

# Mindfulness

## The Four Principles:

1. **Observe** – Just notice the experience. Notice without getting caught up in the experience or reacting to it. Have a Teflon mind letting experiences, feelings and thoughts come into your mind and slip right out. Control your attention. Push away nothing. Cling to nothing Step inside yourself and observe. Watch your thoughts coming and going, like clouds in the sky. Notice each feeling, rising and falling, like waves in the ocean. Notice exactly what you are doing. Notice what comes through your Senses – your eyes, ears, nose, skin, tongue.
2. **Describe** – Put words on the experience. When a feeling or thought arises, or you do something acknowledge it. For example, say in your mind, “Sadness has just enveloped me” ...or “Stomach muscles tightening” or “A thought, ‘I can’t do this’ has come into mind” or “walking, step, step, step”. Put experiences into words. Describe to yourself what is happening. Put a name on your feelings. Call a thought just a thought, a feeling, just a feeling. Don’t get caught up in the content.
3. **Be in the Moment** – Do one thing at a time. When you are eating, eat. When you are walking, walk. When you are bathing, bathe. Focus your attention on the very moment you are in with the other person. When you are thinking, think. When you are worrying, worry. Do each thing with all of your attention. If other actions or other thoughts or strong feelings distract you, Let go of the Distractions and go back to what you are doing – again, and again, and again.
4. **Without Evaluating** – See but don’t judge. Take a non judgmental stance. Just the facts. Focus on the “what” not the “good” or “bad” the “terrible” or “wonderful” the “should” or “shouldn’t”. Unglue your opinions from the facts, from the who, what , when and where. Accept each moment, each event as a blanket spread out on the lawn accepts both the rain and the sun, each leaf that falls upon it. Acknowledge the helpful, the wholesome, but don’t judge it. Acknowledge the harmful, the unwholesome, but don’t judge it. When you find yourself judging, Don’t judge your judging.

This material is from Marsha Linehan’s handbook: Skills Training for BPD, 1993 The Guildford Press.

Think of the mind as something which is constantly hopping from thing to thing. With the thoughts come emotions, physical sensations and eventually behaviours. In mindfulness we practice holding thoughts in one place for seconds or up to a minute.

Here are some experimental “mindfulness activities” you could try:

1. Come to your senses – Review 3 things you see, hear, touch/feel, smell and taste in the moment, without judging them. (example: I hear the fan, the street, muffled voices. I see the chair, the Kleenex box, a pen. I am feeling the chair under my bum, toes in my shoes, cloth on my back. I taste sweet, warm, wet. I smell ....) Do this multiple times for up to several minutes so that your brain can come to the moment.
2. Breathe! Slow the breath down and just keep the mind on the breath. Sometimes it helps to count the breaths or visualize them. When the mind takes off, gently bring it back as many times as it takes to maintain “one thing in the moment”.
3. The name game – Ask the mind to stay on 3 girls names that start with A, B, C, .... and so on. When it can’t think of a name and takes off, bring the mind back to the task. (Great one for getting back to sleep.)
4. Spend 10 minutes sitting in a favourite outdoor spot. Observe your environment. What is the weather like? Feel the air on your body. How is your body responding? Smell the air as you breathe full, slow breaths. How does the air smell? Can you hear people talking, cars, birds, insects, wind blowing? Notice things that you may have never seen before in this spot. Describe the smells. How is your body responding?
5. Spend 5 minutes eating your favourite food. Before taking a bite observe the food on the plate. Smell the aroma; look at the colour, the texture, the way it is arranged on the plate. Observe the temperature of the food. Think about why this is your favourite food.

Check Out: Introductory Mindfulness Documentary by PBS. Go to Youtube and put in the name Jon Kabat-Zinn. A lot of material will come up under his name. Click on the UCDenver video called “Healing the Mind”. It’s a 42 minute documentary that demonstrates the basic principles with people suffering from physical pain.

Check Out: Dan Seigal’s work on mindfulness and in particular his work on brain function. I particularly like his video on “Flipping Your Lid” - Youtube/DanSeigal/Flipping your lid

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