

MINDFULNESS: MY INTRODUCTION

My first exposure to mindfulness was in a Dialectical Behavior Therapy class for my MA. While, I do not remember the teacher's name, he was pivotal because he introduced me to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Through his books and lectures, Jon Kabat-Zinn particularly in Full Catastrophe Living, and to some extent Wherever I go, There I am, played a key role in popularizing mindfulness in Western medical settings, some time before I heard of it in 2007. Below is a summary or overview of some of the key principles and practices Jon Kabat-Zinn introduced, as they are fundamental to mindfulness in the current way that I and many folks understand it.

A Definition of Mindfulness, by JKZ:

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose,
in the present moment, non-judgmentally.

Attention, Presence, Purposeful, Nonjudgment Awareness.

Seven Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness Practice:

- **Non-Judging:** Observing your experience without labeling it as good or bad.
- **Patience:** Understanding and accepting that things must unfold in their own time.
- **Beginner's Mind:** Seeing things with a fresh perspective, as if for the first time.
- **Trust:** Trusting in yourself and your intuition.
- **Non-Striving:** Not trying to get anywhere other than where you are now. No agenda.
- **Acceptance:** Seeing things as they are in the present.
- **Letting Go:** Releasing attachment to thoughts, feelings, and situations.

Mindfulness Practices:

Mindfulness is often done using the breath as an anchor, with an intention to observe, so we notice our thoughts, sensations, impulses. Just as if our thoughts are logs on a stream, not becoming attached, we let the log (thought, impulse) drift away, until another thought on a log goes by, staying present and letting go of each thought as it arrives. We allow the process to go on, until at some point, a thought comes in and those *extra* sticky ones, STICK to the log that you were watching go by, and then we go along down the stream with the log, and it may take us down a few stronger rapids sometimes. Once we notice we have drifted, we simply invite and *gently and nonjudgmentally*, shift our attention bringing focus back to our anchor.

(Please find these attached at the end of this document!)

- **Body Scan Meditation:** A systematic way of focusing attention on distinct parts of the body, from the toes to the head.
- **Sitting Meditation:** Observing thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations while sitting quietly.
- **Walking Meditation:** Being mindful of the experience of walking, including the sensations in the feet and legs, and the rhythm of breathing.
- **Loving-kindness (Metta) Meditation:** Cultivating feelings of goodwill and kindness towards oneself and others.



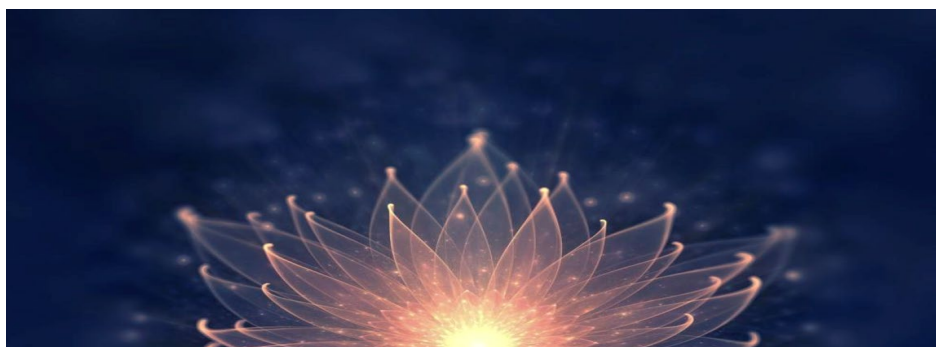
Principles for Daily Life:

PLEASE FIND EXERCISES IN THE SESSION

WORKBOOK FOR WEEK 1.

- **Staying Present:** Reminding oneself to be in the present moment throughout the day. Practice awareness of breath, or another anchor to the present moment.
- **Non-Reactivity:** Noticing feelings and thoughts without reacting to them impulsively.
- **Awareness of Breath:** Using breath as an anchor to the present moment, especially during challenging situations.
- **Mindful Eating:** Paying full attention to the process of eating, savoring each bite, and noticing the effects of food on the body. This is another opportunity to anchor in the present moment. If you plan to do that for a meal during each day, the practice makes new patterns, neuropathways, and changes to our Autonomic Nervous System.

POLYVAGAL TRAINING AND GROUPS ARE SEPARATE, SO PLEASE REACH OUT TO HELLO@sensingfieldsllc.com for further information. In the meantime, please join us for the first Mindfulness Group and Training Session/Q&A/Experiential Mindfulness.



Similarly, any time can become your reminder to notice what is happening now. While showering is a favorite of mine, because I love H₂O (aka water), so is a pool and large bodies of water. For me, water is an automatic flag raising Presence in the Now.

Busyness: One challenge/response when folks say they are too busy to practice mindfulness, meditation, yoga, etc., for 30 minutes: that makes it that much more important that you set aside time with the intention to practice for an hour. It TRULY is helpful to set aside regular times for mindfulness practice. When in doubt, remember your **why**, and that we practice because it becomes easier and more comfortable to remain present in our everyday life.

Doubt: Please trust the process and trust your own experience. If you find it difficult, practice. The more you practice, the easier it will become (like anything else). The easier it becomes, the more present-centered you will be in general.

Below, there is a resource for harm caused by mindfulness, as that is a rare, known potential.

Drowsiness: Adjusting posture, opening eyes, or standing up during meditation. Also, you may fall asleep. Remember, that is not the agenda, as the only thing we want to do is be present. Sometimes, we fall asleep. Gently returning attention to the object of meditation (e.g., breath, body) will be helpful if this happens, as the more quickly you notice, the less far away you become from this moment. If you are having difficulty, notice if you find it easier to focus on something with which you have a different relationship (e.g. Candle, if Breath is a challenge).

Aversion or Attachment: This is the point. We can Recognize these feelings and return to the present moment without judgment. If it becomes important to 'shake' something off, we may express, through gentle and mindful movement or other bilateral motion, or a rebalancing exercise from energy psychology, breathwork. If it is related to someone else, mindful practice will help to ensure you can handle a situation less reactively after giving it some attention and space.

Remember, the goal of mindfulness is not to achieve a particular state but to cultivate awareness of what is happening now. This awareness can bring insight, clarity, and a deeper understanding of one's life. If you are interested in diving deeper, it is recommended to read Kabat-Zinn's books or enroll in an MBSR course. There are many mindfulness training and groups, including our mindfulness groups that move through tenants of mindfulness, and offer groups for achieving mastery.

Please note: Meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation is something that helps us, in mind, body, and spirit. In rare circumstances, the practice caused harm, and that may be experienced by anyone particularly in first time mindfulness folks. In the unlikely event this occurs, please visit <https://www.cheetahhouse.org> for RESOURCES after a meditation that caused problems.