



## Introduction

With almost no exceptions, everybody will experience physical pain at some point in their lives. When we're in pain, we want it to go away. Immediately! The last thing we want to do is pay more attention to our pain. But that's exactly what we do in mindfulness. Instead of focusing on how badly we want the pain to stop, we pay attention to our pain with curiosity and without judgment. Jon Kabat-Zinn and his group founded the Stress Reduction Clinic at University of Massachusetts in the late 70s. Their research and work over ten years demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness and meditation in the treatment of chronic pain, anxiety and illnesses. They found positive improvements in indicators such as present- moment pain, negative body image, degree of inhibition of everyday activities by pain, medical symptoms, anxiety, depression, and self esteem. Finding cheaper and more effective ways to reduce pain and our reaction to it is a big subject, attracting much scientific interest.

## In this session

In this session we have introduced the following concepts: 1. Meditative approaches to physical pain - (1) tune out: put concentration somewhere else; (2) tune in: make the pain your object of awareness, allowing it to be present (this is the mindfulness approach). 2. Key points: Awareness itself is all you need (no trying or forcing) - changes will happen when they're ready. Meditation helps the body and mind to relax deeply. 3. With pain comes an associated mental commentary, which is almost never helpful. 4. We learn how to let go of the mental commentary - making the physical pain/sensations the object of meditation makes dealing with the mental overlay much easier. 5. Meditation as a credible method to deal with pain - seminal paper by Kabat-Zinn et al. (1985). More recent studies on pain in Zen meditators shows that they have a lower pain sensitivity both in and out of a meditative state. 6. Counting the Breath meditation - keeping attention on one object of meditation, the breath.

## Commitment

Committing to 20-30 minutes of practice every day for the duration of this course, including still meditation, writing a meditation diary, movement practices, and daily mindfulness exercises.



## Homework

Practice counting the breath meditation every day and note your experiences in your meditation diary. In addition, once a day when you are walking, slow down just a tiny bit and count your breath in the same way you do when you are sitting. See how it feels and record your experience.

### Body scan meditation reminder

Practice of keeping our attention on one object of meditation, the breath. Also here we begin exploring sitting meditation. Sitting either on a chair, kneeling with a cushion or bench (knees apart), or cross legged on a cushion. Establish your triangular foundation between your sitting bones and two knees. Make sure your spine is as upright as you can manage, your neck long with your head tilted down slightly. Hands in your lap, eyes resting down, open or closed, tongue soft and resting on roof of mouth. Become aware of your breath as low down as possible, ideally in your belly. Begin mentally counting your breath: in-breath, one, out-breath, two, in-breath, three, out-breath, four. And so on, up to ten - when you can start again at one. Allow any thoughts, feelings, memories, or anything at all to arise and pass. Stay with the sensation of the breathing and counting in your belly as best as you can. Anytime you get distracted or lose count, without any judgment, start again back at one. Counting in-breath one, out-breath two...