep, and sleep will arrive on its own. Every time we exhale, we also let go. Many people are burdened with years of emotional pain, without realising that they can let it go.

Many people are burdened with years of emotional pain, without realising that they can let it go.

TO MAKE A DECISION AND TO HAVE SELF-DISCIPLINE

When I am mindful, I am living my life. I do the things I have to do, the things which have meaning for me without making it into a big deal. I always take things lightly and do not easily get hung up on old issues or my own limitations. I complain less about my life. I see the possibilities that exist and I know how to take care of myself, also when my world breaks down now and then.

Mindfulness practice requires 45 minutes of your energy or motivation, at least six days a week. You do not have to like meditating, you just have to do it. Mindfulness can be a way of being which you can use in your everyday life. But you must determine if you are ready

for mindfulness practice. Choose what is important for you and that which puts you in a state where you can be yourself in an affectionate and constructive way.

Choose your own personal goals and decide what is important.

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

Even the fastest suffers defeat
if he doesn't move his feet!
Let us see what we can learn from
the hare and the tortoise's run:
The tortoise said to the hare:
"Bet you I can finish the next three
miles before you can. Want to take
my bet?"
"Ha!" cried the hare and struck
the tortoise on the shell.
"You're talking utter crap.
You're slower than the slowest.
I'm faster than the fastest!
If I accept you'll become a laughing
stock!"
"But why don't we make the bet
anyway?" said the tortoise and stuck
out a foot.
"Well hell. OK," thought the hare.
"So long fool!"
The hare tore over the hill in the blink
of an eye.
It had all the time in the world.
So it ran and teased the hunters'
dogs. They tried to catch the lightning-fast
hare. It hid in the undergrowth.
It knew winning the race was a piece
of cake. So it grazed in the heath and
played in the sun. It rested in the shade
and even took an afternoon nap, as it
stretched out on its back.

The competition was much too easy
as the tortoise slogged along.
It moved forwards slowly with a lot of
difficulty and had to stop for air.
But the hare thinking victory was easy,
lay on its back, drowsy and tired.
It rested a day and a night and used
the time to mess around.
It ate spinach and drank from the spring
knowing for certain it would win.
It thought: "How much ground has the
tortoise covered?
I'll beat him for sure."
But the hare was wrong. The tortoise
had crossed the finishing line and won.
The tortoise said: "If you never get going
you never win.
No matter how fast you run!
You sped off like a bat out of hell.
I toiled every day. And I carried a shell!"

Jean de la Fontaine

Write down your personal goals.

Write something positive about you.

Symptom registration form for the week

If there are specific things you want to work with, for example, symptoms of anxiety, stress, obsessive thought or pain, you can note the symptoms down when they occur and rate their severity in the registration form for the week (see page 31). You may also want to work on a bad habit. If I feel that I have been rejected, I often feel insulted. So I behave in a manner that means I am entirely rejected. It is a bad habit that I frequently have to work on.

In the form, each day is divided into four periods: morning, afternoon, evening and night. Write down what you did and the degree of severity of your symptoms on a scale of 0 to 10.

For example: Monday morning: Work busy, already headache 5. Afternoon: Slept all afternoon, headache 3. Evening: Really quiet, relaxed at home, headache 1. Night: Sleep, woke up sometimes but no headache.

Frequently, you think you know all about your symptoms or the things that irritate you. But often, you only know that the symptoms or problems are insufferable.

The form will help you to have an overview of your symptoms. To begin with, you must not try and alter your symptoms. You just need to register when you have them and their severity.

Main points in week 1

- Whatever your problem is, there is more right with you than wrong with you.
- This book will help you to work on your problems.
- Small steps and perseverance are the way to move forward.
- Concentrate on the now. It is the only point in time where you can learn, grow or change some thing.
- To begin with, following the mindfulness course can be stressful.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 1

- Carry out a body scan meditation at least six times a week
- Eat a meal in a mindful way
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week

WEEK 2

AGENDA:

- BODY SCAN
- YOGA
- DISCUSSION ABOUT BODY SCAN
- DISCUSSION ABOUT REGISTRATION OF SYMPTOMS
- THERE WHERE THE LIGHT ENTERS
- THOUGHTS CONTROL BEHAVIOUR
- WAYS OF LOOKING
- THE EIGHT LIES
- SOMETHING PSYCHOLOGICAL
- PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PAIN ARE INTERRELATED
- PAIN
- STRESS AND BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME
- ANXIETY
- HEALTH ANXIETY
- DEPRESSION
- OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS
- SLEEP
- REHABILITATION
- SLOW THINGS DOWN AND FEEL WHERE YOU ARE
- SHORT MEDITATION
- HOMEWORK

*Reality is not the problem.
The problem is that we only see a small part
of reality through a personal filter. And as-
cribe a meaning to what we see, a meaning
that causes us to suffer.*

Lone Overby Fjorback

WEEK 2 AWARENESS

Week 2 starts with a long body scan and five minutes of yoga. The body scan exercise is available on the CD at the back of this book. A short version of the exercise is available at www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness.



WWW

BODY SCAN

Lie on your back with your arms at your sides, your legs uncrossed, your feet splayed. If you do not like this position, choose another one that you prefer. The energy you put into the exercise is more important than your position. Make sure you are wearing loose-fitting and comfortable clothing, especially around the stomach area. Breathe freely and naturally. View the exercise as an opportunity to receive positive energy and attention. This is your gift to you, where you are completely accepting of who you are. Do not try to change anything. Just give your body as much attention as possible. Be curious about your experience. See your thoughts and feelings. Try to let go of judgemental thoughts. Allow yourself to be who you are and to be aware of what you are feeling. And also when you are not feeling anything. Begin with your breathing. Feel your stomach move as you breathe. Precisely as you examined the raisin, focus on your breathing at your stomach. If you wish, place your hand on your stomach and feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe in and out.

To feel the body

I have heard a lot of people make these sorts of remarks after they have carried out body scans for the first week of the mindfulness course:

"I just don't know how to do it."

"It made my body become really painful."

"Staying still really stressed me out."

"I can't even feel my body."

"I fell asleep straight away."

"What is the point of all of this?"

"My body relaxes in a completely new way."

A lot of people think they perform body scans incorrectly, because they do not achieve calmness or relaxation. Other people, perhaps only once, experience a kind of tranquilly that is new to them and they become disappointed when they cannot repeat the experience. There is no correct or incorrect way of carrying out a body scan. The aim of a body scan is to feel the body, as accurately as possible. In this fashion, you learn to know your body. For example, it is important to discover when your body is stressed or tense and to let your body become calm by itself. Trying too hard to relax or to have specific experiences, can have the opposite effect.

Staying awake

Another and frequent problem people experience, is staying awake during the body scan exercise. In general, a lot of people do not get enough sleep, which makes staying awake much more difficult. Choose a time when you are more likely to stay awake. I prefer body scanning in the morning, when I am freshest.

To carry out a body scan is as if you are awake while you sleep. You let go in the same way as you do when you fall asleep. Frequently, thoughts arise that slip into a dream and so you are about to fall asleep. You must always bring your attention back to your body and to feel the part of your body that you are scanning. If you

A lot of people think they performed a body scan incorrectly, because they did not become tranquil or relaxed

have forgotten a leg (or two), then continue with the body scan from the point that you have reached. I too have had trouble staying awake and when this happens I carry out a body scan standing up.

Focusing on the pain

If you experience a pain that fills your whole consciousness, you can keep your focus on that. You can examine the pain. Accept it, because it will be there under all circumstances. If the pain moves around, you can move your attention with it. If the pain is too intense, you can choose to focus on your breathing.

Finding time

Finding time for body scan can be a challenge in itself. You need to decide that the exercise is important and has a high priority. Some people feel that they are being self-centred when they spend time on themselves. Instead, think about your long-term goal, for example, having good health. Or think about this instruction you get in an airplane: In the event of lack of oxygen, you must first attach your own oxygen mask before you help anyone else.

When after a period of time of exercising yoga, I started to carry out body scans and meditation on a daily basis, my children noticed that I had become much happier. You can carry out a body scan and feel unwell at the same time, but as time goes by you become better at staying with what is difficult. And you have more capacity, perhaps because you are no longer using energy in avoiding thoughts, pain or tensions.

Registering your symptoms

Perhaps registering your symptoms in week 1 was a frustrating experience. Their very existence may make you unhappy or upset. A lot of people try to avoid thinking about them. But if you want to eliminate your symptoms, you have to know when and in what situa-

How did registering your symptoms go?

tions they arise. Remember, registering your symptoms also reveals those times when your symptoms are gone and when you are feeling better.

There are a lot of everyday things we cannot change and likewise it can be frustrating to look at a symptom or problem that persists. But there can also be things that are relatively easy to change but which you perhaps were not aware of. When I filled the form out, I discovered that I felt worst when I was on a night shift and best when I saw a Christmas television series with my children.

*Keep your gaze fixed on the wounded place,
for it's here where the light enters.*

Rumi

There where the light enters

You are reading this book because it is highly likely there is something you want to change. We feel Rumi's "wounded place" differently. I often feel it like a stone in

Mindfulness is not psychotherapy. Mindfulness cannot help to explain the way your life has developed in a particular fashion.

the stomach or a tightness in the chest. It may be that you are experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety or depression. Perhaps you are ill, have chronic pain or are experiencing a heavy sorrow. Perhaps you think you lack enthusiasm or direction in your life or have undesirable habits you want to work on.

Mindfulness is keeping your gaze fixed upon the wounded place. It seems completely illogical to feel that which you would rather avoid feeling, and some people immediately think that spending your time in this way is to engage in suffering. But there are only two options: You can either feel the wounded place or you can put it away. As Rumi says, keeping your gaze fixed on the wounded place lets you see the place where the light enters. When you have held your gaze long enough, you discover there are other things in the centre of the pain, for example, happiness, spaciousness, creativity, humour and thankfulness.

Thoughts control behaviour

The way you perceive your problems or pain is an important factor in determining how you react. If you think: “This is ruining my life.”, it most likely will do just that. A lot of people speculate about situations or events that have gone wrong. Through psychotherapy you can examine new and old conflicts and the reasons for why you repeat the same undesirable reaction patterns. In cognitive behavioural therapy, you work with the thoughts that lead to disability, low self esteem and disorder-driven behaviour. If a person who is suffering from anxiety thinks: “This is ruining my life, so I’m avoiding any kind of social interaction.”, therapy will focus on changing the thought process and behaviour by practice the person in social interaction.

When there is a lot of symptoms, it is difficult to find a cause and even though you change your thought process and practice your behaviour, the symptoms may persist.

This is where mindfulness can help, as the technique can increase your acceptance of the symptoms that are impossible or difficult to change.

To accept life, as it is right now, can involve denial, anger and sorrow. Mindfulness lets you see these feelings and continuously actively work on acceptance: Such is life - what do I do? How do I best look after myself?

Mindfulness is not psychotherapy. Mindfulness cannot help to explain the way your life has developed in a particular fashion. Instead, you have to be aware of now and accept it as it is. Through meditation you learn to be aware of feelings and see the way the mind creates thought and meaning. With mindfulness meditation, you leave the thoughts, feelings and pain alone, while you interestedly observe what happens.

TEST YOUR AWARENESS

You Tube has a 'test your awareness' film. Viewers are instructed to count the number of passes a team makes while a gorilla moonwalks across the court. Almost every viewer fails to notice the gorilla. Watch the gorilla and you can't count the number of passes. It is highly likely that you already know that you tend to automatically see what you expect to see in your everyday life. You unconsciously see the gorilla or count the number of passes and a whole lot of other things that take place in your field of view.

Ways of looking at things

Through our five senses we are continuously affected by the world around us, for example by other people, the weather, radio and computer. We are also affected internally: by the body and the mind. Psychiatrist and brain researcher Daniel Siegel describes the ability to feel your body as being like a sixth sense, an ability that can promote intuition and decision making. He proposed that the ability to observe the mind (thoughts,

feelings, dreams, hopes and meaning) is a seventh sense, which promotes empathy and insight, while the ability to sense one's relation to oneself and others is an eight sense, which can promote social skills.

The impact or information from Siegel's eight senses are processed in the brain. And the way we perceive the effects determines how we react. Previously, it was believed that information entered a person's field of awareness as a passive process. Today brain researchers suggest that the selection of the perceived information is an active process. It is a general feature of human beings that they attribute meaning to themselves or to a situation, this meaning is crucial for our individual reaction patterns, but it can be both deficient and wrong.



As the classic illustration of the old/young woman shows, it can be extremely difficult to see a thing or a situation in a new perspective. It is almost impossible to see both at the same time. In his book *Peace Is Every Step* (Bantam Books 1991), the Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, writes that flowers and rubbish are equal. Flowers become rubbish and rubbish transforms into flowers. You can practise to see the rubbish in the flower and the flower in the rubbish. In the same way you can see periods with many symptoms or problems as perhaps being just as valuable as those periods where you have no symptoms of problems.

The eight lies

The eight lies is originally a North American folk tale, rewritten in modern English by the American poet Angeles Arrien. The folk tale explains how people deceive themselves by believing they have to be something else.

There is nothing wrong in wishing for the eight things named. The question is, is it not possible to value life as

it is right now? In Western cultures we are taught we have to fight for success in our careers, finances, family and leisure time. We do not learn how to accept ourselves, independent of how much money we earn, what job we have, if we have a job, how many children we have, if we have children, our physical appearance or if we are ill or healthy.

THE EIGHT LIES

If only I were rich, then I would be happy.

If only I were famous, then I would be happy.

If only I could find the right person to marry, then I would be happy.

If only I had more friends, then I would be happy.

If only I were more attractive, then I would be happy.

If only I weren't physically handicapped, then I would be happy.

If only someone close to me hadn't died, then I would be happy.

If only the world were a better place, then I would be happy.

Do you believe that? Or can you wake up to your life right now?

You can be successful and still feel empty. And you can own nothing and feel wealthy. The ability to feel comfortable and give others the space to be themselves, is the ability most people admire the most in others. Despite this, only a minority of people practice themselves in this ability. Instead, most people spend their time chasing external values. When successful people moan about their lives, it can be difficult for everyone else to accept. We think: "If that was me I'd be happy." The point is, it is your mind that believes that it would be much easier if you were ...

Mindfulness is a method to learn to accept yourself and find peace with yourself. Independently of whether you are successful or not.

'Something psychological'

Symptoms can be synonymous with that there is something wrong with the body. Stomach pains can be a symptom of appendicitis, joint pains can be a symptom of arthritis and cramps can be a symptom of epilepsy. Previously, doctors would conclude that if you had a lot of physical symptoms but no disorder, then it was due to 'something psychological'. If a psychiatrist could not put forward a psychological diagnosis, the conclusion was that the symptoms were caused by something 'physical'. And whenever there is no known physical or psychological disorder involved, the category 'something psychological' is typically used.

CHARCOT AND HYSTERIA

Symptoms can be seen as a person's way of expressing distress. The French neurologist and professor Jean-Martin Charcot worked on what he called hysteria in women in the middle of the 19th century. The theory at the time was that hysteria was caused by previous unresolved conflicts. It is roughly equivalent to the explanation "something psychological" people use today.

We do not know what Charcot's female patients were exposed to but we do know that every individual reacts to excessive physical, psychological or social distress with physical or psychological symptoms. Physical distress can be a cancer, broken leg, etc. Psychological distress can be from having a sick child or from being exposed to bullying, etc. Believing your life is not how it should be can also cause psychological distress. Divorce, unemployment, job insecurity or poor finances are all forms of social distress.

Physical and psychological pain are interrelated

To divide symptoms into physical and psychological categories is an obsolete approach. We do not know why people who suffer from the same disorder can have many or few symptoms. At the same time, we have discovered that many physical disorders also have a psychological component that forms part of the causal

explanation. For example, the way a person manages feelings, thoughts and stress, plays a part in the course and development of very many disorders. Studies have shown that repressed anger is linked to an increased risk of early death, independent of age, gender, education, smoking or obesity. Studies of diaries written by nuns starting from when they were 22 years old, has shown those who had a forgiving God and a high level of emotional satisfaction, 40 years later had a lower risk of dying than those nuns who had low levels of emotional satisfaction and whose God was a punishing deity.

RENÉ DESCARTES

In 1637, the French philosopher René Descartes introduced the idea of dualism; that the mind is independent of the body. From then on people looked on the body as a machine, which physicians could study and repair and the mind as something that was determined by ourselves and which was separate from the body. Today, we know this to be incorrect. We cannot just decide to have a headache, palpitations, to be tired or to have difficulty in concentrating. We do not have this power over our bodies.

Pain

During a crisis, you can experience physical pain. The last time my world broke down, I was convinced that I had destroyed all of my inner demons, forgiven everything and everyone and I was at one with my life. But that was not the case. In a crisis situation, we may experience that life is not what we think and may be forced to rewrite our own narrative. It hurts. I experienced it as a physical pain that ran behind my left eye, up over my head and down my left shoulder and arm, down through the left side of my back to my left buttock area. I can actually evoke the pain just by thinking about it. The pain existed for four to six months, a period of time when I had to cancel many things and use the time to lick my wounds. Luckily, thanks to yoga and meditation, I know how to look after myself.

THE BODY REMEMBERS PAIN

If the body has experienced violent pain it remembers it. In this way, pain can become a way of reacting to things. Children who have experienced extreme earache when they were small can feel pain in their body, for example in the legs, in reaction to something that is distressing them. Perhaps the distress is caused by hunger, lack of sleep, too many leisure activities or conflicts in school. There is nothing actually wrong with the child's legs but the child's reaction to the distress causes pain in his/her legs.

Pain affects mood. I have read that there is no greater joy than when a person is suddenly freed from pain.

Lone Overby Fjorback

The intensity of pain varies over time. Negative thinking makes pain worse, for example, thinking the pain will never get better or thinking it will definitely get worse from now on. The mind cannot concentrate for a particularly long period of time, neither can it concentrate on pain. If you really focus your concentration on the pain, your attention moves, exactly as it does when you try to keep your concentration focused on your breathing. You can try to place a hand on where it hurts and say to yourself: "I'm taking care of this."

A lot of Mindfulness Therapy course participants say they do not experience any difference in the first 5–8 weeks. But by the end of the course they are surprised to find that they have either completely stopped or use considerably less painkillers. The on-going results of my PhD studies also show that the therapy course can reduce pain. After 8–9 weeks of daily mindfulness practice where participants focus on examining their pain, many of them find that the pain moves or changes.

People react differently to distress. Some people develop physical or psychological symptoms, while others develop some form of abusive or self-harming behaviour.

What symptoms do you experience?

When you are experiencing symptoms, you can ask yourself:

- Do my symptoms have a meaning?
- Do I look after myself well enough?
- Am I so busy that my body has difficulty keeping up?
- Am I getting enough rest?
- Am I eating properly?
- Am I getting enough exercise?
- Do I drink or smoke too much?
- Is there anyone I can talk to?
- Do I share my thoughts or problems with others?
- Am I more vulnerable in this period of my life?
- Do I have a lot of judgemental thoughts about my life?
- Am I living life as I would wish?

AFFECTION EXERCISE

Imagine someone is in distress, a person whom you have deep affection for. For example, a child who is hurt. Write down what you would say in the situation and describe what your posture would be.

You most likely ask yourself: "Are you unwell?", "Is there something I can do to help?", "Come and get a hug" or "Dear thing, what has happened?" In other words, you show care, understanding, acceptance and affection. Perhaps you lean forwards and open your arms. Perhaps you blow on/touch where it hurts. Why do you do that? Because it helps!

Imagine right now that you are in distress. How do you talk to yourself and what is your posture?

When it is yourself who feels poorly, perhaps you reproach yourself. Perhaps you say: "How could I have been so stupid?", "Pull yourself together", "Why can't I handle that when everyone else can?" At the same time, perhaps you squeeze your stomach, tense your muscles and tighten your throat. Why reproach yourself? Because you want to be seen in a good light. You want to be loved and the mind traps you into thinking if you were perfect it will be easier for others to love you.

The next section looks at when symptoms become a disorder. It provides case examples of specific disorders where patients have used mindfulness.

Stress and Bodily Distress Syndrome

Functional disorders are conditions where patients suffer from physical symptoms that cannot be attributed to any known medical or surgical disorder. Anyone can

experience physical symptoms which do not result from any known physical or psychological disorder. You can say that the body is reacting to stress. You do not have to feel that you are stressed. But if you have a lot of symptoms, it is a sign of too much strain. In most cases the symptoms go away again, especially if you change some feature of your life.

Overall, you can do two things: reduce the strain or increase your resources. For some people, the symptoms are so serious and long-lasting that they develop into a disorder. Individuals may be diagnosed with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic hypermobility syndrome, chronic whiplash, chronic tennis elbow, chronic stress, chronic pain, burn-out or other symptoms that do not have a medical explanation.

Studies have shown that these syndromes have uniform symptoms and it is impossible to categorise them into separate disorders. In 2007, the Research Clinic for Functional Disorders (Forskningsklinikken for Funktionelle Lidelse) studied the symptoms of 900 patients with functional disorders. The symptoms were split into four groups:

- Heart and circulation symptoms, which resemble the physical symptoms from panic attacks
- Stomach symptoms that are equivalent to irritable bowel syndrome
- Muscle symptoms that are equivalent to fibro-myalgia
- General symptoms, equivalent to chronic fatigue syndrome

Doctors working in each specialist field were asked what in their opinions were the cause of the symptoms. Their answer was stress. Subsequently, the research clinic devised a new scientifically-based diagnosis: Bodily Distress Syndrome.

PHYSICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS AND DISTRESS

You have Bodily Distress Syndrome if you have at least three symptoms from at least three of the following groups. The condition must have been present for at least two years and must affect the individual's ability to function.

Heart & circulation 'Autonomous'	Hot sensations or cold sweats Shakes or tremors Dry mouth Palpations or irregular heartbeat Upset stomach or 'butterflies' Flushes or blushes Constricted chest Out of breath for no apparent reason Shortness of breath with fast and deep breathing
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Stomach & intestine	Loose stools Stomach pain Bloating, feeling of tenseness or heaviness Diarrhoea Heartburn or regurgitation Constipation Queasiness or discomfort Vomiting Burning feeling in chest or top of stomach
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Muscle & joints	Pain in arms and legs Muscle pain and joint pain Feeling of paralysis or weakness Back pain Pain that moves Unpleasant feeling of numbness or spinning
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General symptoms	Tiredness Difficulty remembering things Difficulty concentrating Tension headache Dizziness
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PHYSICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS AND DISTRESS

Depressive reactions	Nervous reactions
Dejection	Tendency to worry
Weepy	Restlessness and disquiet
Isolation	Tiredness
Loss of interest and ability to feel happy	Overly-sensitive to noise
Feelings of guilt	Irritability
Reduced self-confidence	Tension and feeling of being under pressure
Feeling of hopelessness thinking about future	Muscle tension
Thoughts of suicide/death	Tension pain (e.g. headache, back pain)

To date, there is no official Danish-language term for Bodily Distress Syndrome, though it is roughly translated as “chronic stress condition”.

WHY DO YOU GET BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME?

Health anxiety (previously called hypochondria and illness-anxiety), long-term stress and strain, and too many unnecessary medical examinations and treatments increase the risk of a person developing Bodily Distress Syndrome. Inherited factors, the environment, diet, smoking, exercise and stress factors can also increase this risk, in the same way as a series of other disorders do, for example, cardiac disorders, depression and cancer.

BRAIN ACTIVITY

A study took patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome and subjected them to pain stimuli while their brains were scanned in a PET scanner. The same procedure was carried out on healthy test subjects. The study showed the brains of the patients suffering from

Bodily Distress Syndrome reacted differently to the pain stimuli. The healthy individuals had activity in many areas of the brain while the brains of the patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome had activity in only a few areas. Brain researchers claim the results demonstrate that the brains of patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome have a reduced ability to process pain stimuli.

DEFINITION

The Research Clinic for Functional Disorders gives the following definition:

"Bodily Distress Syndrome is a chronic disorder with symptoms from several organ systems and has a moderate to severe impact on everyday activities. The prognosis for untreated Bodily Distress Syndrome is generally poor quality of life and ability to function but there is no proof of any increases in the mortality of the disorder. Some sufferers retire early. Only a small number of sufferers engage in full-time employment while avoiding frequent sickness absence."

Perhaps the reduced sensitivity to pain is due to the fact that the person only feels pain when he or she has become overly distressed.

HIGH PAIN THRESHOLD

Paradoxically, the brain studies also showed that the patients had a higher pain threshold than healthy individuals. Perhaps the reduced sensitivity to pain is due to the fact that the person only feels pain when he or she has become overly distressed.

It is also thought that many of the physical symptoms of Bodily Distress Syndrome occur because the sufferer's brain is 'playing a trick'. The brain is giving signals that it hurts even though there is no injury in the part of the body where it hurts, exactly like phantom pain, where a person feels pain in a missing arm or leg.

One theory is that patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome have a diminished ability to filter signals from the body. They register signals that healthy individuals are unaware of. At the moment when the

body's signals reach consciousness, they are in all likelihood interpreted as distress. People who suffer from health anxiety (see page 54) have an increased risk of developing Bodily Distress Syndrome. This is because the signals coming from the body cause more pain if the individual thinks, for example, that they are due to cancer and not lack of sleep.

BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME AND OTHER DISORDERS

Once diagnosed with Bodily Distress Syndrome, a lot of people fret over whether they will be offered medical examinations in the future. Will every symptom be interpreted as part of this disorder? Bodily Distress Syndrome sufferers have the same right to be treated as any other patient. They are as susceptible to ill-health and are as mortal as the next man.

WHAT TRIGGERS BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME?

Long-term stress can trigger Bodily Distress Syndrome. For some people, it starts with a death in the family or an accident they have been involved in. When the particular person is examined, it is frequently discovered that they have been under strain for a long period of time before the accident occurred.

A lot of unnecessary medical examinations can themselves trigger Bodily Distress Syndrome. It is extremely distressing waiting to find out if you have cancer, sclerosis or a cerebral haemorrhage. Unfortunately, both thoughts and examinations can negatively affect health. Often the supposed solution – pondering over the symptoms and several examinations – can become a part of the problem.

It can be incredibly difficult to accept that you have Bodily Distress Syndrome, if you were already convinced you had something else.

A lot of unnecessary medical examinations can themselves trigger Bodily Distress Syndrome.

CASE: STRESS

I remember a woman who for 15 years, worked as a night cleaner and looked after her three children (two boys and a girl) during the day. The boys had ADHD and the girl was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Their mother had escaped a violent marriage and now lived with a loving partner with three children of his own, who stayed in the house every other week. Her sons were violent and her daughter self-harmed. She said she never had a quiet moment. To an outsider the situation was intolerable, but after the Mindfulness Therapy course, she said: "I've realised my worries won't let me have a single quiet moment. When I can't do anything, for example when I'm in the class, I find a space where I can let myself relax, one moment at a time." She took this home with her and discovered many more moments where she could relax.

DISORDER BEHAVIOUR

Patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome relate very differently to their symptoms. Some people completely ignore the symptoms and for many years they consume a lot of pain-relief medication to be able to work. They are frequently ill during their vacations. They cannot alter a state of affairs where they are continuously over straining themselves. Others cease to work or cease to engage in sport or stop seeing their family and friends, for fear their condition will worsen. Every time the person has visitors, he/she gets worse, which leads the person to believe that: "Now I can't even do that." These two reactions represent extremes and are equally inappropriate.

Mindfulness meditation can help people who suffer from Bodily Distress Syndrome to feel their pain, to examine it and in that way to work with it. It is important to learn your limits. To begin with, you do this by carrying out body scans and registering your symptoms. It helps if you take a friendly approach to noticing your symptoms and to see your thoughts as thoughts, not truths.

CASE: BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME

Five months after Mindfulness Therapy, a course participant wrote: "I can't understand that I feel SO much better in a just a few months. I was a diligent and positive student. Fully-committed to becoming well – and it seems I've succeeded. Feeling how I am, has become second nature – stop, one thing at a time, not be perfect, go slowly and feel the ground beneath my feet, etc. I've become excellent at 'discovering' if my mind is too busy with 'other' things while I am doing routine tasks. I challenge my limits by seeing how much I can, and gradually I've become very secure with the situation – I feel more and more that I have gotten my life back! I can go on and on ... a lot less pain, six weeks between migraines; which are milder, a lot of faith in the future, I have a social life again ..."

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal reaction to situations that are dangerous or experienced as dangerous. The physical symptoms of anxiety can be, for example, palpitations, nausea, sweats, tremors and dizziness. Anxiety becomes a disorder when the body's natural ability to feel anxiety occurs in safe situations and prevents the person from being alone, using forms of transport, holding down a job, participating in leisure activities, etc.

Two Cavemen

There were two cavemen: one was very anxious and the other was very adventurous. Whenever the adventurous caveman proposed something, the anxious one replied: "No. No. It's much too dangerous." The point being, we are all the descendants of the anxious primitive man, because our adventurous ancestors died out long ago.

CASE: ANXIETY

A woman with severe panic disorder participated in the Mindfulness Therapy course. She suffered panic attacks whenever she boarded a train. She managed to think: "You can do the usual thing and let the panic win and not get on the train, or you can find your seat, sit down and focus on your breathing." To her great surprise, the panic attack stopped. All that she had done was focus on her breathing. She usually avoided using the carriage toilet because the gazes of other people could trigger a new panic attack. She said very proudly: "I went to the toilet 5-6 times just to show myself that I could."

Health anxiety

Health anxiety is an anxiety where people fear that they have a serious disorder. They do not want to be ill. A lot of people who suffer from health anxiety have pre-

CASE: HEALTH ANXIETY

I taught a course participant who cried the first five times we met. She despaired that she had all of the symptoms of multiple sclerosis but was not being treated for the disease. I repeatedly invited her to feel her anxiety and see the thought: "I have undetected multiple sclerosis." I asked her to notice where in her body she felt the anxiety and the feelings that were associated with it. She felt a suffocating sensation in the chest and stomach and a great sorrow, because, as she put it: "I have been like this my entire life and I'm not stupid. I clearly see that it is ruining my life." Being able to give herself space and acceptance was a new experience for her. She used a lot of energy being ashamed of herself. During meditation she felt a warmth in her body that felt "as though my mother was comforting me." The warmth expressed the fact that she had contacted a love that is accessible to everyone. She was able to see the other aspects and richness of life. She continued to have a fear of having multiple sclerosis but it no longer took up so much of her attention.

viously experienced that they or their parents were seriously ill, and it was not taken seriously. Because of this, the individual has become very aware of the danger of not reacting to something in time. The fear has become a phobia, where the person completely avoids the subject of ill health and seeks therapists who can provide reassurance. Unfortunately, the reassurance is short-lived. Thus, the treatment of anxiety is to look at the unfortunate behavioural pattern. Mindfulness meditation can practice you to see thoughts as thoughts and to work on your awareness, so that your health anxiety becomes lessened and manageable.

Depression

To be depressed is one of the most unpleasant things you can think of. Self-reproach, feelings of guilt, less energy and desire, sadness and difficulty in sleeping are typical symptoms of depression and it is important that depression is diagnosed and treated. Often, people who have had a severe depression say that it is the worst thing they have ever experienced and they will do anything to avoid it. But the fear of developing new depressions can cause you to constantly check your state of mind. You can become scared of being unhappy. It is important to see a moment of ordinary sadness, as just a moment with sadness and not as a sign of a failed life.

A bad mood can easily become a vicious circle, and feeling guilty because you are unhappy, with the fear that this state of affairs will never end and being frightened by possible suicidal thoughts. As stated earlier, it is not your feelings or thoughts that are the problem, but the way you relate to them. At the same time, it is crucial that if you are depressed, you start to receive the correct treatment.

Obsessive thoughts

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a form of anxiety where the individual is plagued by obsessive thoughts

and compulsions. People who suffer from OCD are afraid of their own thoughts. The majority are aware that their obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviour is absurd. You can develop the perception that your thoughts are truths that you must comply with. For example, you perceive yourself as a bad person because you have 'bad' thoughts. You try to avoid the thoughts because they involve anxiety. All of us, even those who do not suffer from OCD, are afraid of our thoughts to one degree or another. We cannot decide the nature of our spontaneous thoughts. They arise without our influence. But thought is not inherently dangerous.

CASE: SEVERE DEPRESSION

A yoga instructor reproached herself because she could not use yoga and that she was hospitalised for depression. Her condition declined over a two-year period, until she could no longer get out of bed, wash, clothe or feed herself. With the correct medication, she made a rapid recovery.

Mindfulness is a prevention programme, not a treatment. Mindfulness or psychotherapy should not play a role in the treatment of severe depression that requires hospitalisation. I have seen many patients who have talked to therapists about all of the sad things in their lives; e.g. difficult relationships with parents. But once they receive the correct medication and are no longer depressed, all of the sad things are no longer a problem.

Mindfulness practice can trigger a lot of emotional reactions. Looking at things you would rather not see is difficult. For many healthy people this can involve a lot of tears. So practice requires professional guidance. The techniques must not be used to treat severe depression. Depression causes patients to focus on everything that has gone wrong in their lives.

CASE: OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS

I once treated a woman who was persecuted by obsessive thoughts about being a good person, which ordered her to follow in the words of Jesus. but as she put it: "The most ridiculous thing is, I'm not even religious." If she passed someone on the street she would think the person was bad and there was no end to what she would do to remedy the thought. A bad thought meant she had to go back and start all over and hope she did not meet anyone, which would cause new thoughts. Sometimes it took forever to get to work. Her treatment involved meditation on sound. Sound surrounds us constantly. We choose to notice it or we ignore it. For example, we ended every consultation by first meditating on sounds and then talking about the spontaneous thoughts. The woman did not like the spontaneous thoughts but she experienced calm when she meditated on the sound. In this way, she could always focus on the sounds whenever she had negative thoughts. The next step was to view the thoughts in the same way as the sounds.

Sleep

A lot of people have difficulty sleeping. Some people find it difficult to fall asleep, others wake up several times during the night and lie awake for a long time. Some people feel constantly tired or need to sleep a lot. Too little sleep and too much sleep are equally bad for you. A lot of people have an unrealistic idea of how many hours are needed for a good night's sleep. Most people require between six and nine hours of sleep every night and no sleep during the day. It is normal to wake several times during the night. Most of us do not notice this or quickly fall asleep again. Very few people sleep like a stone for eight hours.

Without doubt, sleeping badly affects our moods, pain threshold and thoughts. An adult can easily cope with a few nights of poor sleep. But long-term sleep problems are damaging. Sleeplessness has many causes, for

A lot of people today live in a paradoxical situation where they are half asleep when they are awake and half awake when they are asleep.

Erich Fromm

example, stress, depression, bad eating habits or sleeping habits. If you lie in bed and think that you cannot sleep, it is difficult to fall asleep. The body gets used to a pattern, where time in bed is 'worry time'. Sleeping during the day instead of at night, is a vicious circle.

If you sleep poorly at night, it is important that you go to bed late and avoid sleeping during the day. On the first nights, you might go to bed at 01:00. When you begin to sleep at night, start to go to bed fifteen minutes earlier. You have to teach your body new habits. If you cannot sleep, focus on your breathing. If you do not fall asleep after 15 minutes, get out of bed and only go back to bed when you are feeling tired again. In this fashion, your body learns that your bed is to sleep in.

SLEEP HYGIENE

Go to bed late at night and get up at the same time every morning, no matter how much sleep you got.	Get up and go into another room if after 15 minutes you have not fallen asleep. Go to bed again when you are drowsy.
Lie down only to sleep, when you are drowsy.	Repeat the above if you cannot sleep (several times if necessary).
Use your bed only for sleep and sex.	Avoid falling asleep during the day.
Avoid tobacco, coffee, alcohol and soft drinks before bed.	Avoid taking sleeping medicine over longer periods.
Exercise during the day on a daily basis.	You can control your waking hours – not your sleep hours.

CAUSES OF SLEEPLESSNESS

Poor sleep hygiene

Stimulants (coffee, tobacco, soft drinks)
Light, sound, food, exercise late at night

Physical disorders

Nocturnal urination
Pain
Chronic bronchitis
Reduced cardiac function

Learned sleeplessness

Poor sleeping habits
Unrealistic expectations of sleeping hours
Lack of knowledge

Circadian rhythm disorders

Shift work
Jet lag
Chronic bed rest
Senility

Psychological disorders

Stress, anxiety and depression

Medicine and alcohol

Unexplained sleeplessness

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation following stress, Bodily Distress Syndrome, anxiety or depression follows the same principles as rehabilitation after a broken limb or a sports injury. Correct and regular rehabilitation results in fewer complications and fewer relapses. Breaking from the rehabilitation principles (forcing rehabilitation and

THE STAIRCASE MODEL

Life consists of good days and bad days. Your mood will be affected if you are sick, are in pain, have a depression or anxiety. A lot of people do not think about the fact that their mood continues to swing, just at a lower level. When a lot of people are in a good mood, they think: "I better get out and do something." And so they over stress themselves and become even worse. They have started a vicious circle. The trick is to find out how bad you are in the bad days and to accept this and to slowly practice yourself up from there, one step at a time. This is what is known as the staircase model.

ignoring warning signs) results in a 'jagged' process, with large swings in outcome, which can prevent a person from becoming well.

Slow things down and feel where you are

You do not know what the future will bring. The only thing you can control is where you focus your attention here and now and how you relate to it. Meditation is about being yourself and knowing who you are. And seeing that here and now impacts on what happens next. If you want to go in a specific direction, you need to find out where you are right now. You need to slow things down, so you can feel where you are. This is what we do in meditation.

You will certainly have discovered that your thoughts tend to fly around when you meditate. That's just the way the mind works. Holding your concentration for a long time is difficult. You become distracted by sounds, thoughts, feelings or signals from your body. Accept it and keep working, again and again, bringing your attention back into focus. The goal is to consciously work on attention. It is important not to suppress thoughts or feelings. You must not try to enter into a specific state.

When you meditate, you must not force anything. Your task is to feel what there is. No matter what you experience, it is your experience. If you are bored, you are bored. If you hurt, you hurt. If you have anxiety, you have anxiety. Be conscious of your experience and accept it as it is.

No matter what you have experienced in your life, it has already happened. The most important question is: And what now? This moment is the only thing you can work with, no matter if you like it or not. Frequently, we forget that we are here right now. It is as if you charge around and lose contact with yourself and your options.

Frequently, you forget that you are here right now. It is as if you charge around and lose contact with yourself and your options.

You enter a kind of robotic state, where you see, think and do all the usual things – without sensing anything. Most people have experienced the situation where they have been driving in their car and suddenly realise that they have travelled a good distance without registering it. Their attention was elsewhere. It is a dangerous state to be in (not just when driving), because it means you are not able to take care of yourself. This state is popularly called “going into automatic pilot”. Mindfulness is about switching off your automatic pilot and being completely present in your life.

In the coming weeks you can become aware of the good experiences in your everyday life, by completing the registration form for the week on page 63.

SHORT SITTING MEDITATION

Sitting in a comfortable position, with your back straight, free of the chair's backrest if you prefer, you may want to look around the room. When you are ready, you can either close your eyes or focus at a point in front of you. Notice how your body breathes. Breathe naturally. Do not alter your breathing. Your body will breathe for you. It has done this your entire life. The only difference is that you now feel it. Feel the air being inhaled and exhaled through your body and try to let go of all other things and just be with your breathing. Every time you find that your attention has drifted to somewhere else, refocus on your breathing. Sit like this for 5–10 minutes.



Main points in week 2

- You see reality through a filter – frequently you see only a small part of reality. Your interpretation can be incorrect or insufficient.
- The way you look at your disorder, pain or symptoms, determines how you react. And the way you look at the exercises and the discipline required to carry out the exercises, determines how you react.
- When you give your body positive energy and attention, you can help yourself to come into contact with the body's ability to heal itself.
- When we cease to remove ourselves, for example from pain or a situation, a whole new way of learning opens up to us.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 2

- Carry out a body scan meditation at least six times a week
- Meditate sitting down for at least 10–15 minutes every day
- Use mindfulness as part of your routine activities (when you brush your teeth, take a shower, read to your children, empty the bin, etc.)
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the good experiences registration form for the week

GOOD EXPERIENCES REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE WEEK.

You can try and be aware of good experiences or events every day, while they happen.

Complete the form.

	Situation What did you experience?	Were you aware of the bad experience WHILE it happened?	Body What did you feel in your body while it happened?	Thoughts What thoughts did you have?	Feelings What feelings did you have?	Now What thoughts and feelings are you having as you write this now?
Day 1						
Day 2						
Day 3						
Day 4						
Day 5						
Day 6						
Day 7						

WEEK 3

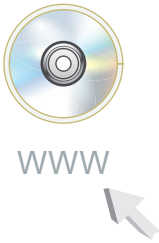
AGENDA:

- SITTING MEDITATION
- DISCUSSION ON SITTING MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS ON ROUTINE ACTIVITIES
- FORMAL AND INFORMAL PRACTICE
- WALKING MEDITATION
- BREATHING
- MINDFULNESS YOGA
- MEDITATION ON A GOOD EXPERIENCE
- WHAT MAKE SOMETHING A GOOD EXPERIENCE?
- DEEPER CONTENTMENT CAN BE TRAINED
- WE ARE ALL THE SAME
- IT IS HAPPENING NOW!
- PLACE ENERGY IN THE NOW
- MEDITATION
- NEW HOMEWORK

Sometimes happiness is a blessing - but generally it's a conquest. The magic moment of the day changes us and makes us take off in the direction of our dreams.

Paulo Coelho

WEEK 3 NOW



Week three starts with a short sitting meditation. You can also do the exercise lying down. The goal is to feel your breathing, as it is. When you discover that your attention has moved, bring it back to your breathing, without reproaching yourself. When you sit still in meditation, you can easily get the urge to move. You are not forbidden from moving but if you do, do it mindful, you can also remain sitting still and examine what happens. Perhaps you come into contact with a physical pain. You cannot injure your body by sitting still.

SHORT MEDITATION SITTING DOWN

Sitting in a comfortable position, with your back straight, free of the chair's backrest if you prefer, you may want to look around the room. When you are ready, you can either close your eyes or focus at a point in front of you. Notice how your body breathes. Breathe naturally. Do not alter your breathing. Your body will breathe for you. It has done this your entire life. The only difference is that you now feel it. Feel the air being inhaled and exhaled through your body and try to let go of all other things and just be with your breathing. Every time you realise your attention has drifted to somewhere else, refocus on your breathing. Sit like this for 5–10 minutes.

How did the exercises in week 2 (short sitting meditation and mindfulness of routine activities) go?

Formal and informal practice

A course participant asked me how it would her good to be fully-present while she brushed her teeth. The answer is that we practice our ability to experience the moment and to be aware of the here and now.

Mindfulness practice can be both formal and informal. Formal mindfulness practice is the time you have allocated to daily meditation. Informal practice is all the other times you meditate. You can use formal meditation to become more conscious of the moment in your everyday life. To live right now. To eat while you eat, work while you work, be family when you are with your family, and friend when you are with your friends.

In his book *The Art of Loving* (Harper 1956), Erich Fromm states that both important and unimportant things “assume a new dimension of reality”, when we focus our full attention on what we do.

Meditation instructor Larry Rosenberg, names five ways to systematically bring mindfulness into your everyday life:

1. As much as possible, do only one thing at a time
2. Fully concentrate on what you are doing
3. When you lose your concentration, bring it back
4. Repeat step three several times
5. Examine whatever it is that is distracting you

WALKING MEDITATION

Start to walk. Feel how your weight presses down one foot as you lift the other foot. Feel what happens in the ankle, the whole foot and the whole body. Feel how and when the foot touches the ground again and how your weight is placed on the other foot. Try to look ahead and not look down. Examine your body's incredibly complicated and amazing ability to walk. Walk quite slowly, to and fro in a straight line (just 2–4 metres), for around five minutes. Notice that when you concentrate on walking it can suddenly become quite difficult. Remember, you are used to walking without thinking about it.

Most of us cover a lot of ground every day. To bring mindfulness to your gait, is another way to become aware of the now.

Walking meditation

Most of us cover a lot of ground every day. Using mindfulness as you move is another way to become aware of the now. Walking meditation is walking normally at a slower tempo. Your body naturally knows how to walk – what is new is that you examine how it does it. I frequently use walking meditation in my work as a doctor, when I am preparing to meet the next patient. Every step can be a reminder to be present in the here and now.

Breathing

Breathing is constantly with us. It offers you a way of being in touch with yourself and your life, right now. Every single breath is different and the way you breathe reflects your state of mind. If you are busy, stressed or afraid, your breath is quick and shallow. If you are relaxed, it is deep. Actually changing the way you breathe changes your state of mind.

Breathing is known as the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, because we have a measure of control over our breathing, unlike the rest of the autonomic nervous system, which controls heart rhythm, blood pressure, digestion, body temperature, etc. The body controls our breathing 99% of the time, and if we should forget to take a breath, our body will quickly take over. By examining how our own body breathes, we can contact our unconscious, or that which happens of itself. Focussing on breathing and allowing it to relax is a very important way of relaxing the body and mind.

YOGA

Carry out different yoga exercises. Decide for yourself if you want the yoga session to be short or long.



WWW



Mindfulness yoga

Mindfulness yoga is exercises, where you feel your body by using your breathing and focusing your attention. It is about being as close as possible to your breathing and body; exactly as with body scanning. You learn to respect the body' limits and relax tense muscles. Yoga cultivates suppleness, balance and strength, all at once. You can do yoga standing up, sitting down, on your back, in a bed or in a wheelchair. All that is required of yoga, is that you breathe and make some kind of voluntary movement.

Yoga should be done in tandem with meditation. This means you keep focused on the now. Do not try to be somewhere else. Allow yourself to be, as you are. Let go of self-judgemental thoughts. See your thoughts and feelings and accept them, e.g. frustration over what your body cannot do, or the habit of trying to overreach yourself. You are your own expert, so move carefully.

If there are exercises you are not ready to do, lie in a comfortable position, close your eyes, feel your breath-

It is a misconception, that yoga is the same as fitness practice. Yoga is not about stressing the body and using energy. It is about balancing the energy.

ing and imagine you are doing the exercises. You must work with your body, so try and do as much of the exercise as possible, so you can feel something happening. You must examine your body's limit and respect it, so that you do not overreach. You are the only one who can feel where your limit is. You can use your breathing as a pathfinder. If you hold your breath and tense your face, then you have overreached. Go back a little, breathe freely and concentrate on feeling the exercise. You can also notice if you have begun to compete with yourself or others.

The most important yoga exercise is called the "Corpse Pose". You lie on your back with your arms by your side, legs straight out and feet splayed apart. You concentrate on being completely still and feeling your body in this position. You are so still and you let go completely, as if you were dead.

YOGA IS NOT FITNESS

The word yoga can be translated 'to unite or to create harmony between the body and the mind or between physical and mental energy.' It is a misconception to think that yoga is the same as fitness practice. Yoga is not about stressing the body and using energy. It is about balancing the energy. It cannot be emphasised enough, that the aim of yoga is to feel the body. If you are good at yoga, you are good at feeling your body. You explore the limits of your body and keep your focus exactly there.

One day my back just completely locked up. A lot of my usual exercises became impossible to do. There was nothing I could do but skip those exercises and work on a few modified ones. You can only work with your body as it is now. Not as it was or will be.

When you work with the body over a longer period, your body's capabilities will change. You can practise yoga

your whole life and still be able to explore the exercise further. The body changes all the time. So it can feel as though you continuously must live in a new body. The experience can be quite shocking if the body changed because of illness, but the natural ageing process also changes the body.

Doing yoga is about trying to be as close to your body and breathing as possible. You register thoughts and feelings and continuously return to the body and breathing. "There's not much to these wee exercises. I need something else, something more to happen, if it's going to be any use." This is a typical remark made by people who do a lot of sport and it frequently involves feelings of irritation, boredom or restlessness.

"The exercises are too difficult. I can't do them," say others who are not used to moving, perhaps because of pain. Their remark may involve feelings of hopelessness, frustration, fear, anger, sorry or perhaps envy. Because we are so used to aligning ourselves to our automatic thinking, it can be difficult just registering thoughts and feelings.

Every situation offers interesting experiences and help. It is about seeing and letting go of fixed conceptions of what you want right now.

A course participant told me that she refused to feel her body before "it felt better." Sounds logical enough but is highly damaging in the long-term. Research shows that which you cannot bear, you get more of, be it feelings, thoughts and bodily signals. If you deny feeling anxiety, you will suffer more anxiety. If you deny feeling pain, you will suffer more pain.

So you must practise in feeling or bearing what there is to feel or bear. When you struggle to avoid painful experiences, the struggle makes the experiences even more

Frequently, I conclude a yoga session by asking participants to feel the contact they have with their bodies. At that moment you are immersed in your body and you fill your whole body with your awareness.

painful. You could say that the solution becomes the problem. My own experience is that when I shut out pain, I also shut out happiness and all of the good things in my life. And you cannot decide that you will only have the good feelings and the good experiences.

YOGA CAN UNITE BODY, THOUGHT AND FEELING.

Many yoga traditions, e.g. tantra yoga, are practised in silence. By way of introduction, the yoga instructor will explain how an exercise is to be carried out, but will not name any expected effects. In this fashion, you experience what happens rather than wait for an expected experience.

Yoga can create harmony. Your whole body is your instrument. It is about feeling and experiencing you and the world with the whole of your body, rather than just being in your thoughts, which is a very limited part of your resources as a human being.

Frequently, I conclude a yoga session by asking participants to feel the contact they have with their bodies. At that moment you are immersed in your body and you fill your entire body with your awareness. It can be a very pleasant experience. The contact and balance created with the body is not like a closed room, where you sit and are satisfied with yourself. On the contrary, it is a room where all of the doors and windows are wide open, so you have the opportunity to create real contact with the world around you.

YOGA AND BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME

Very many disorders or conditions, cause the body to unconsciously tense; stress, depression, sorrow, Bodily Distress Syndrome, etc. This causes pain. Some people experience actual weakness or paralysis.

I was extremely happy when I first began teaching yoga to patients suffering from Bodily Distress Syndrome.

"Now we are going to do something that will make them feel well." I had previously taught retired senior citizens and patients suffering from schizophrenia and my experience was that these people often arrived annoyed and tired but left happy. Releasing bodily tensions has a positive impact on a person's mood. Unfortunately, my Bodily Distress Syndrome patients left frustrated and even more tired and sad than when they had arrived. I realised that many Bodily Distress Syndrome patients had a kind of body phobia. All of their bodily signals told them the exercises were dangerous and they would become ill. I experienced that the patients' reactions represented two extremes. One group would not move while another group would move too much and over strain their bodies.

The technique I use now, which functions well, is to get the patients to feel their body and to make their own decision about how much they can move. That they get going at their own pace and become assured with the exercises works best. It is clear that the individual's way of carrying out the exercise is more important than my instructions.

YOGA AND PAIN

When you have a lot of pain you rarely feel like you want to lie down on a mat and give your pain all of your attention. You can become scared of being touched and feeling the part of you that hurts the most. Because of pain and discomfort, many people avoid physical activity or strain. Some lose the desire to use their body if they have previously overstretched its limits. But if we do not use our body we lose it. You become ill if you do not use your body, not because you use it.

When you have a lot of pain you rarely feel like you want to lie down on a mat and give your pain all of your attention.

USE THE BODY

Historically, patients who had suffered a heart attack were encouraged to stay in bed for three months. Now they are encouraged to be active as quickly as possible. People lose muscle mass when they have been inactive for just a short period of time. Lack of exercise is the cause of many illnesses while regular exercise is an important way of maintaining and improving health. For example, studies show that half of all women in Denmark will suffer from osteoporosis. Physical activity is the best way of avoiding osteoporosis.

Good experiences

We shall now work with good experiences. We begin with a meditation.

MEDITATION: A GOOD EXPERIENCE

Sitting (or lying) comfortably, feel your breathing and try to think about a good experience you have had during the day or the week. If you cannot, then think about what you believe was the most pleasant. Can you remember if you were aware of the good experience while it lasted? What did you feel in your body? What were you thinking? What were your feelings? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you recall the experience? What do you feel in your body now? Return your attention to your breathing and be conscious of your breathing for the next few breaths. And now leave the small meditation.

Afterwards, you can describe your experience. What did you feel in your body? What were your feelings? What thoughts and feelings do you have now? It does not matter what your good experiences were.

If you are part of a group, you can form pairs and discuss the same questions. You must not tell each other what the good experiences were, but talk about how you experienced the experience – your thoughts, feelings and what you felt in your body.

Thoughts:

Feelings:

The body:

What thoughts and feelings do you have now?

You can compare what you have written in the good experiences registration form (page 63) to what you have just written and ask yourself: Is there a pattern?

What makes something a good experience?

Frequently, we have the same thoughts, feelings and sensations in the body when we have a good experience. Talking with a friend or enjoying a cup of coffee is not the important factor. What is important is contact, connection and sense of community. When you feel that you are in contact with yourself, others, animals and nature, you feel better. It is the same with a feeling of connection and community. Fellowship is a great basis for a good experience.

Deeper contentment can be trained

There is a difference between pleasure and deeper joy or contentment. Pleasure is transitory. You can enjoy a piece of cake, but if you eat ten pieces, your enjoyment will likely turn to nausea. In contrast, deeper joy or contentment is much more stable. It is a condition that can be trained.

The sea can be used as a metaphor. The surface of the sea may be stormy while its depths are still and peaceful. Yoga and meditation helps you to reach the quiet depths and feel rested tranquility.

We are all the same

The Dalai Lama says that we are all the same. He means that our primary goal is to be happy and to avoid suffering. Human beings are social animals. From the moment we are born, we try to connect with others. Meditation is a way of connecting with yourself. The more you are anchored in yourself, the easier it is to connect with others and to value the connection. We know that a lack of intimacy in childhood can create deep wounds. The first step to healing these wounds is to discover them and to listen to yourself and connect with yourself and the body with positive energy and attention. This is what you do when you meditate.

THE THREE FS

Doctor Joan Borysenko in her book *Inner Peace for Busy People* (Hay House 2003) talks about the importance of the three Fs: faith, family and friends. Faith, family and friends are the things that are important. Faith does not necessarily mean religious or spiritual faith, but belief in things will turn out OK. Most people experiences are that when they do something that extends beyond themselves, it is a positive experience.

If thou wilt be observant and vigilant, thou wilt see at every moment the response to thy action. Be observant if thou wouldst have a pure heart, for something is born to thee in consequence of every action.

Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks

You miss out on so much more than you realise by not being in the now. Pleasure and enjoyment lie in the actual moment.

IT IS HAPPENING NOW!

Now matter if you are meditating, washing up, at a meeting or interview, your degree of conscious intimacy is crucial to how mindful you are. To have what Rumi calls 'a pure heart' means to be at peace with oneself. 'That we are receiving something as a consequence of every action, can mean that in every single moment we have the possibility of being so much in the now that the past and the future disappear and the possibility of deeper joy is present everywhere.

When you are aware, your decisions and actions are influenced. When you are exhausted and complain about how busy you are, it is not because you are too busy. Exhaustion arises because you are everywhere else but right here. You plan, that life must be enjoyed and you must relax just as soon as you are finished with ... But you miss out on so much more than you realise by not being in the now. Pleasure and enjoyment lie in the actual moment.

The American writer Henry David Thoreau lived in simple wooded seclusion for many years. In his book *"Walden, or, Life In The Woods"* (1854) he wrote about the pleasure of simple being and experiencing the moment and described times when the moment itself was so beautiful that he could not sacrifice it to any kind of manual or intellectual work. He wrote: " I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance."

Thoreau, like many of us, had difficulty in permitting himself to enjoy the moment. We may even suspect that we are wasting our time. Many of us believe that when we take a break or meditate we lose time. But frequently, when you set time aside for rest and meditation, you

gain time. The old expression "to get the Sabbath day" is about just that.

The mind easily pulls us away from the moment. This is mainly because as adults we are used to imagining the future and evaluating the past. As American choreographer and dancer Martha Graham says, "Make the moment vital and worth living. Do not let it slip away unnoticed and unused."

Place energy in the now

Sometimes you have to put energy into good experiences. You can use a couple of minutes to really see and hear the people you are with or to taste the food you eat. It becomes a whole other experience. The mind's logic the feeling that something more interesting has to happen soon. Boredom is the result of not having the will or not knowing how to put energy into the now, to make this moment into something special.

TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS PROLONGS LIFE

A group of elderly care home residents were encouraged to make their own decisions, for example, when to visit the cinema or have guests. A second group was encouraged to let the staff make all of the decisions. The individuals in each group were given a plant. The first group had to look after their plants. The second group were told that the staff would take care of their plants. After 18 months the two groups were examined to see how many of them had died. The total number of people who had died in the second group in that period was in line with the norm for the home. But in the first group, whose members made their own decisions and were responsible for their own plants, the number of people who had died was halved in that period. The study concluded that being able to make decisions and feeling connected to something or someone had a positive impact on physical and psychological well-being and thus longevity.

Frequently, when we notice signals from the body or have specific thoughts or feelings, we lose focus and turn on our automatic pilot. In the coming week you will practice at becoming aware of what causes you to lose focus, and notice what you least want to look at. You can learn about your bad experiences by registering them in the bad experiences form on page 81.

SHORT MEDITATION

Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main points in week 3

- You can find energy and joy in the now. Make the moment worth living. Do not let it slip away unnoticed and unused.
- Yoga can unite body, thoughts and feelings, so we can say yes to life
- Be aware if you are losing good moments perhaps you are only focusing on the bad?
- See if you can succeed in valuing what you have, without striving for something else
- You can have positive moments, even when you are in pain or in a crisis

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 3

- Carry out a body scan every other day and do yoga every other day
- Carry out a sitting meditation for 10–15 minutes every day
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the bad experiences registration form for the week
- Capture the moment during the day
- Be conscious of the situations where you go into automatic pilot. What distracts your focus?
- What do you least want to focus on?

BAD EXPERIENCES REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE WEEK

Be aware of bad experiences or events each day while they happen.

You can record them later in the form and describe how you experienced it.

	Situation What did you experience?	Were you aware of the bad experience WHILE it happened?	Body What did you feel in your body while it happened?	Thoughts What thoughts did you have?	Feelings What feelings did you have?	Now What thoughts and feelings are you having as you write this now?
Day 1						
Day 2						
Day 3						
Day 4						
Day 5						
Day 6						
Day 7						

WEEK 4

AGENDA:

- YOGA (5 MINUTES)
- SITTING MEDITATION (30 MINUTES): BREATHING, BODILY SENSATIONS, THE BODY AS A WHOLE
- DISCUSSION ABOUT HOMEWORK: WHAT DO YOU SEE, FEEL, AND LEARN – IF ANYTHING
- MEDITATION ON A BAD EXPERIENCES
- WHAT MAKES SOMETHING A BAD EXPERIENCE?
- STRESS
- MANAGE BAD EXPERIENCES WITH MINDFULNESS
- BASIC MODEL
- MEDITATION (5-10 MINUTES)
- NEW HOMEWORK

Bird Wings

Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror up to where you're bravely working.

Expecting the worst, you look, and instead you see the joyful face you have been longing for.

Your hand opens and closes, and opens and closes. If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralysed.

Your deepest presence is in every contraction and expansion, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as bird wings.

Rumi

WEEK 4 TO BE STUCK

Week four begins with yoga exercises followed by long sitting meditation.

The meditation can be structured like this: 15 minutes of sitting meditation followed by 5 minutes of walking meditation followed by another 15 minutes of sitting meditation.

MOUNTAIN POSE

Stand (or sit if you prefer) with your feet parallel and your knees slightly bent. Tilt your hip slightly forward, chest pointing upwards and head balanced on your spinal column. If you imagine a fixed weight is hanging from your tailbone, it will point down to the ground. Feel the way your body breathes. Lift the arms or shoulders and feel your breathing. Lower your arms or shoulders again. Focus on them as you do so. Execute a sideways bend on each side. As you very slowly and carefully bend notice how the side of your body stretches. Finally, stand in the mountain pose again and feel your breathing.

BALANCE POSE

Concentrate on feeling the sole of your right foot. Shift your weight onto your right leg. Inhale and simultaneously lift your left foot and leg out to the left while you lift both arms out to the side, horizontal if you want. Lower both arms and leg when you exhale. Switch to the other side. You can carry out the exercise by following your breathing from side to side. You can also hold this position for a couple of minutes while you breathe, and then you can change to the other side. If you find keeping your balance is quite difficult, then you can instead lift your foot just a little. If needed, you can use a wall to support yourself. Afterwards, return to the mountain pose.

SPINAL ARTICULATION

The feet are parallel, the knees are slightly bent. Shoulders, hips and ankles are pointing straight ahead. Look over your right shoulder. Breathe freely and feel your breathing in your thorax. Return to the mountain pose. Change to the left side. Let your hips and ankles point straight ahead. Look over your right shoulder and let your shoulder turn with you. Change to the left. For the last time, look over your right shoulder. Let your shoulder and hip turn with you, so that your body turns from the ankles. Change to the left. All of the exercises can be done in a sitting position. Stand in the mountain pose again.

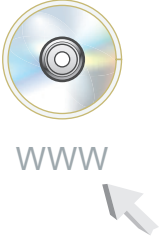
BENDING POSE

Bending pose: Stand again with knees slightly bent (if standing up). Let your head and arms fall forwards. Completely relax head, neck and arms. Feel your breathing. Rise slowly, one vertebrae at a time. Lastly, lift your head. If you become dizzy when you come up, then hold your breath in. Stand still in the mountain pose and feel the whole body at once.



WWW





SITTING MEDITATION

The exercise last for 30 minutes and consists of three steps: breathing, what you feel in your body and your body as a whole.

1. Sit in a comfortable position. When you are ready, observe your breathing. Stay focused on your breathing (approx. 5–10 minutes).
2. What do you feel in your body? Are there places on your body that you feel particularly intensely? Perhaps you feel a pain or something unpleasant in your body that occupies your concentration when you sit for a longer period of time. If this happens you can work in one of two ways. You can either consciously change position or move automatically. Or you can work with the pain by concentrating on it. See if you can relate to the pain by examining it, by being inquisitive and accepting towards it. Where did you feel it? What quality does it have? Is it a throbbing or burning sensation? Is the pain accompanied by thoughts and feelings? If the pain moves, move your attention with it. Normally we tense up around a pain and try to seal it off. See if you can open up to where it hurts. If needed, you can focus your breathing on the pain (5-10 minutes).
3. Concentrate on feeling your body as a whole (5–10 minutes).

What did you experience in the sitting mediation? How did you work with it?

The instructor's foremost task is to awaken the student to experience and bring the student out of the captivity of being judgemental, out of all that the student fears or craves, which causes the student to forget himself/herself and lose the moment.

Swami Janakananda

You have now practised yoga, body scanning and sitting meditation for some time. And you have registered your symptoms in the form several times.

What have you noticed? Did you capture the moment?
What do you want least of all to see?

In harmony with yourself

When I begin a yoga class, I always say that to be good at yoga is to be good at feeling your body. Some people believe that highest achievement in yoga is being able to control your thoughts, which is the most difficult skill you can learn. The physical yoga exercises are the key to coming into contact with your body. It allows you to balance the energy, so that the physical impulses generated by the body are in harmony with the mind, which subsequently becomes calm. You can feel the impulses coming from your body and the 'noise' coming from your mind. Perhaps you start to get bored, feel irritation and resistance. If you practise yoga for one to two hours you register the whole spectrum of responses: "When will it end?", "I can't do this", "I can't be bothered", "Its bor-

Mindfulness is both very simple and very difficult. A lot of people find that weeks 3–7 are particularly tricky.

ing", "It's too big a task for me", "It's too little a task for me." Finally, you let your thoughts go and your expectations of what the exercise should be and you will feel your body intensely, as it is.

When you balance, there where there is no mental noise or bodily impulses, you are in harmony with yourself and your experience. This is the state we practice ourselves in.

Mindfulness is both very simple and very difficult. A lot of people find that weeks 3–7 are particularly tricky. They think that they have to spend a lot of time on something that they have difficulty seeing the point of. It can take some time before you feel the effect of the exercises, so be patient.

It is important that your practice has a goal. It requires discipline to feel your body and yourself daily, especially when it is unpleasant. Every single moment can be the beginning of your practice.

Bad experiences

We shall now work with bad experiences. You can start with a meditation.

MEDITATION: A BAD EXPERIENCE

Sit in a comfortable position or lie down. Feel your breathing. See if you can think about a bad experience. Were you aware of the bad experience while it lasted? Can you remember what you felt in your body? What were you thinking? What were your feelings? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you recall the experience? What do you feel in your body now? Return your attention to your breathing and be conscious of your breathing for the next few breaths. And now leave the small meditation.

Afterwards, you can describe your experience. What do you feel in your body? What were your feelings? What thoughts and feelings do you have now? It does not matter what your bad feelings were.

If you are part of a group, you can form pairs and discuss the same questions. You must not tell each other what the bad experiences were, but talk about how you experienced the experience – your thoughts, feelings and what you felt in your body.

Thoughts:

Feelings:

The body:

What thoughts and feelings do you have now?

You can compare what you have written in the bad experiences registration form (page 81) to what you have just written and ask yourself: Is there a pattern?

What makes something a bad experience?

People's reactions to bad experiences are often surprisingly the same. Most people react with anger, grief, hopelessness, loneliness, powerlessness, anxiety, shame or fear. Anger is an emotion that makes you defend yourself. Arm muscles tense, hands become fists and heart rate accelerates. You sweat and may even become dizzy. Large volumes of blood go to the muscles and brain, while blood stops flowing to the stomach.

Grief and powerlessness can be felt in the body as a total lack of energy. Grief makes us want to be with our nearest and dearest, so someone can take care of us while we grieve. In contrast, anxiety makes us want to flee and can be felt as difficulty breathing, palpitations and hyper arousal. The bodily signals related to bad experiences resemble bodily reactions triggered by stress and strain (see page 48).

Bad experiences, like good experiences, have a series of common features:

THOUGHTS

- The mind is inherently critical and judgemental. These are vital tools that enable you to carry out a task, but when you use those tools towards yourself

and your feelings, and compare yourself to others, your experience can easily become bad.

- Negative thoughts can cause unpleasant feelings, which can lead to maladaptive behaviour.
- Negative thinking affect the body. In his book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, neuroscientist and psychiatrist Daniel G. Amen writes that your body reacts to your thoughts. Negative thinking sends electrical signals through the brain that release chemical substances that cause a series of physical symptoms, such as headaches, muscle pains, stomach pains, etc.
- You are prone to negative thinking when you are tired, sad or have symptoms.
- You are not in the now, when the mind induces an internal dialogue about how good or bad a person you are. When you are mindful, you are just you, no more, no less.
- There is a connection between your expectations to a situation and your reaction, if the situation develops differently to what you had hoped. We may have more good experiences when we notice what life brings, instead of comparing it to our expectations.

BODY

- Pain, stress, anxiety or lack of energy affect one's experience. The symptoms initiate thoughts about the cause and what those symptoms may mean for the future. In this fashion we lose focus on the now. It is overtaken by speculation of the past and worry for the future, which amplifies the symptoms and has an even greater impact on your mood.

FEELINGS

- Situations are easily experienced as bad ones when we believe that we have to be happy all of the time. When life is difficult, it is almost second nature to think something is wrong. It is easy to blame oneself when you feel lonely, sad, ashamed or angry.

- When your thinking goes off on the wrong track and the pain or the difficulty is experienced as a personal failure, your suffering is amplified. The task is to take responsibility for the original pain, feel it and let it pass. Do not try to ignore or amplify the pain.
- Difficult periods are a part of life. It is precisely these periods that offer us a chance to learn something new. The search for happiness and avoidance of pain can prevent the joy that arises by itself.

BEHAVIOUR

An experience can easily become bad:

- When you behave in a way you didn't want to.
- When you shut the world out because you feel rejected or threatened. Shutting the world out is a way of protecting yourself, but it is a short-term solution. The majority of us want to be in close relationships with others. When we shut the world out, we are actually moving in the opposite direction.
- When you nag yourself (and others).
- When you consciously avoid doing the right thing. Perhaps you avoid working with something that is difficult. A lot of people say that they will begin to live the life they really want as soon as they have more confidence, when they are in a good period in their life, when the anxiety has gone or when the children are older.
- When you find yourself in a waiting position. A lot of people imagine, perhaps even unconsciously, that life will be good if they just become richer, smarter or more successful. At some point this attitude changes to one of longing for the things in the past that at the time were not valued.
- When you cross your own limits and strain yourself.
- When you don't accept life as it is. "It's not how well you are but how well you deal with it" goes an old saying. This may sound a little judgemental. But it should be understood as the ability to live life as it is, whatever it brings. This is mindfulness. It is an abili-

ty in others we often praise and an ability we can practice and improve.

- When you do not manage to say no. A lot of people believe you always have to say yes, so sometimes when they say yes they mean no. If you always say yes out of sense of duty, you can lose desire and longing for another person, writes family therapist Jesper Juhl in his book *Kunsten at sige nej* (The Art of Saying No) Apostrof, 2006). When you learn to say no, you are actually saying yes to yourself.

Stress

A bad experience can trigger a stress reaction that puts the body into emergency mode, preparing it to fight, flee or 'freeze'.

Stress is an organism's reaction to extreme situations. Both the body and the nervous system are affected, muscles, blood pressure, blood flow, hormones and power of concentration. The reaction is a natural and necessary tool for survival. Both external influences (an accident or being laid off, etc.) and internal influences (pain, illness, thoughts or emotions) can trigger stress reactions.

I was told of two scientists, who when hiking together in the Canadian wilderness to study the flora, encountered a bear with her cubs. One of the scientists collapsed on the ground as if he was dead and the other gave a wild mighty roar. The bear seemed to shrug its shoulders a little and disappeared. Frequently, our immediate reaction to a critical or bad experience is to roar, flee or be as still as death. We still experience these fight, flee, or freeze reactions even though we will almost certainly never come face to face with a wild bear.

THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The autonomic nervous system consists of two systems. One of these is called the sympathetic nervous system and it allows us to react to stress. It mobilises blood flow to the brain and muscles, increases the body's heart and respiratory rates, so that we are ready to react. The other system – the parasympathetic nervous system – is responsible for relaxing the body. We need both systems and yoga can be used to balance these systems.

Stress can be short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic). The thing or event that triggers the stress reaction is called the stressor or stress stimulus. Most people have experienced how the same situation can sometimes be very stressful, yet at other times not be stressful at all. This is because the way we tackle a situation is crucial to how we experience it.

WHEN STRESS BECOMES CHRONIC

When the body has been exposed to stress for a long time, it cannot recover. The body's natural 'feedback system' responsible for making us react quickly in dangerous situations or to situations perceived as dangerous, is constantly active. Chronic stress takes the form of chronic weariness, chronic muscle pain (e.g. face, shoulders, lower back and hands), palpitations, digestive problems, difficulties in concentration and feelings of hyper alertness. When you are stressed, you often exhibit maladaptive behaviour. Perhaps you eat incorrectly, drink too much, work too much, take medication, stop exercising and avoid listening to your body. This can lead to food, medication, caffeine, alcohol, drug or work dependence and it can in extreme cases, cause illness or death.

It has been shown that mindfulness practice prevents memory and concentration difficulties usually experienced in highly stressful situations. It is a well-known

It has been shown that mindfulness practice prevents memory and concentration difficulties usually experienced in highly stressful situations.

<p>IGNORING (Ready – start)</p> <p>You react automatically without asking yourself if this is the most appropriate approach. Perhaps you are well aware that you are stressing yourself beyond your capabilities, but you ignore your body's distress signals. This is how acute stress can become chronic stress.</p> <p>Symptoms of chronic stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised blood pressure • Stomach problems • Chronic pain • Sleep disruptions • anxiety and depression <p>Maladaptive behaviour Overwork, overeating, hyperactivity, etc.</p> <p>Dependence Food, medicine, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, etc.</p> <p><i>Breakdown of the body illness and death.</i></p>	<p>MINDFULNESS (Ready – prepared – start)</p> <p>An acute stress reaction is not inherently dangerous. Instead of reacting automatically, you can get an overview of the situation by introducing a "prepared" state. You quickly scan your body, a small meditation with focus on your breathing or a walking meditation.</p> <p>Register stress reaction See the threat and be aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Body • Muscle tension • Breathing • Thoughts and feelings <p>Look for options Use STOP: Stop, Take deep breaths, Observe, Persevere</p> <p><i>Regain equilibrium and mental balance.</i></p>
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fact that when you are stressed your performance suffers and you have less capacity. For example, other people find you more irritable and touchy.

As the table on this page shows, you can either ignore acute feelings of stress or you can react mindfully.

Manage bad experiences with mindfulness

You can practise in reacting mindfully to stressful or bad situations. In the first instance, register your reactions. Value your thoughts and feelings, Try to get an overview of the whole situation and see the 'threat'. Be aware of your breathing, your body and any muscle tensions. Afterwards, examine your options.

An emotional strategy may be to see the emotion, to be in it and to let it pass. A problem-solving strategy may be to get an overview of the situation: On the basis of my long-term goal, what can/must I do right now?

You can regain your mental balance by focussing on your breathing before you react.

A mnemonic rule (special word) for dealing with stress is STOP: S for stop! T for take deep breaths! O for observe! P for persevere!

TO BE STUCK

In a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, three brothers have to find water for their dying father. The oldest brother is the cleverest and he tries first. He meets a dwarf who asks him where he is going. The oldest son is too preoccupied to answer. He thinks he knows the way and marches past. But he ends up getting stuck. The same thing happens to the second brother. Finally, the youngest and least-clever brother tries. He too meets the dwarf. "Where are you going?" asks the dwarf. The son answers: "I have no idea. I'm looking for water for my dying father." The dwarf knows where there is water and shows the way.

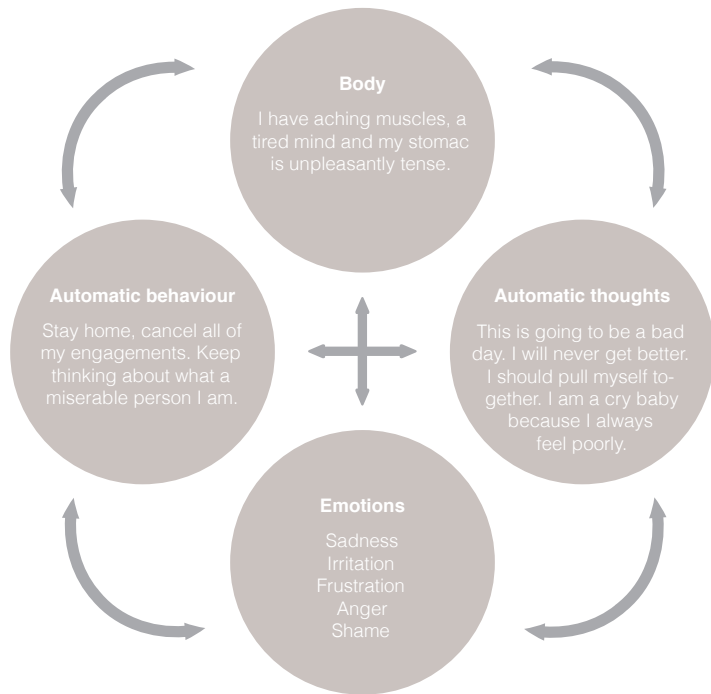
The three brothers can be seen as one and the same person. Sometimes you are unwilling to learn by your mistakes; repeatedly encountering the same problems. And sometimes you have to admit, like the first two brothers, you do not know the way.

Imagine you are driving to work and are stuck in traffic. Your hands are on the steering wheel, the other cars are driven by terrible and selfish drivers and it's becoming more and more obvious that you are going to be late for work. How does this affect your blood pressure, breathing, muscles, stomach and immune system?

Now imagine that you remember this mindfulness course you participated in. You can choose to react as you usually do when stuck in traffic or you can focus on your breathing, body, thoughts and feelings. You can enjoy the view, listen to good music or look at the other upset drivers. You might even manage to smile, realising you were just like them a moment ago. How does this affect your blood pressure, breathing, muscles, stomach?

Basic model

In the next few weeks you can work with the basic model. The basic model is used to register thoughts, feelings, behaviour and signals from the body and allowing you to analyse difficult situations. Thoughts often arise spontaneously. When you have pain or feel that everything is hopeless, you easily succumb to thinking about all the other times when you felt you were inadequate. You can stop this stream of thought or alter your behaviour when you discover that it is inappropriate. A situation could be one where: I have woken early and have slept badly.



SHORT MEDITATION

Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main points in week 4

- Sometimes we think we know more than we actually know.
- Perhaps you race ahead without really knowing what you are doing.
- It is necessary to slow down, so you can determine where you are, before you react.
- Stress is not the problem. How we react to stress is the problem.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE
SHORT CHAPTERS

1)

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the side-
walk.
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
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 side-
walk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in this same
place again.
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 there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit ...
but,
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.

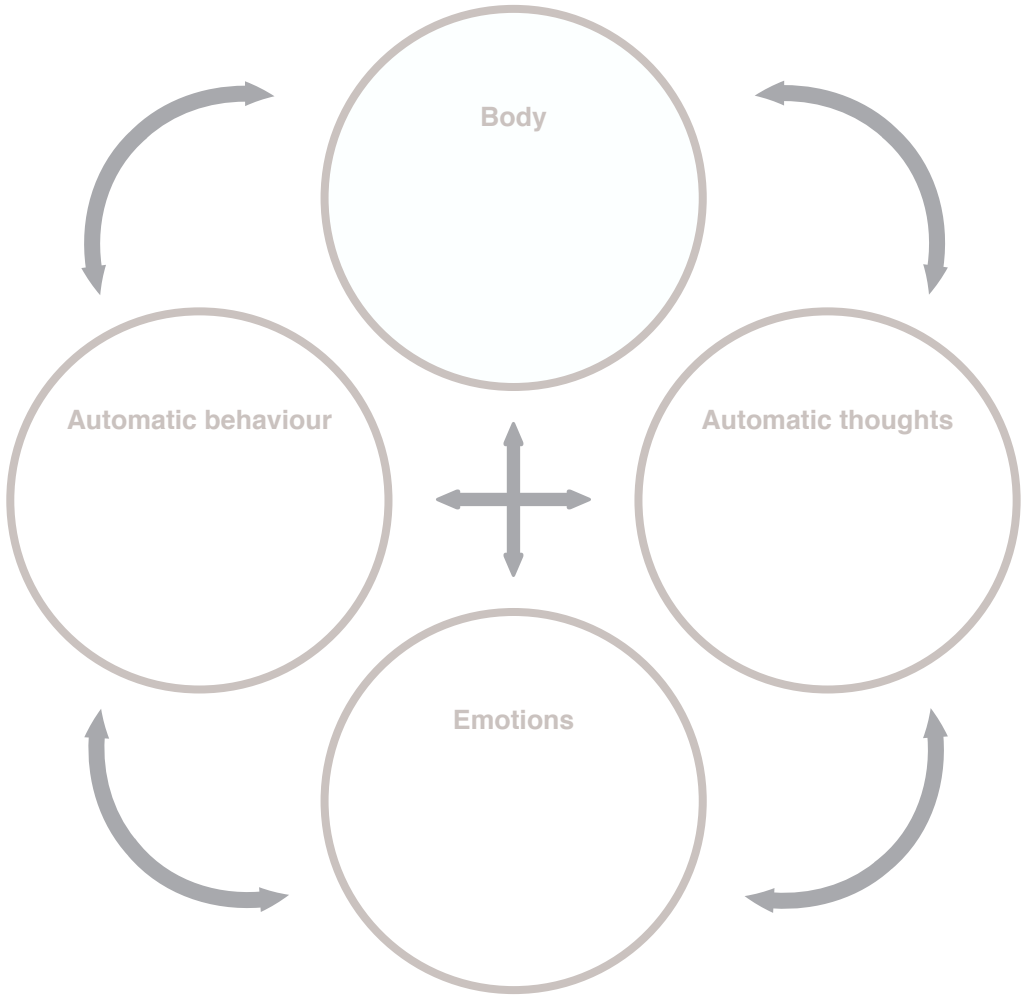
5)

I walk down another street.

Portia Nelson

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 4

- Carry out a body scan every other day and do yoga every other day
- Carry out sitting meditations for twenty minutes every day, with focus on breathing and the body as a whole
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the basic model on the next page
- Be aware of your stress reactions without changing them
- Notice when you feel you stuck or shut things out



Complete the model

WEEK 5

AGENDA:

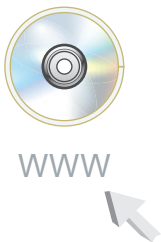
- YOGA (10 MINUTES)
- MEDITATION (30 MINUTES)
- THOUGHTS
- MIDWAY EVALUATION: WE ARE NOW HALFWAY THROUGH THIS COURSE!
- OUT OF THE HEAD AND INTO LIFE!
- THOUGHTS ARE NOT TRUTHS
- A CHALLENGE TO SIT STILL
- LET THE FEELING PASS
- DAILY PRACTICE
- MINDFULNESS AT WORK
- TO OPEN AND SHUT IN
- PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR
- THE BASIC MODEL
- MEDITATION
- NEW HOMEWORK

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the
door sill, where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.*

Rumi

WEEK 5 THOUGHTS

Week five begins with yoga exercises followed by long sitting meditation. You can also use the yoga exercise guide on the CD or online at www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness.



MOUNTAIN POSE

Stand (or sit with) your feet positioned in parallel, with your knees slightly bent (so they are not overstretched). Tilt your hip slightly forward, chest pointing upwards and head balanced on your spinal column. If you imagine a fixed weight is hanging from your tailbone, it will point down to the ground. Feel the way your body breathes. Lift your arms or shoulders, perhaps just a little, and feel your breathing. Lower your arms or shoulders again. Focus on them as you do so. Execute a sideways bend on each side. As you very slowly and carefully bend, notice how the side of your body stretches. Finally, stand in the mountain pose again and feel your breathing.

IMAGINARY CHAIR EXERCISE

Stand with your feet in parallel, about a foot apart. Lift your arms out in front of you. Bend your legs as if you will sit down on an invisible chair. Keep your back as straight as possible. Feel your breathing. Imagine that as you inhale you gain strength and energy and when you exhale you let go of tiredness and tension. Stay standing in this position for a while. Then return to the mountain pose. Perhaps you can feel your heartbeat. Let your body naturally return to a resting state. Feel your whole body.

THE TREE

Concentrate on feeling the sole of your right foot. Focus all of your attention down into the sole of your right foot. Let your weight press down in the sole of your right foot. Lift your left foot, perhaps just a little. If you can, place the sole of your left foot on the inner side of your right leg. Or place it along the ankle, lower leg, knee or thigh. If you can, join your hands together (palms flat) and hold them in front of your chest. You can choose to avoid joining your hands and instead keep your balance by using the wall as a support. If holding your balance is easy, then raise your arms up above your head. Feel your breathing. Stay standing in this position for a while. If your arms are raised above your head, keep them straight while you lower them along the side of your body. When they are horizontal, lower your leg. Perhaps you can make a "three-point landing", where the arms and left foot 'land' at the same time. Switch to the other side. Once again, feel your whole body in the mountain pose.

MEDITATION CHANGES THE BRAIN

Brain scan studies carried out at Harvard Medical School (Sara Lazar, 2005), have shown that individuals who meditate regularly have thicker regions in the areas of the brain that control reason and decision making in comparison to the brains of individuals who did not meditate. A Danish research group has also found structural changes in the brains of individuals who meditate. It seems that the long-term practice of meditation can change the structure of areas in the brain that control pulse and respiration, which may explain meditation's positive impact on cognition, emotions and the immune system.



SITTING MEDITATION (LONG)

The following meditation has six steps. The focus is on breathing, the body, sounds, thoughts, feelings and being aware of what is there.

1. Begin with your breathing. Feel the way your body breathes.
2. Expand your awareness, so that it takes in the whole body. What do you feel in your body? Are there places that hurt? Or are there areas that you feel particularly intensely?
3. Notice sound. Listen to the sounds, perhaps all of the sounds at once. Listen to the silence between the sounds. Examine the sounds. You do not need to identify the sounds; that was a car, etc. You just have to listen. You do not have to decide whether you like the sounds or not. Your task is solely to listen to what is there.
4. Notice your thoughts, especially thoughts that arise by themselves. You can for example, think in images. But the thoughts can also be expressed by signals from the body. Perhaps now at the moment when you are to concentrate on your thoughts, no thoughts arise. This is also a thought. Perhaps memories arise or expectations about the future. It can be planning, thoughts about food, meditation or something else. The contents of your thoughts are not important. It is important that you observe your thoughts without taking a position on whether you like them or not. That you experience the thoughts that are there.
5. Be aware of your feelings. Perhaps you know that the body can have an "emotional stone". How are you right now? Feel yourself. And again – be aware of what you feel. Do not try and change anything. You may even say to yourself: "I'm taking care of this."
6. Feel what there is to feel, without having a specific focus. If your breathing is the most conspicuous thing, then stay with that. If your thoughts are the most conspicuous thing, then hold focus there. The same applies to feelings and pain. Just feel what there is to feel.

What did you experience in the sitting mediation? What was difficult? How did you work with it?

Thoughts

Thoughts tend to go round in circles. Visually speaking, when your thoughts have to explain how you are feeling, you change between two or three records: "It's because my husband is such a so and so", "It's because I don't have a partner", "It's because I have to do everything" or "It's because I'm sick, poor and lonely." Meditation is a way of seeing these thought patterns. i.e. seeing the record that's being played.

Perhaps you discovered during meditation that the mind has a life of its own. Your goal was to stay focused on your breathing for 30 minutes but you only managed to momentarily stay focussed on your breathing. You were occupied by your thoughts the rest of the time. If a person has offended us, the mind has prepared a long series of thoughts about how terrible it is. A tone of voice, a movement. It does not take much for the mind to have a whole novel ready.

You decide yourself what you will use meditation for. You can continue to do what you have usually done or you can try something new and just for a moment cease

fighting yourself. Is it possible to exist in the moment without having to change anything? You cannot think yourself into 'being yourself.' It is a feeling. Remember, you are you and only you and that is good. It sounds banal, but most people forget this in practice.

In her book *The Self-Healing Human* (Holistic Wellness Publishers, 2003), Susanna Ehdin writes that if food is nourishment for the body, then thought is nourishment for the soul. Your mind starts to resemble your most frequent thoughts. And thoughts can drain you of energy. The thoughts you have today are probably the same thoughts you had six months or a year ago. It is worth thinking about what you put your thoughts and energy into.

Three stonemasons

In the Middle Ages, three stonemasons were working on a cathedral. Each was asked what they were doing. The first answered: "Clearly you can see, I'm cutting stone." The second answered: "I'm earning my and my family's bread and butter." The third answered: "I'm building a wonderful cathedral." It is not too difficult to guess which of them was having the most fun.

To become conscious of the negative thoughts that are controlling one's life, is an important step towards improving one's well-being.

Midway evaluation

You are now midway through the mindfulness course. What have you learned about yourself?

To become conscious of the negative thoughts that are controlling one's life, is an important step towards improving one's well-being.

Are you making changes

Are you participating as best you can?

What benefit, if any, have you noticed so far?

THE GUEST HOUSE

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression,
a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,*

*still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out for some new
delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whatever comes.
Because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

Rumi, translation by Coleman Barks

What challenges are there in

Body scan:

Yoga:

Meditation:

Do you manage to do the exercises? How often?

Will you continue to work with mindfulness?

What will you do differently in the rest of the practice course?

See, if you can let the end of the first half be a new beginning. Let every moment be a new beginning!

Out of the head and into life!

In my experience, the most difficult with mindfulness is not taking your thoughts seriously. We are used to just existing in our thoughts and frequently we do not discover the other, bigger and more interesting reality.

The first time I returned home after a three-month yoga and meditation course, I was perplexed by how difficult it was making eye contact with people in the street. People go about their business with furrowed brows and brood. Thought is one of the biggest resources people have but it also one of their biggest limitations. This is because of our perceptions of our surroundings (what we see) and our impression of it, which is determined by what we expect to see.

Thoughts affect our emotions and emotions affect our thoughts. Research has shown that the more well-

See, if you can let the end of the first half be a new beginning. Let every moment be a new beginning!

developed our emotions are, the better we can exploit our thought capacity.

Thoughts are not truths

Your heart beats automatically, without you consciously willing it. So too do thoughts arise. You can easily begin to believe that thoughts are truths that must be obeyed. Sometimes it can help if you give the thoughts a name, for example, worry, planning, daydream, prediction, comparison, judgement or storytelling. You can learn to see the moments when you are experiencing sorrow, hopelessness or loneliness as moments with sorrow, hopelessness or loneliness and not an expression of a whole life that has gone wrong.

A challenge to sit still

One of my meditation teachers said that meditation first starts when it gets seriously difficult. It is here, where it becomes interesting. And it is here where you can observe yourself and your reactions.

Sitting still during meditation can be difficult. The impulse to do something else arises quickly, and thoughts about how difficult or pleasant sitting here is. You may also feel emotions like anxiety, boredom, restlessness, sorrow, nervousness, deep happiness and thankfulness. Every emotion has a physical expression. At the same time, you can feel something in the body that starts to put thoughts, emotions and impulses into action. It is about becoming interested in the process. Examine: "What is it that is so interesting about breathing?", "What is it I feel in the body?" or "Are there feelings or thoughts connected to this?"

Let the feeling pass.

If I become restless or feel pain or have negative thoughts during my morning meditation, I observe it. Afterwards, I experience that the restlessness affects me less during the rest of the day. And if I become restless, I notice it quicker.

Sometimes it can help if you give the thoughts a name, for example, worry, planning, daydream, prediction, comparison, judgement or storytelling.

During meditation you may discover emotions, thoughts or tensions that you otherwise were unaware of. Do not try and explain to yourself why you are overwhelmed by a feeling. Let the feeling pass. A lot of people believe they have to find an explanation for their emotions or tensions. But that will frequently trigger even more thoughts.

Once on a course, I became very emotionally affected. The other participants were interested to hear what had triggered my reaction. Their thoughts revolved around wanting to know what I had been through. But it was nothing. It was just a moment where I had been overwhelmed by deep thankfulness.

WE CONSTRUCT OUR OWN REALITY

The philosopher Kant revolutionised philosophy with the realisation that we construct reality. We do not perceive reality through the senses. What we sense is filtered in the nervous system and made into the representation we call reality. This representation is in reality a fiction, one that emanates from our term and category forming minds. Kant meant that we are not able to see something as it actually is in reality. Hence an objective, exact reality does not exist. Our perception of reality is dependent upon how the senses and the brain perceive reality. Previous experiences and thoughts filter the information we receive at any moment in time. In this manner, we are limited by our thoughts. We see certain things while overlooking other things.

In Buddhism, it is said: "If you have opened your mouth, you have already said the wrong thing." It eloquently describes how mindfulness is about stepping into the experience in a non-thinking way, which is much greater than words.

Daily practice

You must practise mindfulness daily, as a matter of life, says Kabat-Zinn – because in a way it is. I meditate

every morning, without exception. It provides me with strength of will and the energy I need to get me through the day. When I am mindful, my thoughts, feelings and actions are in accordance with my long-term goals. That is to say, meditation is not about sitting in your own wee closed harmonious circle. Mindfulness lets you be part of an open circle, where there is harmony between the inner and external world.

IT WON'T LAST

Karen Blixen was once given a letter and told that she must only open the letter when she was very sad or very happy. She opened the letter when she was very sad and the letter said: "It won't last."

Harmony is not a permanent state of being. Harmony must be created and recreated, again and again. This is why daily practice is so important.

Mindfulness at work

Mindfulness practice can help you to be more present in the now in every situation - including work. Breathing is with you all the time and you can use mindfulness in every step you take.

For example: You become aware that you have a headache. You are tired and your whole body is tense. Your body is telling you to go home and rest. You want to look after your body to avoid chronic stress. On the other hand, you want to do your best at work. You think that to go home is to admit defeat. What is the best thing you can do, if you think about your long-term goals?

A lot of people have a "all or nothing" mentality and will quickly conclude: "Either I quit my job or I work on." But there are several options. You can start by letting yourself take a rest there and then. You can use

To put it crudely, there are three possibilities in every situation. You can accept the situation. You can change it. Or you can get out of the situation.

this break to give yourself positive energy and attention. Then you can carry out the tasks you are able to do and talk with yourself or your manager about what you can realistically accomplish during a day, a week or a month.

To put it crudely, there are three possibilities in every situation: acceptance, change the situation or get out of the situation. If you find yourself in a situation you can neither change nor escape from, then just accept it. It is not easy but meditation can help. Paradoxically, acceptance can change one's life. You must love your sufferings, because that is the way to remove them, says Swami Janakananda. This applies to everything, no matter if there is pain, anxiety or fixed ideas about how the world should be.

To open and shut in

Most people at some point need to shut the world out. Reality can be so hard that we cannot confront it. It can be difficult to endure, when we or others are in difficulties. The technique of shutting out is as old as the technique of opening up. When you meditate, you can imagine awareness as a door that can be opened or closed. You work with the limit. The door must not be wide open all of the time. Feel when it is enough, and close the door again. You are awake the whole time and are conscious of when you are opening and closing the door. Perhaps this is what Rumi refers to in the poem *The breeze at dawn*, on page 104.

ONE STEP AHEAD

The body is often one step ahead of our consciousness. For example, I pinch my fingers when something irritates or annoys me. My fingers are agitated before I know that I am restless. As soon as I become aware of my fingers, I try to find out what is going on. If I can get my fingers to be still, then my mind also quiets and I can concentrate on whatever it is I'm doing.

WITH NEW EYES

American automotive executives regularly visited Japan at the start of the 1980s to find out why Japanese factories were outperforming American ones. One of the executives reported that he was unimpressed. The Japanese had not shown him the genuine factories. They had put together some phoney set-ups. He had seen a lot of conveyor belts and all of the locations he visited did not have any storage capacity. In just a few short years, he was proved wrong. The executives had been shown examples of the Just-In-Time production but their own understanding had blinded them. They could not conceive an assembly plant without huge warehouses. Their understanding limited them, so they could not see with a fresh perspective. It is a universal problem. But we can practise to see the world, thoughts and feelings with a fresh perspective.

Mindfulness is an invitation to be conscious of when you are opening up or shutting out. The intention is not for you to feel all of your pain all at once. You must feel a little pain and be conscious of when it is enough. You learn your own limits. It is important you practice in being sensitive to yourself. You can have both physical and psychological pain. The technique is the same. The majority of people have a habit of avoiding anything that hurts. It is a completely understandable reaction. But pain is a part of life. Every human being will experience pain and we will all die. But if you shut out pain you also shut out joy. Thus, the invitation: You must feel a little pain and be conscious of when it is enough. When you are ready, feel a little more.

Patterns of behaviour

We get into the same difficulties, again and again. This is because we think, act and react in the same specific ways. Feeling something in your body may trigger specific thoughts that lead to specific actions. This is what is called a pattern. If you frequently think that you have experienced a situation or feeling before, you are

seeing one of your patterns. You can look for patterns. Seeing the patterns is a way of learning about yourself and it can be the first step in changing.

How did it work out with the basic model in week 4?

The basic model

With the help of the basic model, you may have noticed that thoughts, feelings, bodily signals and actions affect each other. Frequently, you give a situation a degree of importance that is out of all proportion. Perhaps it is a sore point. Perhaps you react by getting a suffocating sensation in the chest and stomach. Once you are aware of your reaction and that it is out of proportion, you can act differently.

EMOTIONS ARE A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE PSYCHE

According to American researcher and professor Candace Pert, who wrote the book *Molecules of Emotions – Why You Feel the Way You Feel* (Scribner, 1997), emotions are biochemical molecules that form a bridge between the body and the psyche. For example, if you are incapable of feeling anxiety, you cannot take care of yourself. If you cannot feel anger you cannot take care of yourself or your children. If as children we are not seen, we die. Jealousy and envy can be a part of the means of being seen. The energy in anger, restlessness, jealousy and envy can be used constructively, so you can pursue your dream and live the life you want. So emotions have an important function. Happiness and contentment shall curb negative thinking, for example, so we can cooperate and love, which enables us to form bonds and to look after each other.

HOW TO WORK WITH THOUGHTS LESSON

"Experience yourself, sit and experience your thoughts, feelings, opinions and notions as an observant and neutral observer. What are you thinking right now? You must analyse the thoughts and not the meaning. You are neither happy nor annoyed by your thoughts. Your task is to let every thought flow freely and uninhibited, no matter how provocative or tempting it is. The same applies to your feelings. What are you thinking right now? And now? Now? Persist, without influencing. Whatever happens permit it, accept it, experience it. You are not the thoughts. You are what sees the thoughts. If you realise that you are speculating and forgetting the meditation, or if you are stuck in a thought, then say: What did I think? See the thought and continue.

The most crucial thing is that you experience thinking. How many or how few thoughts or feelings are there, or which of the thoughts and feelings are the least difficult. There are many ways to think: with images, emotions, words. As an observant observer, look at the thoughts. Note if there are worries that fill the mind, opinions about yourself and what you may or should do. Are there things you may not think? Experience particularly the spontaneous thoughts that arise. Experience them as an observer, set your mind free.

There are no such things as good or bad thoughts. Be careful, do not become introverted or search for anything specific, just experience what happens. Let go. Stop letting thoughts decide for you. But at the same time, allow things to influence you. You may only be carried by and experience the liberating effect by letting it happen and anyway – deep down – observantly observe the whole. You are not the thought. You are not the feeling. You are the experienter."

Swami Janakananda

A course participant with Bodily Distress Syndrome told me that the course had made her aware of a typical reaction pattern. If she was tired when she was with her friends she tended to go home. This led her to believe she was different and not part of the group. She became more upset and even more tired. With the basic model she became aware that she could explain to her friends that she was tired, she would take a rest and

then join the company again. She felt she had become better at taking care of herself and that her friends cared for her.

Difficult communication

Many people find it difficult to communicate. Next week, you will work with exercises that are about difficult communication. You can already try to complete the difficult communication registration form for the week, on page 123.

SHORT MEDITATION

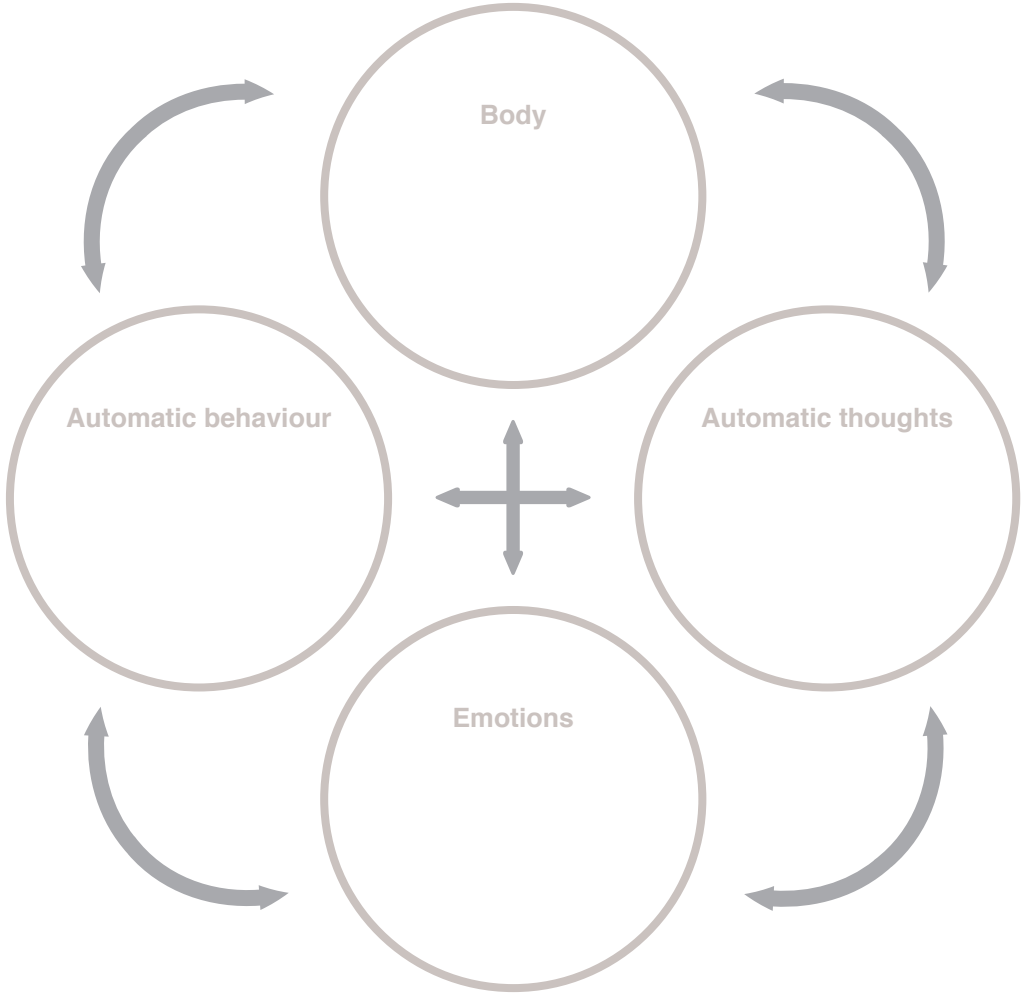
Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main points in week 5

- You can learn to know yourself better and to contact feelings and reactions through mindfulness practice.
- I am not a feeling or a thought. I am that which is experiencing.
- I value my thoughts and feelings. It is important for my survival.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 5

- Meditate sitting down one day, body scan or practise yoga the next day
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the basic model below
- Keep an eye on your patterns
- Complete the week's difficult communication form



Complete the model

DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE WEEK

	Situation What did you experience?	Were you aware of the bad experience WHILE it happened?	Body What did you feel in your body while it happened?	Thoughts What thoughts did you have?	Feelings What feelings did you have?	Now What thoughts and feelings are you having as you write this now?
Day 1						
Day 2						
Day 3						
Day 4						
Day 5						
Day 6						
Day 7						

WEEK 6

AGENDA:

- YOGA (10 MINUTES)
- MEDITATION (30 MINUTES)
- DISCUSSION ABOUT HOMEWORK
- COMMUNICATION PRACTICE
- DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION
- EXPRESS YOURSELF CLEARLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY
- THREE TYPES OF COMMUNICATION
- THE ART OF LISTENING AND DOING NOTHING
- IMAGE OF ME
- MEDITATION
- NEW HOMEWORK

*Out beyond ideas of rightdoing
and wrongdoing
There is a field.
I will meet you there.
When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about
language, ideas, even the phrase each other
doesn't make any sense.*

Translated from Rumi

WEEK 6

COMMUNICATION

Week six begins with yoga exercises followed by long sitting meditation. You can also use the yoga exercise guide on the CD or online at www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness.



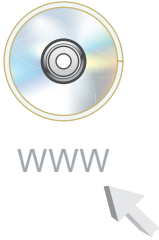
WWW



YOGA

Cross-legged pose: Sit on the floor. Bend your legs. Bring your soles against each other. Fold your hands around your feet, and slowly pull them in to your body, as far as possible. Feel your seat bones: Straighten your back without being stiff. Push the hip forward, as in the mountain pose. Let the knees fall out to the side and make small tilting motions with the legs. You must not press down on your knees. But if you relax the thigh muscles and the pelvic floor, the knees will gradually lower by themselves. The body is still, only the legs move.

Back stretch: Stay sitting on the floor, with your legs stretched out (you can also do this on a stool). Take a deep breath. Let your body sink over your legs as you exhale. Let your head and arm hang freely. How far you sink is not important. Feel the position and stay this way for a few minutes. Concentrate on your breathing. You must not force this position, let your body find the position.



SITTING MEDITATION

1. Sit in a comfortable position. When you are ready, observe your breathing. Stay focused on your breathing (approx. 5–10 minutes).
2. What do you feel in your body? Are there places on your body that you feel particularly intensely? Perhaps you feel a pain or something unpleasant in your body that occupies your concentration when you sit for a longer period of time. If this happens you can work in one of two ways. You can either consciously change position or you can work with the pain by concentrating on it. See if you can relate to the pain by examining it, by being inquisitive and accepting towards it. Where did you feel it? What quality does it have? Is it dull or burning? Is the pain accompanied by thoughts and feelings? If the pain moves, move your attention with it. Normally we tense up around a pain and try to seal it off. See if you can open up to where it hurts. If needed, you can focus your breathing on the pain (5-10 minutes).
3. Concentrate on feeling your body as a whole (5–10 minutes).

What did you experience? What was easy? What was difficult? How did you work with it?

MEDITATION: DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION

Sit comfortably. Feel your breathing. Think about a difficult communication. Try to recall a time when you were not seen or heard. It is memory now.

Who was it with? What was it about? Why was it so difficult? What did you want from the other person? What did you get? What did the other person want? What did you feel in the meantime? What do you feel now? Has the problem been solved? How can it be solved?

Feel your breathing again. And when you are ready, slowly come out of the meditation.

Difficult communication

We shall now work with communication. You can begin with a short meditation (5–10 minutes).

The following communication exercise is for two people.

Sit down side by side. If you prefer, you may have eye contact or not. Choose which of you will be the listener and which will be the speaker. The listener must be completely still and not say a word. Not even if there is a lull. The listener must also as much as possible avoid nodding, etc., to what the speaker says. The listener can offer his or her time and attention to the speaker. Only the speaker decides what he/she will talk about. The speaker can also choose to say nothing.

1. The speaker starts by explaining why a specific communication was difficult. Do not explain the exact content. Just describe: What did I want? What did I get? What did the other person want? What did I feel in the meantime? What do I feel now? Has the problem been solved? How can it be solved? The listener concentrates on listening without saying anything (first part lasts for three minutes).
2. It is now the listener's turn to speak and explain what he/she heard. Not one word is to be repeated,

but the message or essence of what was said is explained (second part lasts for three minutes).

3. The speaker now once again talks about a difficult communication. It may be the same one as in step 1 or a new example. Once again, the listener is completely still. This time the listener must notice the speaker's body language (third part lasts for three minutes).
4. The listener explains his/her observations of the speaker's body language (fourth part lasts for three minutes).

Now swap roles and repeat the exercise.

What was it like being the listener? Did you suffer from performance anxiety? Did your partner's words cause you to think in a certain way? Did your mind try to conceive what the speaker's talk was about? Did you know specifically what the other had to do in the difficult communication situation?

What was it like being the speaker? What was it like talking about difficult communication for three minutes while another person listened? Did you notice something new, about yourself or your body language?

You can look at what you have written in the difficult communication registration form and ask yourself: Is there a pattern?

AN UNUSUAL CHARACTERISTIC

"Little Momo could listen in a way that nobody else could. That's nothing unusual, some might say, everybody can listen.

This is not true. There are only a very few people who can really listen. And the way in which Momo listened was absolutely unique.

When Momo listened, stupid people suddenly got bright ideas. Momo could listen so that inarticulate folk suddenly came out with bright ideas. It wasn't anything that she said or asked that brought such ideas out of the other person; no, it wasn't that. She simply sat there and listened with full concentration, completely involved. While she gazed at them with her huge dark eyes, others felt unique ideas (which they had never guessed were there) suddenly surfacing from deep within.

She could listen so well that restless or undecided people suddenly realized exactly what they wanted. The timid unexpectedly felt free and bold. Those who felt unlucky or

depressed exuded confidence and joy. And if somebody felt that something was missing from his life, which had become meaningless (that he was only one of the teeming masses; that he could not manage and would be discarded like a broken jar) - then he would go and tell little Momo all about it. While he spoke about it, it would become clear in some secret hidden way, that he was basically mistaken; that there was only one of him, that he was unique, and because of that, he was important to the world.

How Momo could listen!"

Michael Ende

Express yourself clearly and constructively

Communication can be stressful, especially in periods that are already marked by acute or chronic stress. Some people experience that their relationship to another person or to them self is actually a stress factor. Perhaps you feel that other people, to some degree or another, have a negative influence on your life. Or perhaps you have experienced that you damage your own or someone else's life.

Many of us react in a specific way when we are not heard or seen.

You can learn to express your feelings in a constructive way. You can also become aware when you cause poor communication. When someone steps on your toes or if you step on someone's toes, frequently is because you have misread a situation or have oversimplified things.

There are times when you are not heard or where you want to communicate but cannot. Many of us react in a specific way when we are not heard or seen. Perhaps not expressing yourself has become a habit. e.g. not saying what you are feeling or thinking. Perhaps another pattern is that you cannot say no to a specific person, or without realising it, you hurt others because you do not listen to them.

If a relationship with another person is to last and to grow, then you need to be able to solve conflicts. And to

bear the duality, so that you and the other can be loving and resisting. Frequently, the more you learn about mindfulness, the more clearly you see the reactions and habits that you unconsciously bring into your relationships.

Three types of communication

Bad communication is frequently experienced as an attack. You feel ‘trampled on’ or ‘driven over’, which triggers a stress reaction.

The martial art Aikido trains you to keep your balance during an attack and to use the attacker’s energy without hurting the attacker or yourself. This requires that you have to have physical contact with your attacker. A lot of people completely avoid contact with people they do not like. Aikido’s goal is to create contact, without hurting anyone.

You can respond to an attack in three ways: passive, aggressive or assertive. The three types of response are demonstrated in this exercise for two people - where the attacker moves forward with arms out and pushes the ‘victim’. If you do not have the opportunity to do this exercise with another person, try and imagine the different situations.

PASSIVE RESPONSE

The attacker scolds at you. You become annoyed, but do not manage to resist. You give in by lying down on the floor and saying: “It is my fault! Sorry!” You turn away so that the attacker cannot make eye contact. Observe what thoughts and feelings you have. What do you feel in your body? The majority of people dislike these roles but know them well from their own experiences. The attacker frequently feels as frustrated as the victim.

Repeat the exercise. This time you manage to run away. In all certainty, the attacker becomes even more frus-

You can respond in three ways: passive, aggressive or assertive.

trated. But perhaps you feel slightly better. At the very least, you were not trampled over. The problem is, we can rarely react this way because then we would be constantly running away or avoiding others.

AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE

Repeat the exercise. This time you resist by pushing back against your attacker. You both stand your ground and fight: "I'm right. You're wrong." Now close your eyes and observe what you feel in your body. What emotions are you experiencing? Frequently, it feels good to fight for your cause. But it is also no good, because the situation is unresolved. Usually it will drag on forever or until one side gives up. Perhaps with the thought: "It's me who is saving the relationship" or "I can't ever do anything right."

ASSERTIVE RESPONSE

The assertive response is the equivalent of a mindful reaction to a stressful situation (see page 95). You realise that the attacker is a stressor. You try to stay in control and to see the situation without losing your head.

You move towards the attacker. Stand to the side of the attacker and hold your attacker by the wrist. You are now using the attacker's energy without injuring anyone, and both of you are looking in the same direction. There is close contact. You signal that you are willing to work on the conflict. You are willing to see the situation

EXAMPLE OF AGGRESSIVE/ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

You are scolded. Instead of counter-attacking, you respect the other person by saying: "I understand you are angry. I was not aware that I had hurt you. What I mean is.." in this way you can reach a common understanding – in other words look the same way, without necessarily agreeing.

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
<p>LANGUAGE: You avoid saying what you want, think or feel. When you do say what you want, think or feel, you do it in a way that belittles you. You frequently use apologetic words with hidden meanings. A smokescreen of vague terms or silence. For example, "Well... I mean....I think...I guess... sorry." You let others choose for you.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE: You speak honestly, about what you want, think and feel in a direct and helpful way. You make your own decisions. You communicate with tact and wit. You use "I", e.g. "I am angry." Your words are clear and well-chosen.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE: You say what you want, think and feel, even if it hurts others. You use patronising words. You use "you", e.g. "You irritate me" and judge and categorise people. Your language is full of threats and accusations.</p>
<p>ACTION: You use actions instead of words. You hope that someone guesses what you want. Your voice is unsure, hesitant and weak. You whisper in monotones. You look down or to the side. You nod to almost everything that is being said. You sit or stand with as much distance as possible between you and the other person. You do not know what to do with your hands. Your hands tremble and shake. You exude that you have poor meeting skills, are tense or inhibited.</p>	<p>ACTION: You listen carefully. Your manner is calm and confident. You communicate with empathy and strength. Your voice is warm, confident and expressive. You look directly at the other person without staring. You meet the other person. Your hands are relaxed. Your hand is held high and you lean slightly forwards to the other person. You exude calmness.</p>	<p>ACTION: You demonstrate your strength. You have no respect for anyone. You behave in a superior manner. Your voice is tense, high, cold and commanding. You can be completely still. Your eyes are cold, small and staring. You almost look straight through people. You take a macho conflict approach. Your hands are on your hips. You stand very close to the other person. Your hands clenched or you point directly at the other person. You have an angry and tense tone.</p>
<p>GOAL: To please people so that they will like you.</p>	<p>GOAL: To communicate and be respected.</p>	<p>GOAL: To dominate and humiliate.</p>
<p>FEELINGS: You feel anxiety. You feel that you are ignored, hurt, manipulated and are disappointed by yourself. You are frequently angry and offended afterwards.</p>	<p>FEELINGS: You feel confident and successful. You are comfortable with yourself when you are communicating and afterwards. You feel in control. You have self-respect and are target-orientated.</p>	<p>FEELINGS: You are self-righteous and superior. You are controlling. Sometimes afterwards you are embarrassed or egoistic.</p>

THE SITUATION YOU FIND YOURSELF IN:	WHAT YOU SAY AND DO:
1. You are watching a film but the people in front of you are making too much noise.	You shush and clear your throat repeatedly.
2. You are at a meeting and someone interrupts you while you are speaking.	You look at the person directly and say: "Excuse me. Let me finish."
3. You want a wage increase.	You walk into your boss's office and say: "Was there any chance of.... oh, can I have a raise?"
4. You tell your boss a good idea about how the office work can be organised. He agrees it is a good idea and says he will ask someone else to implement it.	You put your hands down by your side and shout: "It was my idea. I won't let another person take the honours for it."
5. You look forward to a quiet evening by yourself. A relative phones and asks if you can babysit for them.	You say in a friendly but strong manner: "I have reserved tonight for myself. So, I cannot babysit."
6. Your parents or in-laws phone and say they will visit. You are busy.	You say in a high voice: "You always ring two minutes before you arrive and expect me just to drop everything."
7. Two colleagues speak privately. The work is piling up. Other colleagues have complained about the situation. You are their superior.	You call them over and lean towards them and say: "I know how easily time passes when you're relaxing and talking with friends, but the work is piling up, so I would prefer can you use your twenty-minute break for personal matters"
8. A close friend always arrives late. You have not spoken in several weeks.	When your friend arrives you are ready to explode. You say: "You are always late!"
9. A fixed date and time is set for a weekly meeting. The time is inconvenient for you. It is impossible for you to regularly attend the meeting.	When you are asked about the time, you look down and whisper: "It's OK. I won't be able to turn up regularly but if it suits the rest of you, then it's OK with me."
10. You are the only woman in a group of men (or vice versa). You are asked to be the secretary at the meetings.	You answer: "I'll gladly do my part and take notes this time. I also want everyone else to take their turn too."

CORRECT ANSWER: 1.P 2.AS 3.P 4.AG 5.AS 6.AG 7.AS 8.AG 9.P 10. AS

from the attacker's viewpoint. You also communicate that you are not afraid of contact, at the same time, you do not allow your attacker's energy to overwhelm or injure you. There are now more options. For example, you can wait until the attacker has calmed down and explain the situation to him.

The confrontation becomes like a dance. The anger or frustration that the other brings, can be used as energy in the relationship. It widens both persons horizons. Assertive communication is experienced as the most pleasant of the three forms of communication, because there is contact and both parties end up looking in the same direction.

Several examples of communication are shown on page 134. Determine each kind of communication assertive (AS), Passive (P) or aggressive (AG) communication. The correct answers are shown at the bottom of page 134.

The art of listening and doing nothing

When you meditate, you listen to yourself. It is completely natural that you want your efforts to produce results that you can see or feel, e.g that pain or anxiety disappears. There is always a result, but it is not always the result you had expected. Pain or discomfort changes. Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. It is the basic human condition.

Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, who has participated in research into the effects of mindfulness in the brain, says that the essence of mindfulness is an empathetic awareness that can be improved throughout your life (unlike physical practice). He thinks that genuine happiness is love of life. And to love oneself is to love life. Unfortunately, we seek happiness outside of ourselves, so our search for happiness fails. To love yourself is an ability that can be trained by working with your inner self.

Image of me

In some parts of Africa, people like to hold their most prized possessions when they are being photographed, e.g. a chicken or a watch. We create the same self image in the West. I am a doctor, I have three children and travel a lot. If I am uncertain and I need to regain my confidence, it is frequently this presentation of myself that I use – even when I think it is embarrassing to revert to such labelling.

Seeing yourself as the owner of prized possessions (chickens, watches, big houses, etc.) is meaningless when it comes to yoga and mindfulness. That would just show that you do not know who you are. You can all too easily link your personality to brands, titles or actions. And not just in a positive way. Perhaps you take on the role of a victim: “I have a terrible fate, illness, childhood, anger, family or body.” An illness or fate can be difficult or sad, but it does not determine who we are.

SHORT MEDITATION

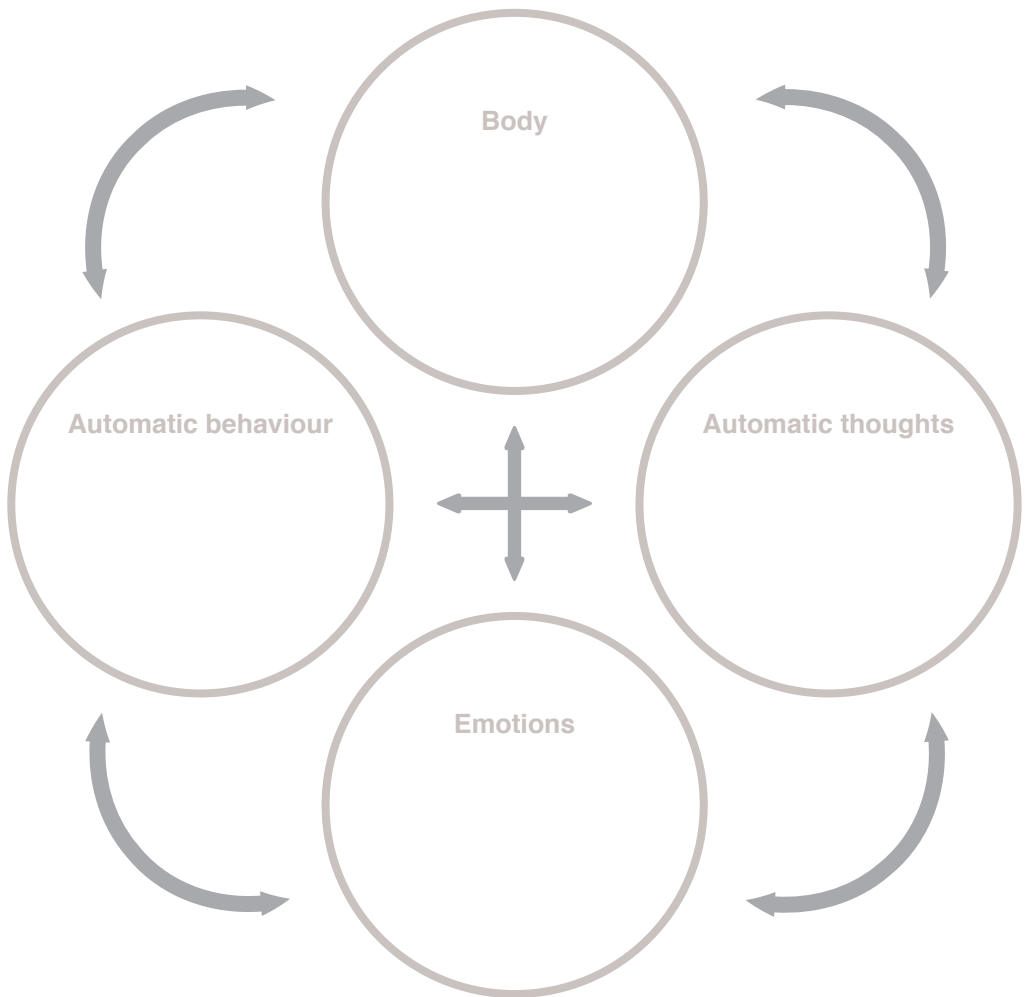
Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main points in week 6

- Communication can be a stress factor. You can practice your communication skills.
- A lot of people believe that they are the only one who feels wrong. That they have no value.
- The brain cannot know the difference between how you treat yourself and others. If you judge others, you judge yourself.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 6

- Alternate on a day to day basis between meditation, body scan or yoga
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the basic model below
- Afterwards, examine your patterns



Complete the model

KINDNESS

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.
Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.
Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and
purchase bread, only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
it is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you every where
like a shadow or a friend.

Naomi Shihab Nye

WEEK 7

AGENDA:

- CONTEMPLATION IN PRACTICE:
 - SILENT MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)
 - RULES (5 MINUTES)
 - SITTING MEDITATION (15 MINUTES)
 - YOGA AND BODY SCAN (60 MINUTES)
 - WALKING MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)
 - SITTING MEDITATION (15 MINUTES)
 - WALKING MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)
 - “LOVE AND KINDNESS”- MEDITATION (30 MINUTES)
 - CHANGE FROM SILENCE TO DIALOGUE
 - GROUP DISCUSSION
- YOUR EXPERIENCE
- TO HOLD PAIN AT A DISTANCE
- SILENCE
- MEDITATION
- NEW HOMEWORK

You have to be able to be aware of yourself before you can be aware of others; feeling good about yourself is a necessary precondition for being capable of forming relationships with others.

Erich Fromm

WEEK 7

CONTEMPLATION

Week 7 gives you the opportunity to contemplate formal practice (mindfulness practice). You can take a whole day or use 4-5 hours to work with the techniques you have learned. If you are part of a group, you can do the exercises together and stay together in silence for the day. You can concentrate on the practice, without talking and while avoiding eye contact. In this manner you permit each other to have a couple of hours on their own, without having to relate to another person. The exercises end with a "Loving-kindness meditation", which is available in the book and on the CD. You should only use the instructions in this meditation if they feel right for you. Afterwards, you can reflect upon your experience. If you are part of a group, you can discuss your experiences.

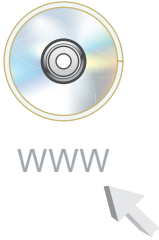


WWW



MEDITATION IN SILENCE

Sit or lie down comfortably and meditate in silence for 10 minutes. Choose the type of meditation that you prefer.



SITTING MEDITATION

1. Once you are sitting comfortably, when you are ready, observe your breathing. Stay focused on your breathing (approx. 5–10 minutes).
2. What do you feel in your body? Are there places on your body that you feel particularly intensely? Perhaps you feel a pain or something unpleasant in your body that occupies your concentration when you sit for a longer period of time. If this happens you can work in one of two ways. You can either consciously change position or you can work with the pain by concentrating on it. See if you can relate to the pain by examining it, by being inquisitive and accepting towards it. Where did you feel it? What quality does it have? Is it dull or burning? Is the pain accompanied by thoughts and feelings? If the pain moves, move your attention with it. Normally we tense up around a pain and try to seal it off. See if you can open up to where it hurts. If needed, you can focus your breathing on the pain (5-10 minutes).
3. Concentrate on feeling your body as a whole (5–10 minutes).

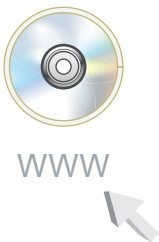
YOGA (30 minutes)

BODY SCAN (30 minutes)

WALKING MEDITATION (15 minutes)

SITTING MEDITATION (15 minutes)

WALKING MEDITATION (15 minutes)



LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION (30 minutes)

- You can start by feeling your breathing.
- And start to think about a person who has touched you, one, who has been kind to you. Perhaps you can think about a situation, where you felt you were truly seen for who you really are. It may be a person who was kind to you. It does not have to be a person. It may also be an animal. If you cannot think about a person or an animal,

you can perhaps imagine how it would be if someone showed you kindness. Think about that person and notice what your body feels. Perhaps you can feel it in the heart.

If you prefer, you can say to yourself:

"May the person be safe"

"May the person be happy"

"May the person be healthy"

"May the person be free from outer and inner harm."

You may prefer other words. use the words you prefer.

- You can wish the same for other people.
- Now you can think about yourself and say the same things. It can be very difficult to say and wish it for yourself.
- You can think about a person who you were in conflict or disagreement with. See, if you can wish the same for this person.
- You can think about the others in the room, the building, the town, the country or even the whole world.
- Lastly, you can return to your breathing.

Your experience

What have you learned, if anything? Did you discover some patterns? What was difficult? How did you work with it? What did you learn about yourself?

To hold pain at a distance

Through meditation I have become aware that part of what motivates me to help others is to hold my own pain at a distance. When the pain is kept at a distance,

it becomes an armour against vulnerability. Through meditation, a lot of people discover that suffering and vulnerability are fundamental conditions that change, and which are shared by everyone.

We need a sensitive point where we can feel ourselves and the depths of life deep into our cores.

We need both strength and vulnerability. We need a sensitive point where we can feel ourselves and the depths of life deep into our bones and where we learn humility, thankfulness and true kindness a moment at a time and from this gain the strength to move in the direction that is important for us.

Vulnerability is the opposite strength; we are able to receive and learn completely new things when we can open up to life and to love.

Silence

For some people silence is liberating, for others it is artificial or difficult. Some people miss communicating or become provoked by having to spend time by themselves. Some people find that meditating in silence is educational, others become disappointed because they do not experience anything. It cannot be emphasised enough, that there is no correct answer to the exercises. Perhaps you had thoughts about how you managed the exercise. No matter what the thoughts are about, they pull our attention from the now. Mindfulness is to feel a place below the changing thoughts and feelings, a place that is still. It is like diving into a stormy sea and discovering all is still just a couple of metres below the surface.

On several occasions, I have spent a whole month in silence. To begin with, the mind is often very noisy. It can be busy with, for example, thoughts about the past or the future. It can also feel as though you will go mad from boredom or frustration. But suddenly you begin to feel the interesting nature of breathing. And perhaps you discover that it is not breathing itself that is so interesting but the energy or sensitivity you put into it.

During silence and longer periods of meditation, the mind gradually becomes tranquil. You let go of something. You give up ‘the fight’ against yourself and live life one breath at a time. The senses become sharper, almost as if you can hear the grass grow.

It is important that you make the practice your own. The week’s exercises are without the CD. Use what you have learned, as well as you can. Practise for 45 minutes everyday. It is here where you feel where you are and how you are feeling. You accept and acknowledge how you are feeling, Perhaps you say to yourself: “I’m taking care of this.” In this way, you give yourself positive energy and attention. You can use the rest of the day for informal practice. Practise the whole time in being present in the moment. Precisely as in the formal practice, your attention wanders, so you go into “automatic pilot’ mode. Your task again and again, is to come back to the single moment, the one moment you can live in, the moment right now.

SHORT MEDITATION

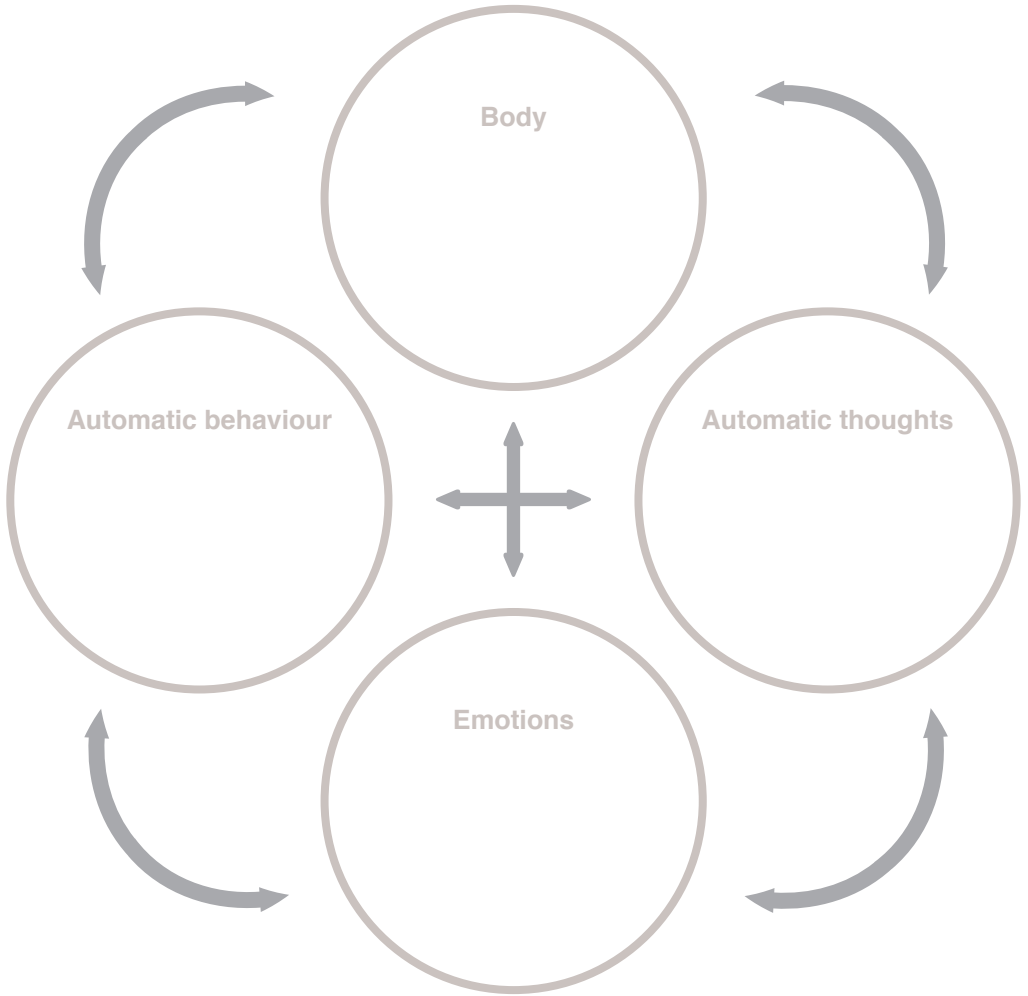
Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main point in week 7

- There is wisdom in stillness.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 7

- Give yourself completely to precisely this moment
- Practice for 45 minutes every day without using the guiding exercises
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the basic model on page 147



Complete the model

WEEK 8

AGENDA:

- YOGA (5-10 MINUTES)
- MEDITATION (30 MINUTES)
- DISCUSSION ABOUT HOMEWORK
- OPPOSING FORCES
- EVERY INHALATION IS A GIFT
- EVERY MOMENT BE A NEW BEGINNING
- CHANGES
- UNDESIRABLE THOUGHTS, HABITS AND BEHAVIOUR
- MEDITATION
- NEW HOMEWORK

To change is to open yourself to something new. Often the healing process requires that you change something in your life. Change often creates fear. We know what we have. There is safety in it, even when it is a bad thing. We do not know what we will get.

Lone Overby Fjorback

WEEK 8 CHANGE

Week 8 begins with yoga and meditation without the use of any guiding exercises.

YOGA (5-10 MINUTES)

You can choose the exercises you prefer.

MEDITATION (30 MINUTES)

Sit in a comfortable position. Breathing can be a way of anchoring yourself in meditation but you can also choose to stay in the meditation without having a fixed focus of attention. Perhaps it is your thoughts or your feelings that dominate, perhaps it is a sound or pain that dominates.



WWW



What was it like to meditate without the guiding exercises?

Meditation is discovering a place that is large enough to contain conflicts or apparently opposing forces. It is a place where there is space for the whole of you.

Opposing forces

I am here but I want to be there. I am there but I want to be here. I am happy to get this task at work but I am having difficulty getting started. Do you recognise these thoughts and feelings? Or does it remind you of something? Meditation is discovering a place that is large enough to contain conflicts or apparently opposing forces. It is a place where there is space for the whole of you.

In this space there is nothing that must be removed or attacked. You must not do anything else other than be, with an awoken and clear consciousness and observe what happens.

"My marriage would be brilliant if it wasn't for my husband" or "My job would be perfect if it wasn't for my boss" are examples given by Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön to illustrate how quickly we blame someone else or complain about something we can't have or do.

Instead, focus on what you can bring. Permit yourself to feel what you feel – because that is how you are feeling, even when you are not feeling good. Can you be present in a short moment without changing anything at all? You can meditate on contentment. It can feel pleasant, but actually, that is not the goal of meditation. The peaceful space or feeling of harmony, contentment or happiness is limited. Therefore, meditation's ultimate goal is pure awareness. In that state, we are open and receptive to the world as it is. We are free from our egos, which constantly try to turn a situation in a specific direction.

Every inhalation is a gift

Many of my patients have told me that every time they feel a little better, something happens that makes the situation worse. The conclusion is that nothing lasts. You may try to hold onto certain situations, experiences or feelings, but everything is temporary. We must leave

this place one day and the only thing we are master of, is how awake and conscious we are. This is what we do in meditation. Every inhalation is a gift. Perhaps you do not think so right now, but one day you will be utterly thankful for that you can breathe. With every exhalation you let go, and if you can let go without resistance, you are free.

Meditation embraces the whole. You embrace your craving for more and your resistance to letting go. Meditating is demanding, even though you do nothing. The task is to completely give yourself to this moment or breath.

Every moment is a new beginning

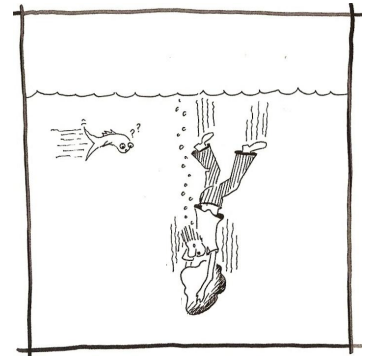
Mindfulness practice can give you a greater insight in how you are feeling and the way you are living your life. Perhaps you use too much energy worrying about things. Perhaps you have undesirable patterns of behaviour that are difficult to change.

You always have a choice. Will you continue along the same lines or will you try something new? Every single moment can be a new beginning.

Some years ago, I decided to finally fight the knot in my stomach. For a whole year, I meditated every day and cried. I struggled and thought, this has to end now. I was ready to take whatever might come. In a meditation I saw an image of myself: I was in a deep and fast-flowing river. I clinged to a stone so I would not lose control and drown. I realised that the stone symbolised my pain and it made me feel safe. I had difficulty letting go of my pain because it felt as if my life depended on it.

With every increasing frequency, I realise that the daily problems I encounter are due to the fact that I will not let go. I try to justify to myself that I have followed a specific path for years – even though it was undesirable.

You always have a choice. Will you continue in the same old way or will you try something new? Every single moment can be a new beginning.



GOOD AND BAD SHOOTS

We are all born with good and bad shoots, says Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. For example, when we are angry, new anger shoots will grow, which makes being happy more difficult. So we must be careful about the life we lead and the feelings we express. We feel much better when we are unconcerned, forgiving and non-judgemental towards ourselves and to others.

Changes

Even giving up overtly bad habits is difficult. Change can provoke anxiety, and the bigger the change the greater the stress reaction. You throw something out that used to work for you. And you do not know what you will get instead. Perhaps there have been periods in your life where it was important that you did not show certain feelings. Perhaps you have always been praised for your efforts at work. Or perhaps you are always aware of the needs of others. The brain learns quickly. If a behaviour worked once, it is an easy habit to repeat this behaviour in the future. But patterns of behaviour can seem like a pair of shoes that have become too small.

Most of us know the pain of saying goodbye to something familiar but also the joy of welcoming something new. You can practice yourself to see change as a challenge and not a threat. You can engage with your life and learn to have control rather than succumb to feelings of hopelessness. Some people have everything but they always complain about what they do not have. Other people have lost everything but still find meaning in their lives.

All of us can practise in grappling with the lives we have; engaging with our lives and taking control of the things we can control. In other words, live life, as it is, for better or worse, instead of becoming lost in fantasies of what life could be.

TO TRAP MONKEYS

in India there is a tradition of trapping monkeys. You make a basket with a small hole, so that the monkey can just stretch its hand inside. There is a banana in the basket. The monkey reaches in and grasps the banana and becomes trapped because it will not release the banana. If it was to let go of the banana it would almost certainly be able to get its arm out and escape. But usually this doesn't happen.

Sit still and feel your breathing. Think about what you hold onto, even if it is not good for you. What do you not want to change?

Undesirable thoughts, habits and behaviour

Most of us have fixed thoughts, habits or patterns of behaviour, even when they are not good for us. It may be a notion of how you should be or how others should be. In a relationship, you can become fixed on who is right, instead of looking at things from a larger perspective.

Like almost everyone else, I like to feel that I am skilful, responsible and helpful. Sometimes striving after these qualities causes me to forget my actual needs. I lose perspective and have trouble seeing what I can realistically manage. What I am up against is my own vanity and my wish to show that I am a great, talented

and loveable person. You could say that the wish to be a great person comes from a very small person.

To become aware of your own patterns of behaviour is to become empowered. It allows you more freedom. It does not mean, for example, that you will never strain yourself. But you may be quicker at realising what is happening and are quicker at 'correcting' the direction you are moving in.

"The wise man also gets lost but he knows how to get back again," goes the saying. The more you are in the now, while being accepting and having affection for yourself, the clearer it becomes for you, when you get lost or trip over – the easier it is to change things.

SHORT MEDITATION

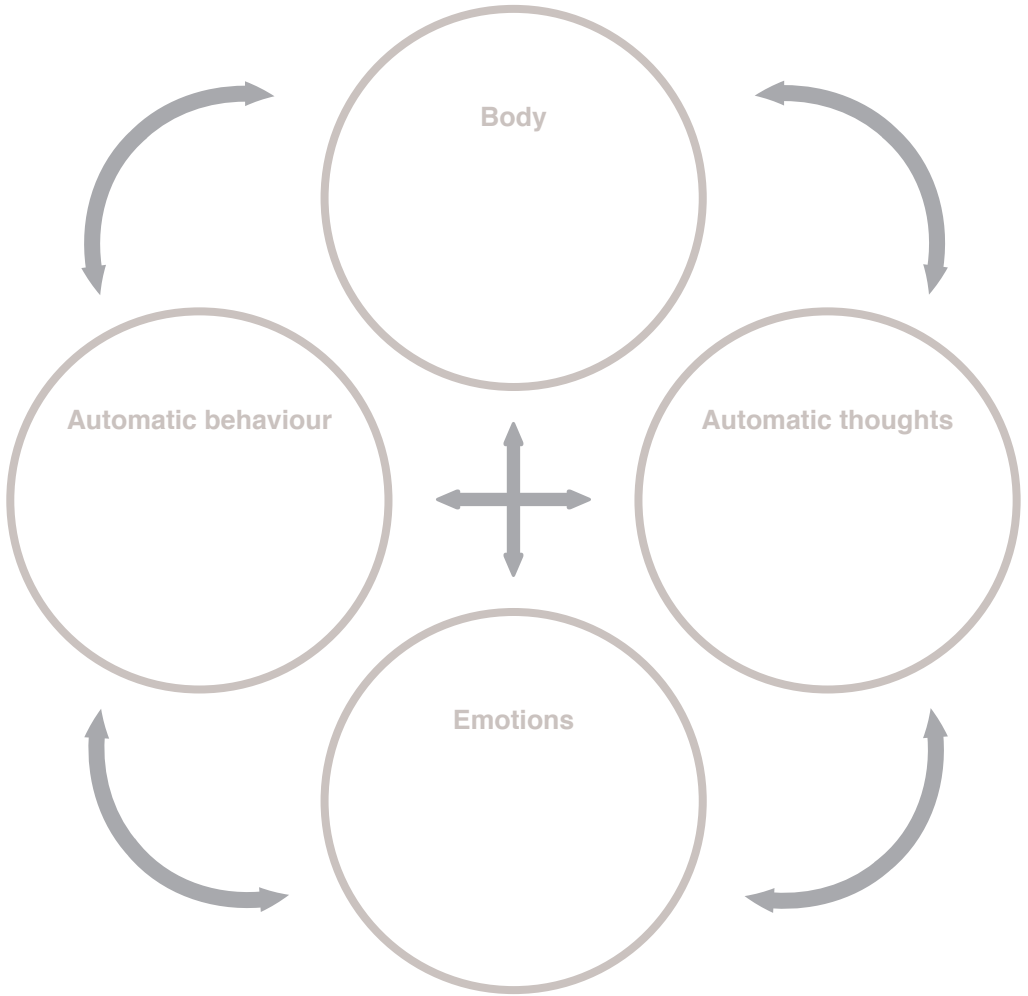
Sitting in a comfortable position, feel your breathing, if required take some deep breaths (5–10 minutes).

Main points in week 8

- Change is difficult. We are creatures of habit and we have a tendency to stick to what we know, even when it is no longer effective.
- Change is frequently necessary if we want to improve our health and well-being.

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 8

- Practise meditation or yoga (with or without the CD) for 45 minutes every day
- Complete the symptom registration form for the week
- Complete the basic model on page 157



Complete the model

WEEK 9

AGENDA AND CONTENTS:

- BODY SCAN
- YOGA
- MEDITATION
- WHAT IS BODILY DISTRESS SYNDROME? (WEEK 2)
- WHY MINDFULNESS? (WEEK 1)
- IMPORTANT ATTITUDES (WEEK 1)
- WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?
- EVALUATION OF THE COURSE
- IDEAS FOR FURTHER MINDFULNESS PRACTICE
- LOOKING AHEAD
- CONCLUDING MEDITATION

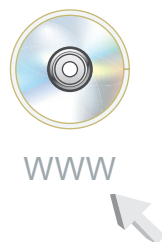
Meditation is like cleansing the body from within ...

Sofia, meditation practitioner

WEEK 9

ON-GOING PRACTICE

Week 9 starts with a body scan – the first meditation you worked on – followed by yoga and sitting meditation. You can also use the yoga exercise guide on the CD or online at www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness.



BODY SCAN

About 30 minutes.

YOGA

About 10 minutes. Choose the exercises that you need. If you are part of a group, then each person can be the instructor for a particular exercise or name the area that he/she wants to focus attention on.

SMALL MEDITATION

Feel your breathing. Meditate over how the course has been. What is it that you are certain you will remember? What will you take with you? Feel your breathing.

The course is about to finish. What are your thoughts?

Why did you start? What expectations did you have?
Why did you continue?

What did you want with the course?

What have you taken from the course?

What have you learned?

What sacrifices have you made and what was the price?

What is your largest obstacle to growth and healing?

What strategies can help to prevent you from becoming stuck?

Ideas for further mindfulness practice

You have practised yoga and mindfulness for many weeks now. I hope your efforts will help you to achieve your goals. Hopefully you will continue to practice, so you can better manage the challenges that life will bring.

1. Sitting meditation for 20–30 minutes, once or twice a day.

Sit, as still as possible, in a comfortable position, with your back and head held straight.

- Be aware of breathing in, and breathing out.
- Be aware of specific areas of the body.
- Be aware of your body as a whole.

- Listen to the silence and the sounds.
- Observe the thoughts and feelings that arise – without getting involved in the contents, observe them only as thoughts and feelings.
- When you discover that your mind is beginning to fantasise, focus your attention back to the now.

If you discover that you are feeling resistant to sitting still every day, focus your attention on your resistance and observe it. By sitting still at the same time every day, you can become more relaxed and balanced in your activities during the rest of the day. Use the CD or visit www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness when you want to strengthen your meditation with guided exercises.

2. *Body scan and meditate as often as you can during the day.*

You now have the ability to scan your body with precise and concentrated awareness. When you discover a tension in a part of your body, focus non-judgemental awareness on that part of your body. Relate to what you are feeling with a sense of curiosity. You can body scan at any time, under all circumstances. All that is required is that you focus your attention on the body and that you are willing to listen. You can also try to breathe all the way down in the belly as often as possible during the day. It does not require effort, just awareness. If you prefer, you can use the CD or visit www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness. Adjust the exercises to suit your preferences.

Body scan permits you to be comfortable in your own body. The feeling is greater than external circumstances or mental states, which sometimes lead to tension or discomfort, sometimes to relaxation and well-being. When you observe changing life situations and emotional states, you are permitting the development of a deep feeling of balance and presence. This feeling is an expression of wisdom.

3. *Walking meditation, as often as you can during the day*

Slow down now and then when you walk and remind yourself that you are here, now. Feel how you hold or bear your body. As you walk, feel your feet, legs and chest. Be open to your surroundings. You can do this exercise when you are shopping or walking on the street, and also when you are standing and waiting. You can combine the exercise with focus on your breathing, by feeling your breath all the way down into your stomach.

4. *Mindful eating*

Examine the quality and quantity of your meal. What function does food have for you? Do you eat to enjoy the meal and give yourself energy or to comfort yourself, fill an emptiness, feel more satisfied or safe?

Perhaps you eat and drink too much, too quickly and incorrectly, so that you dull the senses and do not notice the effects of the meal. This is a pity, because eating can be a wonderful experience, and there is a great sense of satisfaction linked to nourishing the body with good quality food.

Eat with greater attention to your food, and eat slower than you normally would. You can eat a meal in silence, where you only concentrate on your meal. Avoid watching television or reading while you eat. You will be able to focus greater attention on what you are eating. You can also use the same techniques when eating with others.

5. *Yoga – stay in shape without being fanatical*

Regularly practise yoga and relaxation for 20–45 minutes, as often as you can. If you prefer, use the exercises on the CD or online at www.psykiatrifonden.dk. Do the exercises slowly and breathe through the stomach.

- Perhaps it can help if you ask yourself the following questions:
- How does my body feel right now?
- What is my health like right now?
- Am I allowing parts of my body or my mind to become unhealthy because of inactivity or by ignoring it?
- Is better health one of my goals?
- What do I do today to achieve that goal?

6. *Management of stress*

- Be aware when you are experiencing a situation as stressful. Remember, you can be conscious of your reaction instead of reacting automatically.
- Remind yourself that you are complete and whole as you are – ideally, several items a day. You do not lose anything by permitting yourself to express your sensitivity and love.
- Notice judgemental thoughts and feelings, e.g. "I like/don't like.." or "I want/don't want ...". When these feelings arise, you can try and notice how they are expressed in your activities, your behaviour, the tone of your voice and the choices you make.
- Be aware of what underlies your thoughts and actions. Listen to your feelings when you make a choice.
- Notice just how much your feelings and reactions affect your physical well-being. Be conscious of your posture, how you look and how much you eat, drink, smoke and talk. Use breathing to tune in on yourself.
- Notice how much your mind dwells on the past or worries about the future. Notice how many of your thoughts are about "me" and "mine".
- Focus attention on breathing. It helps you to be in the now. Right now, and now ...
- Notice the degree and how overwhelming the following feelings are: fear, anger, jealousy, envy, tiredness, restlessness, boredom, anxiety, worry, insecurity, greed, hate and laziness.
- Notice the quality of the feelings; fearlessness, happiness, happiness for others, energy, peacefulness, open-

ness, relaxation, security, satisfaction, love and enthusiasm. Are they strong? How can they be strengthened and supported?

- Notice your thoughts in relation to anxiety and depression. Are the thoughts correct? What thoughts could support your self-worth and your well-being. Are the thoughts more precise or correct?
- Imagine that you can die at any moment. How would you like that moment to be? What shall your mind be like? Will it be full of condescending thoughts and hate for yourself? Or will you be at peace with yourself? Imagine what can make you at peace with yourself right now.

Looking ahead

Using mindfulness techniques is a continuous process. Learning consists of many steps –forwards and backwards. Do not lose courage, if you fall back into old habits. Relapses will become rarer and rarer events. The better you become at looking ahead, the more you learn. You should be aware that positive changes can also bring new difficulties.

LETTER TO YOURSELF

Small meditation. Feel your breathing. Meditate over how the course has been. What is it that you are certain you will remember? What will you take with you? Feel your breathing. Write a letter to yourself and describe what you have learned and what you will take with you. If you so wish, you can make a note in your calendar to read the letter six months from now.

CONCLUDING MEDITATION

Sit down. Meditate about how you are feeling right now. See if you can find a single word to describe it. Write it down or say it aloud.

If you are doing the exercises in a group, you can sit in circle and hold hands. Each person is then invited to say their word aloud.

Main point in week 9

- The techniques work if you use them!

PROPOSAL FOR DAILY PRACTICE IN WEEK 9

- Carry out a meditation and yoga for 45 minutes every day. Use the technique you prefer(with or without the CD).
- Describe your short-term and long-term goals.

Goals:

Describe three short-term goals that you can achieve, based on your experience from this programme.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Describe three long-term goals (three years or longer)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

*To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it against your bones
your life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it let go.*

Mary Oliver

EPILOGUE

The world is beautiful and savage. We all know that. But it is always a difficult thing to concede. We want to protect our children from the world's terrible reality. We want to protect ourselves. We often forget that pain is unavoidable and to feel pain or joy is part of the human condition. Research shows that mindfulness can improve our physical, mental and social well-being. I feel that I am incredibly privileged, because I can combine my profession as a doctor with my passion for yoga and meditation. For many years now, to my and my patients' great satisfaction, I have used mindfulness techniques as part of treatments. It is wonderful being able to apply scientific principles to these techniques. I am certain in the future, the medical profession will have specific knowledge about what it means to be a human being. We must educate patients, so that they know that whatever ails them – there is more right with them than wrong with them. No matter what ails them, we must work with them if they are willing, but of course not by subjecting them to meaningless examinations and treatments. We must give hope by teaching them to do something that nobody else can do for them – take responsibility for their lives. They must consciously and systematically learn to work with stress, pain and disorders.

I am certain that I am a better mother, wife, friend and doctor when I am in harmony with myself. If I can tolerate my own presence, then I become more tolerant of other people.

I am certain that we can incorporate more humanity into our everyday existence. And this can be of great benefit to our healthcare sector. We cannot solve everything by operating on people or by medicating them. We have to relate to our own and our patients' suffering.

Thank you for sharing this mindfulness journey. I wish you all the best for the rest of your way. If there is one thing that I have learned is this: it is difficult to be in the now. But it is possible. Again and again to return to the life that is right in front of me. When I am mindful, I cry and I am deeply thankful for the miracle that life is.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Mindfulness Therapy, and thank you to the Danish Mental Health Fond and the Research Clinic for Functional Disorders for all of the support they have given to help me disseminate knowledge about mindfulness.

Lone Overby Fjorback

Home

*In time you will discover
a place in your heart,
where your true essence lives.
It has been there all your life
faithfully waiting for you to come home.*

*Buddhists say, this essence is emptiness.
Religions say it is God.
Primitive people believe it is a life force.
Brain researchers think it is
increased activity in the left part of the frontal lobe.*

*I feel the essence - my home,
I know, it is possible
to let go
of the illusions of happiness
and feel it right here.*

Lone Overby Fjorback

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EXERCISES

The following exercises are available on the accompanying CD:

- Long body scan (about 30 minutes)
- Short yoga programme (about 20 minutes)
 - Mountain pose
 - Sideways bend
 - Shoulder rotations
 - Mountain pose
 - Balance exercises
 - The tree
 - Bending pose
 - Mountain pose
- Short sitting meditation (about 14 minutes)
- Loving-kindness meditation (about 13 minutes)

The following exercises are available at
www.psykiatrifonden.dk/forlag/mindfulness:

- Short body scan (about 16 minutes)
- Long sitting meditation (about 33 minutes)
- Long yoga programme (about 33 minutes)
 - Corpse Pose
 - Pelvis rotations
 - The cat
 - Corpse Pose
 - Pelvis rotations
 - Stomach exercises (the Cobra)
 - Corpse Pose