



Introduction

“Your life is the creation of your mind.” - Buddha

Mindfulness and meditation helps to develop the awareness and resilience so that we can cope better with life’s adversities. It also helps to see things more clearly, particularly those things that are nourishing and energy giving, and those things that deplete you and make you feel less than you really are.

Write down for yourself three things you could do in your life that will help to increase the nourishing aspects and reduce the depleting aspects of your life?

Some of the depleting aspects might well be things that are, in the broader perspective of your life (at least for the moment), things you want/need to keep doing.

Write down 3 different ways in which you could approach these activities differently to minimise their ill effects?

There are many activities that are important to do to nurture ourselves: spending time with people on the same path as us, giving (time, money, etc.), forgiving, remembering things you are grateful for, dancing, singing, laughing. These can be expressions of joy or generators of joy.

Cultivation of mindfulness will influence positively your relationships with others. With time your mindfulness practice can expand to all parts of life

“When you’re drinking tea, drinking tea must be the most important thing in your life. Chopping wood is meditation. Carrying water is meditation. Be mindful 24 hours a day, not just during the one hour you may allot for formal meditation.” - Thich Nhat Hanh

In this session

In this session we have introduced the following concepts:

- Meditation and mindfulness helps to develop awareness and resilience to life’s challenges, and see clearly those activities that nourish you and deplete you.
- Meditation practice is important part of your programme of taking care of yourself - daily practice (sitting and/or walking), keeping meditation diary.
- Very important to expand your mindfulness practice into other parts of your life
- Meditation is a tool to improve relationships - take time for giving, for forgiveness, being grateful, singing, dancing, laughing
- Do what makes you come alive
- Physical mini breaks: stretching, yoga, mindful movement



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

- Continue to practice the Following the Breath meditation once a day and note your experiences in your meditation diary. Take some time for mindful movement/stretching. Continue practising and recoding your daily life mindfulness activities.
- walking meditation.
- In addition, every day note down ten things you are grateful for.

Following the breath reminder

First finding your comfortable sitting position, with your stable triangular base, spine upright and erect, eyes lowered and either open or closed, hands in your lap, tongue relaxed.

In the Zen school we particularly become aware of our breathing in the abdomen as this helps us to remain grounded. So, breathing through your nose, become aware of your breath as low down as you can in the body, ideally in the belly. Notice the sensation of the in and out movement of your belly. Allow your body to relax and begin to just follow your breath with your attention. Grounding your awareness in this movement in your belly. Your awareness is riding on the breath, anchored on the breath. But doing your best not to exclude anything or suppress anything. Allowing thoughts, memories feelings, sights and sounds to just arise and pass. Any time you feel yourself getting involved or carried away with thoughts or feelings anything at all just coming back to the breath.

Remembering the image of a busy road with a bridge. The traffic is our thoughts. Any time you find you've climbed up onto the bridge and started hitchhiking off on one of the cars then all you do is just come back under the bridge. Coming back to the breath.