

HANDOUT 5.1



Preliminary Client Handout for MBCT

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE WE MEET.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a very common problem. Twenty percent of adults become severely depressed at some point in their lives. Depression involves both biological changes in the way the brain works and psychological changes—the way we think and feel. Because of this, it is often useful to combine medical treatments for treating depression (which act on the brain) with psychological approaches (which teach new ways to deal with thoughts and feelings).

TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION

When you have been depressed in the past your doctor may have prescribed antidepressants. These work through their effects on the chemical messengers in your brain. In depression, these chemical messengers have often become run down, lowering mood and energy levels, and disturbing sleep and appetite. Correcting these brain chemicals may have taken time, but most people experience improvements in 6 to 8 weeks.

Although antidepressants generally work well in reducing depression, they are not a permanent cure—their effects continue only so long as you keep taking the pills. Your doctor could continue to prescribe antidepressants for months, or even years, since this is now the recommended way to use antidepressants if further depression is to be prevented by this means.

However, many people prefer to use other ways to prevent further depression. This is the purpose of the classes you will be attending.

(cont.)

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PREVENTION OF MORE DEPRESSION

Whatever caused your depression in the first place, the experience of depression itself has a number of aftereffects. One of these is a likelihood that you will become depressed again. The purpose of these classes is to improve your chance of preventing further depression. In the classes, you will learn skills to help you handle your thoughts and feelings differently.

Since many people have had depression and are at risk for further depression, you will learn these skills in a class with up to a dozen other people who have also been depressed and treated with antidepressants. In eight 2-hour sessions, the class will meet to learn new ways of dealing with what goes on in our minds, and to share and review experiences with other class members.

After the eight weekly sessions are over, the class will meet again four times over the following few months for reunions and to see how things are progressing.

HOMEWORK: THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

Together, we will be working to change patterns of mind that often have been around for a long time. These patterns may have become a habit. We can only expect to succeed in making changes if we put time and effort into learning skills.

This approach depends entirely on your willingness to do homework between class meetings. This homework will take at least an hour a day, 6 days a week, for 8 weeks, and involves tasks such as listening to tapes, performing brief exercises, and so on. We appreciate that it is often very difficult to carve out that amount of time for something new in lives that are already very busy and crowded. However, the commitment to spend time on homework is an essential part of the class; if you do not feel able to make that commitment, it would be best not to start the classes.

FACING DIFFICULTIES

The classes and the homework assignments can teach you how to be more fully aware and present in each moment of life. The good news is that this makes life more interesting, vivid, and fulfilling. On the other hand, this means facing what is present, even when it is unpleasant and difficult. In practice, you will find that turning to face and acknowledge difficulties is the most effective way, in the long run, to reduce unhappiness. It is also central to preventing further depression. Seeing unpleasant feelings, thoughts, or experiences clearly, as they arise, means that you will be in much better shape to “nip them in the bud,” before they progress to more intense or persistent depressions.

(cont.)

In the classes, you will learn gentle ways to face difficulties, and will be supported by the instructor and the other class members.

PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

Because we will be working to change well-established habits of mind, you will be putting in a lot of time and effort. The effects of this effort may only become apparent later. In many ways, it is much like gardening—we have to prepare the ground, plant the seeds, ensure that they are adequately watered and nourished, and then wait patiently for results.

You may be familiar with this pattern from your treatment with antidepressants: Often there is little beneficial effect until you have been taking the medication for some time. Yet improvement in your depression depended on your continuing to take the antidepressant even when you felt no immediate benefit.

In the same way, we ask you to approach the classes and homework with a spirit of patience and persistence, committing yourself to put time and effort into what will be asked of you, while accepting, with patience, that the fruits of your efforts may not show straight away.

THE INITIAL INDIVIDUAL MEETING

Your initial individual meeting provides an opportunity for you to ask questions about the classes or raise issues related to the points raised in this handout. You may find it useful, before you come for that interview, to make a note of the points that you wish to raise.

Good luck!

HANDOUT 6.2



Summary of Session I: Automatic Pilot

In a car, we can sometimes drive for miles “on automatic pilot,” without really being aware of what we are doing. In the same way, we may not be really “present,” moment-by-moment, for much of our lives: We can often be “miles away” without knowing it.

On automatic pilot, we are more likely to have our “buttons pressed”: Events around us and thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the mind (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old habits of thinking that are often unhelpful and may lead to worsening mood.

By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice; we do not have to go into the same old “mental ruts” that may have caused problems in the past.

The aim of this program is to increase awareness so that we can respond to situations with choice rather than react automatically. We do that by practicing to become more aware of where our attention is, and deliberately changing the focus of attention, over and over again.

To begin with, we use attention to different parts of the body as a focus to anchor our awareness in the moment. We will also be training ourselves to put attention and awareness in different places at will. This is the aim of the body scan exercise that is the main homework for next week.

HANDOUT 6.3



Homework for Week Following Session I

1. Do the Body Scan Tape (Tape I, Side I) six times before we meet again. Don't expect to feel anything in particular from listening to the tape. In fact, give up all expectations about it. Just let your experience be your experience. Don't judge it. Just keep doing it, and we'll talk about it next week.
2. Record on the Homework Record Form each time you listen to the tape. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.
3. Choose one routine activity in your daily life and make a deliberate effort to bring moment-to-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it, just as we did in the raisin exercise. Possibilities include waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, drying your body, getting dressed, eating, driving, taking out the rubbish (garbage), shopping, and so on. Simply zero in on *knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it*.
4. Note any times when you find yourself able to notice what you eat, in the same way you noticed the raisin.
5. Eat at least one meal "mindfully," in the way that you ate the raisin.

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HANDOUT 6.4



A Patient's Report

This patient had been hospitalized for depression 4 years before, following which her husband and children left her. There had been no further contact except through lawyers. She had become very depressed and lonely, although she had not been in the hospital again. Now over the worst of her depression, she started to use the Body Scan Tape to help prevent her mood from deteriorating. These were her comments looking back after 8 weeks:

“For the first 10 days it was like a burden. I kept ‘wandering off’ and then I would worry about whether I was doing it right. For example, I kept having flights of fantasy. When the tape mentioned Massachusetts, I would think of a trip to Boston with the family 5 years ago. My mind was all over the place. I tried too hard to stop it, I think.

“Another problem at the start was him saying, ‘Just accept things as they are now.’ I thought that was totally unreasonable. I thought to myself, ‘I can’t do that.’

“Eventually, I just put the tape on and expected to go off into a realm of thoughts. I didn’t worry if concerns came in. Gradually, the 40 minutes passed without me losing him, and from then on, the next time was more effective.

“After 10 days, I relaxed more. I stopped worrying if I was thinking about anything else. When I stopped worrying about it, then I actually stopped the flights of fancy. If I did think of something else, I picked up the tape again when I stopped thinking. Gradually, the flights of fantasy reduced. I was happy to listen to him, and then I started to get some value from it.

“Soon I had developed it so that I could actually feel the breath going down to the base of my foot. Sometimes I didn’t feel anything, but then I thought, ‘If there’s no feeling, then I can be satisfied with the fact there is no feeling.’

“It’s not something you can do half a dozen times. It’s got to be a daily thing. It becomes more real the more that you try it. I began to look forward to it.

“If people have got to structure the time for the 45 minutes for their tape, it may be easier to structure other things in their life as well. The tape, in itself, would prove an impetus.”

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HANDOUT 6.5



Homework Record Form—Session I

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:		
Thursday Date:		
Friday Date:		
Saturday Date:		
Sunday Date:		
Monday Date:		
Tuesday Date:		
Wednesday Date:		

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HANDOUT 7.1



Summary of Session 2: Dealing with Barriers

Our aim in this program is to be more aware, more often. A powerful influence taking us away from being “fully present” in each moment is our automatic tendency to judge our experience as being not quite right in some way—that it is not what should be happening, not good enough, or not what we expected or wanted. These judgments can lead to sequences of thoughts about blame, what needs to be changed, or how things could or should be different. Often, these thoughts will take us, quite automatically, down some fairly well-worn paths in our minds. In this way, we may lose awareness of the moment, and also the freedom to *choose* what, if any, action needs to be taken.

We can regain our freedom if, as a first step, we simply acknowledge the actuality of our situation, without immediately being hooked into automatic tendencies to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are. The body scan exercise provides an opportunity to practice simply bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in each moment, without having to do anything to change things. There is no goal to be achieved other than to bring awareness to bear as the instructions suggest—specifically, achieving some special state of relaxation is *not* a goal of the exercise.

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HANDOUT 7.2



Tips for the Body Scan

1. Regardless of what happens (e.g., if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things or focusing on the wrong bit of body, or not feeling anything), just do it! These are your experiences in the moment. Just be aware of them.
2. If your mind is wandering a lot, simply note the thoughts (as passing events) and then bring the mind gently back to the body scan.
3. Let go of ideas of “success,” “failure,” “doing it really well,” or “trying to purify the body.” This is not a competition. It is not a skill for which you need to strive. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. Just do it with an attitude of openness and curiosity.
4. Let go of any expectations about what the body scan will do for you: Imagine it as a seed you have planted. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to develop. So with the body scan, just give it the right conditions—peace and quiet, regular and frequent practice. That is all. The more you try to influence what it will do for you, the less it will do.
5. Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: “OK, that’s just the way things are right now.” If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, the upsetting feelings will only distract you from doing anything else. Be aware, be nonstriving, be in the moment, accept things as they are. Just do it.

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HANDOUT 7.3



Mindfulness of the Breath

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor, with your buttocks supported by cushions or a low stool. If you use a chair, it is very helpful to sit away from the back of the chair, so that your spine is self supporting. If you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees actually touch the floor; experiment with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel comfortably and firmly supported.
2. Allow your back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor, with your legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes.
3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations, just as in the body scan.
4. Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath moves in and out of your body. (When you first try this practice, it may be helpful to place your hand on your lower abdomen and become aware of the changing pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact with your abdomen. Having “tuned in” to the physical sensations in this area in this way, you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations in the abdominal wall.)
5. Focus your awareness on the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each inbreath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each outbreath. As best you can, follow with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen all the way through as the breath enters your body on the inbreath and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the outbreath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between one inbreath and the following outbreath, and between one outbreath and the following inbreath.

(cont.)

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6. There is no need to try to control the breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.
7. Sooner or later (usually sooner), your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath in the lower abdomen to thoughts, planning, daydreams, drifting along—whatever. This is perfectly OK—it's simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where the mind has been (“Ah, there’s thinking”). Then, gently escort the awareness back to a focus on the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen, renewing the intention to pay attention to the ongoing inbreath or outbreath, whichever you find.
8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again), as best you can, congratulate yourself each time on reconnecting with your experience in the moment, gently escorting the attention back to the breath, and simply resume following in awareness the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each inbreath and outbreath.
9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.
10. Continue with the practice for 15 minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time you notice that your mind has wandered and is no longer down in the abdomen, following the breath.

HANDOUT 7.4



The Breath

Breath is life. You could think of the breath as being like a thread or a chain that links and connects all the events of your life from birth, the beginning, to death, the end. The breath is always there every moment, moving by itself like a river.

Have you ever noticed how the breath changes with our moods—short and shallow when we're tense or angry, faster when we're excited, slow and full when we're happy, and almost disappearing when we're afraid? It's there with us all the time. It can be used as a tool, like an anchor, to bring stability to the body and mind when we deliberately choose to become aware of it. We can tune into it at any moment during everyday life.

Mostly, we're not in touch with our breathing—it's just there, forgotten. So one of the first things we do in mindfulness-based stress reduction is to get in touch with it. We notice how the breath changes with our moods, our thoughts, our body movements. We don't have to control the breath. Just notice it and get to know it, like a friend. All that is necessary is to observe, watch, and feel the breath with a sense of interest, in a relaxed manner.

With practice, we become more aware of our breathing. We can use it to direct our awareness to different aspects of our lives. For example, to relax tense muscles, or focus on a situation that requires attention. Breath can also be used to help deal with pain, anger, relationships or the stress of daily life. During this program, we will be exploring this in great detail.

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HANDOUT 7.5



Homework for Week Following Session 2

1. Use the Body Scan Tape for 6 days and record your reactions on the record form.
2. At different times, practice 10–15 minutes' mindfulness of breathing for 6 days. Being with your breath in this way each day provides an opportunity to become aware of what it feels like to be connected and present in the moment without having to *do* anything.
3. Complete Handout 7.7, the Pleasant Events Calendar (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations around one pleasant event each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, *in detail* (e.g., use the actual words or images in which the thoughts came) the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.
4. Choose a new routine activity to be especially mindful of (e.g., brushing your teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out garbage, reading to kids, shopping, eating).

HANDOUT 7.6



Homework Record Form—Session 2

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Thursday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Friday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Saturday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Sunday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Monday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: Breath:	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: Breath:	

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HANDOUT 7.7



Pleasant Events Calendar

Name: _____

Be aware of a pleasant event *at the time it is happening*. Use the following questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down later.

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What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings while the event was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
<i>Example: Heading home at the end of my shift—stopping, hearing a bird sing.</i>	<i>Yes.</i>	<i>Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping, uplift of corners of mouth.</i>	<i>Relief, pleasure, "That's good," "How lovely (the bird)," "It's so nice to be outside."</i>	<i>It was such a small thing but I'm glad I noticed it.</i>
Monday				
Tuesday				

(cont.)

Pleasant Events Calendar (p. 2 of 2)

Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

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HANDOUT 8.1



Summary of Session 3: Mindfulness of the Breath

Focusing on the breath:

- Brings you back to this very moment—the *here and now*.
- Is always available as an anchor and *haven*, no matter where you are.
- Can actually change your experience by connecting you with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things.

BASICS

It helps to adopt an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically—the physical counterpart of the inner attitudes of self-reliance, self-acceptance, patience, and alert attention that we are cultivating.

Practice on a chair or on the floor. If you use a chair, choose one that has a straight back and allows your feet to be flat on the floor. If at all possible, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self supporting.

If you choose to sit on the floor, do so on a firm thick cushion (or a pillow folded over once or twice), which raises your buttocks off the floor 3 to 6 inches.

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HANDOUT 8.2



The 3-Minute Breathing Space—Basic Instructions

I. AWARENESS

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask:

“What is my experience right now ... in thoughts ... in feelings ... and in bodily sensations?”

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is unwanted.

2. GATHERING

Then, gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each inbreath and to each outbreath as they follow, one after the other:

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

3. EXPANDING

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression.

The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment.

The key skill in using MBCT is to maintain awareness in the moment. Nothing else.

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HANDOUT 8.3



Homework for Week Following Session 3

This week we are going to use two different tapes:

1. On Days 1, 3, and 5, use the Combined Breath Focus Tape and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form. This tape combines a few minutes of gentle stretching exercises and instructions for mindfulness of the breath and body.
2. On Days 2, 4 and 6, use the yoga instructions on Side 2 of the Body Scan Tape, and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.

The point of the stretches and yoga is to provide a direct way to connect with awareness of the body. The body is a place where emotions often get expressed, under the surface, and without our awareness. As such, it gives us an additional place from which to stand and look at our thoughts. If you have any back or other health difficulties that may cause problems, make your own decision as to which (if any) of these exercises to do.

3. Practice using the 3-Minute Breathing Space three times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance, and record each time by circling an R on the Homework Record Form.
4. Complete the Unpleasant Events Calendar (one entry per day)—use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in one unpleasant event each day, *at the time that they are occurring*. Notice and record, as soon as you can, in detail (e.g., put the actual words or images in which thoughts came, and the precise nature and location of bodily sensations).

What are the unpleasant events that “pull you off center” or “get you down” (no matter how big or small)?

HANDOUT 8.4



Homework Record Form—Session 3

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Thursday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Friday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Saturday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Sunday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Monday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: R R R	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R	

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HANDOUT 8.5
 ✂
Unpleasant Events Calendar

Name: _____

Be aware of an unpleasant event *at the time it is happening*. Use these questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down later.

What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings <i>while</i> the event was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
<i>Example: Waiting for the cable company to come out and fix our line. Realize that I am missing an important meeting at work.</i>	<i>Yes.</i>	<i>Temples throbbing, tightness in my neck and shoulders, pacing back and forth.</i>	<i>Angry, helpless. "Is this what they mean by service?" "They don't have to be responsible, they have a monopoly." "This is one meeting I didn't want to miss."</i>	<i>I hope I don't have to go through that again soon.</i>
Monday				
Tuesday				

Unpleasant Events Calendar (p. 2 of 2)

Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

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BOX 9.4



Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire

Listed below are a variety of thoughts that pop into people’s heads. Please read each thought and indicate how frequently, if at all, the thought occurred to you *over the last week*. Please read each item carefully and circle the appropriate answer on the answer sheet in the following fashion (1 = “not at all,” 2 = “sometimes,” 3 = “moderately often,” 4 = “often” and 5 = “all the time”). Then, please indicate how strongly, if at all, you tend to believe that thought when it occurs. On the right-hand side of the page, circle the appropriate answers in the following fashion (1 = “not at all,” 2 = “somewhat,” 3 = “moderately,” 4 = “very much,” 5 = “totally”).

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Degree of belief</i>
1 2 3 4 5	1. I feel like I’m up against the world.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	2. I’m no good.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	3. Why can’t I ever succeed?	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	4. No one understands me.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	5. I’ve let people down.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	6. I don’t think I can go on.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	7. I wish I were a better person.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	8. I’m so weak.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	9. My life’s not going the way I want it to.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	10. I’m so disappointed in myself.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	11. Nothing feels good anymore.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	12. I can’t stand this anymore.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	13. I can’t get started.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	14. What’s wrong with me?	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	15. I wish I were somewhere else.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	16. I can’t get things together.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	17. I hate myself.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	18. I’m worthless.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	19. I wish I could just disappear.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	20. What’s the matter with me?	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	21. I’m a loser.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	22. My life is a mess.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	23. I’m a failure.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	24. I’ll never make it.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	25. I feel so helpless.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	26. Something has to change.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	27. There must be something wrong with me.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	28. My future is bleak.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	29. It’s just not worth it.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	30. I can’t finish anything.	1 2 3 4 5

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HANDOUT 9.1



Summary of Session 4: Staying Present

Difficult things are part and parcel of life itself. It is how we handle those things that makes the difference between whether they rule (control) our lives or whether we can relate more lightly to them. Becoming more aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations evoked by events gives us the possibility of freeing ourselves from habitual, automatic ways of reacting, so that we can instead mindfully respond in more skillful ways.

In general, we react to experience in one of three ways:

- with spacing out, or boredom, so that we switch out from the present moment and go off somewhere else “in our heads.”
- with wanting to hold on to things—not allowing ourselves to let go of experiences that we are having right now, or wishing we were having experiences that we are not having right now.
- with wanting it to go away, being angry with it—wanting to get rid of experiences that we are having right now, or avoiding future experiences that we do not want.

As we will discuss further in class, each of these ways of reacting can cause problems, particularly the tendency to react to unpleasant feelings with aversion. For now, the main issue is to become more aware of our experience, so that we can respond mindfully rather than react automatically.

Regularly practicing sitting meditation gives us many opportunities to notice when we have drifted away from awareness of the moment, to note with a friendly awareness whatever it was that took our attention away, and to gently and firmly bring our attention back to our focus, reconnecting with moment-by-moment awareness. At other times of the day, deliberately using the breathing space whenever we notice unpleasant feelings, or a sense of “tightening” or “holding” in the body, provides an opportunity to begin to *respond* rather than *react*.

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HANDOUT 9.2



Homework for Week Following Session 4

1. Practice the Guided Sitting Meditation Tape (Tape 2, Side 1) for 6 out of the next 7 days and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form. (Alternative option: Alternate Guided Sitting Meditation Tape (Tape 2, Side 1) with Yoga Tape (Tape 1, Side 2)—indicate which on the Homework Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular: Practice three times a day, at the times that you have decided in advance. Record each time you do it by circling an R next to the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Coping: Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant feelings*. Record each time you do it by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
4. Optional: If you have had a chance to view the video *Healing from Within*, you might like to checkout the book of the film—*Full Catastrophe Living*.

HANDOUT 9.3



Homework Record Form—Session 4

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Sunday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

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HANDOUT 10.1



Summary of Session 5: Allowing/Letting Be

The basic guideline in this practice is to become mindfully aware of whatever is most predominant in our moment-by-moment experience. So if the mind is being repeatedly drawn to a particular place, to particular thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations, we deliberately and intentionally take a gentle and friendly awareness to that place. That is the first step.

The second step is to notice, as best we can, how we are relating to whatever arises in that place. Often, we can be with an arising thought, feeling, or bodily sensation, but in a nonaccepting, reactive way. If we like it, we tend to hold onto it; we become attached. If we do not like it, because it is painful, unpleasant, or uncomfortable in some way, we tend to contract, to push away out of fear, irritation, or annoyance. Each of these responses is the opposite of acceptance.

The easiest way to relax is, first, to stop trying to make things different. Accepting experience means simply allowing space for whatever is going on, rather than trying to create some other state. Through acceptance, we settle back into awareness of what is present. We let it be—we simply notice and observe whatever is already present. This is the way to relate to experiences that have a strong pull on our attention.

For example, if you notice that your awareness keeps being pulled away from the breath (or other focus of attention) to particular sensations in the body associated with physical discomfort, emotions, or feelings, the first step is to become mindfully aware of those physical sensations, to deliberately move your focus of awareness to the part of the body where those sensations are strongest. The breath provides a useful vehicle to do this—just as you practiced in the body scan you can take a gentle and friendly awareness to that part of the body by “breathing into” that part on the inbreath, and “breathing out” from it on the outbreath.

Once your attention has moved to the bodily sensations and you have the item in the field of awareness, say to yourself, “It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK. Let me feel it.” Then, just stay with the awareness of these bodily sensations and your relationship to them, breathing with them, accepting them, letting them be. It may be helpful to repeat, “It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK. Let me feel it,” using each outbreath to soften and open to the sensations of which you become aware.

Acceptance is *not* resignation: Acceptance, as a vital first step, allows us to become fully aware of difficulties, and then, if appropriate, to *respond* in a skillful way rather than to *react* in knee-jerk fashion, by automatically running off some of our old (often unhelpful) strategies for dealing with difficulties.

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HANDOUT 10.2



Using the Breathing Space—Extended Instructions

When you are troubled in thoughts or feelings:

1. AWARENESS

Observe—bring the focus of awareness to your inner experience and notice what is happening in your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations.

Describe, acknowledge, identify—put experiences into words, for example, say in your mind, “A feeling of anger is arising” or “Self-critical thoughts are here.”

2. REDIRECTING ATTENTION

Gently *Redirect* your full attention to the breath.

Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out.

Try noting “at the back of your mind,” “Breathing in ... breathing out” or counting, “Inhaling, one ... exhaling, one; inhaling, two ... etc.”

3. EXPANDING ATTENTION

Allow your attention to expand to the whole body—especially to any sense of discomfort, tension, or resistance. If these sensations are there, then take your awareness there by “breathing into them” on the inbreath. Then, breathe out from those sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath. Say to yourself on the outbreath, “It’s OK. Whatever it is, it’s OK. Let me feel it.”

Become aware of and adjust your posture and facial expression.

As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.

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HANDOUT 10.3



Homework for Week Following Session 5

1. Practice Sitting Meditation daily (alternate days: Tape 2, Side 1; no tape—sit with silence for 30–40 minutes) and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular: Practice three times a day at times that you have decided in advance. Record each time by circling an R next to the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Coping: Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant feelings*. Record each time by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.

HANDOUT 10.4



Homework Record Form—Session 5

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Sunday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

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HANDOUT 11.1



**Summary of Session 6:
Thoughts Are Not Facts**

Our thoughts can have very powerful effects on how we feel and what we do. Often those thoughts are triggered and run off quite automatically. By becoming aware, over and over again, of the thoughts and images passing through the mind and letting go of them as we return our attention to the breath and the moment, it is possible to get some distance and perspective on them. This can allow us to see that there may be other ways to think about situations, freeing us from the tyranny of the old thought patterns that automatically “pop into mind.” Most importantly, we may eventually come to realize deep “in our bones” that *all thoughts are only mental events* (including the thoughts that say they are not), that *thoughts are not facts*, and that *we are not our thoughts*.

Thoughts and images can often provide us with an indication of what is going on deeper in the mind; we can “get hold of them,” so that we can look them over from a number of different perspectives, and by becoming very familiar with our own “top ten” habitual, automatic, unhelpful thinking patterns, we can more easily become aware of (and change) the processes that may lead us into downward mood spirals.

It is particularly important to become aware of thoughts that may block or undermine practice, such as “There’s no point in doing this” or “It’s not going to work, so why bother?” Such pessimistic, hopeless thought patterns are one of the most characteristic features of depressed mood states, and one of the main factors that stop us taking actions that would help us get out of those states. It follows that it is particularly important to recognize such thoughts as “negative thinking” and not automatically give up on efforts to apply skillful means to change the way we feel.

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HANDOUT 11.2



Ways You Can See Your Thoughts Differently

Here are some of the things you can do with your thoughts:

1. Just watch them come in and leave, without feeling that you have to follow them.
2. View your thought as a mental event rather than a fact. It may be true that this event often occurs with other feelings. It is tempting to think of it as being true. But it is still up to you to decide whether it is true and how you want to deal with it.
3. Write your thoughts down on paper. This lets you see them in a way that is less emotional and overwhelming. Also, the pause between having the thought and writing it down can give you a moment to reflect on its meaning.
4. Ask yourself the following questions: Did this thought just pop into my head automatically? Does it fit with the facts of the situation? Is there something about it that I can question? How would I have thought about it at another time, in another mood? Are there alternatives?
5. For particularly difficult thoughts, it may be helpful to take another look at them intentionally, in a balanced, open state of mind, as part of your sitting practice: Let your “wise mind” give its perspective.

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HANDOUT 11.3



Homework for Week Following Session 6

1. Practice with your own selection from the Series 2 tapes a minimum of 40 minutes a day (e.g., 20 + 20, 30 + 10, etc.). Record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular: Practice three times a day at times you have determined in advance. Record each time by circling an R on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Coping: *Whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings* (paying particular attention to *thoughts*)—If negative thoughts are still around after the breathing space, then write them down. You might like to use some of the ideas in Handouts 11.2 and 11.5 to get a different perspective on these thoughts. Record each time you use the 3-Minute Breathing Space—Coping by circling an X for the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
4. Note situations in which you use the breath as an anchor to *handle the situation as it is happening*, and situations in which you use the mindfulness practice to *deal with the issues later*.

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HANDOUT 11.4



Homework Record Form—Session 6

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Sunday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

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HANDOUT 11.5



When You Become Aware of Negative Thoughts

When you become aware of negative thoughts and images in your mind, hold them in awareness, with an attitude of gentle interest and curiosity, perhaps expanding awareness to include one or more of the following (go back to the breath after each one):

Perhaps I am confusing a thought with a fact?

Perhaps I am jumping to conclusions?

Perhaps I am thinking in black-and-white terms?

Perhaps I am condemning myself totally because of one thing?

Perhaps I am concentrating on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths?

Perhaps I am blaming myself for something that isn't my fault?

Perhaps I am judging myself?

Perhaps I am setting unrealistically high standards for myself, so that I will fail?

Perhaps I am mind reading/crystal ball gazing?

Perhaps I am expecting perfection?

Perhaps I am overestimating disaster?

The keynote attitude to take with your thoughts is gentle interest and curiosity.

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HANDOUT 11.6



Relating to Thoughts—I

It is remarkable how liberating it feels to be able to see that your thoughts are just thoughts and not “you” or “reality.” For instance, if you have the thought that you must get a certain number of things done today and you don’t recognize it as a thought, but act as if it’s “the truth,” then you have created in that moment a reality in which you really believe that those things must all be done today.

One patient, Peter, who’d had a heart attack and wanted to prevent another one, came to a dramatic realization of this one night, when he found himself washing his car at 10 o’clock at night with the floodlights on in the driveway. It struck him that he didn’t have to be doing this. It was just the inevitable result of a whole day spent trying to fit everything in that he thought needed doing today. As he saw what he was doing to himself, he also saw that he had been unable to question the truth of his original conviction that everything had to get done today, because he was already so completely caught up in believing it.

If you find yourself behaving in similar ways, it is likely that you will also feel driven, tense, and anxious without even knowing why, just as Peter did. So if the thought of how much you have to get done today comes up while you are meditating, you will have to be very attentive to it as a thought or you may be up and doing things before you know it, without any awareness that you decided to stop sitting simply because a thought came through your mind.

On the other hand, when such a thought comes up, if you are able to step back from it and see it clearly, then you will be able to prioritize things and make sensible decisions about what really does need doing. You will know when to call it quits during the day. So the simple act of recognizing your thoughts as thoughts can free you from the distorted reality they often create and allow for more clear-sightedness and a greater sense of manageability in your life.

This liberation from the tyranny of the thinking mind comes directly out of the meditation practice itself. When we spend some time each day in a state of nondoing, observing the flow of the breath and the activity of our mind and body, without getting caught up in that activity, we are cultivating calmness and mindfulness hand in hand. As the mind develops stability and is less caught up in the content of thinking, we strengthen the mind’s ability to concentrate and to be calm. And if each time we recognize a thought as a thought when it arises and register its content and discern the strength of its hold on us and the accuracy of its content, then each time we let go of it and come back to our breathing and a sense of our body, we are strengthening mindfulness. We come to know ourselves better and become more accepting of ourselves, not as we would like to be, but as we actually are.

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HANDOUT 11.7



Relating to Thoughts—II

The thinking level of mind pervades our lives; consciously or unconsciously, we all spend much or most of our lives there. But meditation is a different process that does not involve discursive thought or reflection. Because meditation is not thought, through the continuous process of silent observation, new kinds of understanding emerge.

We do not need to fight with thoughts or struggle against them or judge them. Rather, we can simply choose not to follow the thoughts once we are aware that they have arisen.

When we lose ourselves in thought, identification is strong. Thought sweeps our mind and carries it away, and, in a very short time, we can be carried far indeed. We hop a train of association, not knowing that we have hopped on, and certainly not knowing the destination. Somewhere down the line, we may wake up and realize that we have been thinking, that we have been taken for a ride. And when we step down from the train, it may be in a very different mental environment from where we jumped aboard.

Take a few moments right now to look directly at the thoughts arising in your mind. As an exercise, you might close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting in a cinema watching an empty screen. Simply wait for thoughts to arise. Because you are not doing anything except waiting for thoughts to appear, you may become aware of them very quickly. What exactly are they? What happens to them? Thoughts are like magic displays that seem real when we are lost in them but then vanish upon inspection.

But what about the strong thoughts that affect us? We are watching, watching, watching, and then, all of a sudden—whoosh!—We are gone, lost in a thought. What is that about? What are the mind states or the particular kinds of thoughts that catch us again and again, so that we forget that they are just empty phenomena passing on?

It is amazing to observe how much power we give unknowingly to uninvited thoughts: “Do this, say that, remember, plan, obsess, judge.” They have the potential to drive us quite crazy, and they often do!

The kinds of thoughts we have, and their impact on our lives, depend on our understanding of things. If we are in the clear, powerful space of just seeing thoughts arise and pass, then it does not really matter what kind of thinking appears in the mind; we can see our thoughts as the passing show that they are.

From thoughts come actions. From actions come all sorts of consequences. In which thoughts will we invest? Our great task is to see them clearly, so that we can choose which ones to act on and which simply to let be.

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HANDOUT 12.1



Summary of Session 7: How Can I Best Take Care of Myself

What we actually *do* with our time from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from one year to the next, can be a very powerful influence affecting our general well-being and our ability to deal skillfully with depression.

You might like to try asking yourself these questions:

1. Of the things that I do, what nourishes me, what increases my sense of actually being alive and present rather than merely existing? (up activities)
2. Of the things that I do, what drains me, what decreases my sense of actually being alive and present, what makes me feel I am merely existing, or worse? (down activities)
3. Accepting that there are some aspects of my life that I simply cannot change, am I consciously choosing to increase the time and effort I give to up activities and to decrease the time and effort I give to down activities?

By being actually present in more of our moments and making mindful decisions about what we really need in each of those moments, we can use activity to become more aware and alert, and to regulate mood.

This is true for dealing with both the regular pattern of our daily lives and periods of low mood that may lead to depression—we can use our day-by-day experience to discover and cultivate activities that we can use as tools to cope with periods of worsening mood. Having these tools already available means that we will be more likely to persist with them in the face of negative thoughts such as “Why bother with anything?” that are simply part of the territory of depressed mood.

For example, one of the simplest ways to take care of your physical and mental well-being is to take daily physical exercise—as a minimum, aim for three brisk, 10-minute walks a day and also, if at all possible, other types of exercise, such as mindful stretching, yoga, swimming, jogging, and so on. Once exercise is in your daily routine, it is a readily available response to depressed moods as they arise.

The breathing space provides a way to remind us to use activity to deal with unpleasant feelings as they arise.

(cont.)

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USING THE BREATHING SPACE: THE ACTION STEP

After reconnecting with an expanded awareness in the breathing space, it may feel appropriate to take some *considered action*. In dealing with depressed feelings, the following activities may be particularly helpful:

1. Do something pleasurable.
2. Do something that will give you a sense of satisfaction or mastery.
3. Act mindfully.

Ask yourself: What do I need for myself right now? How can I best take care of myself right now?

Try some of the following:

1. Do something pleasurable.
Be kind to your body: Have a nice hot bath; have a nap; treat yourself to your favorite food without feeling guilty; have your favorite hot drink; give yourself a facial or manicure.
Engage in enjoyable activities: Go for a walk (maybe with the dog or a friend); visit a friend; do your favorite hobby; do some gardening; take some exercise; phone a friend; spend time with someone you like; cook a meal; go shopping; watch something funny or uplifting on TV; read something that gives you pleasure; listen to music that makes you feel good.
2. Do something that gives you a sense of mastery, satisfaction, achievement, or control.
Clean the house; clear out a cupboard or drawer; catch up with letter writing; do some work; pay a bill; do something that you have been putting off doing; take some exercise (N.B. It's especially important to congratulate yourself whenever you complete a task or part of a task *and to break tasks down into smaller steps and only tackle one step at a time.*)
3. Act mindfully (read *Staying Present*, Handout 9.4).
Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing right now; keep yourself in the very moment you are in; put your mind in the present (e.g., "Now I am walking down the stairs ... now I can feel the banister beneath my hand ... now I'm walking into the kitchen ... now I'm turning on the light ..."); be aware of your breathing as you do other things; be aware of the contact of your feet with the floor as you walk.

(cont.)

REMEMBER

1. Try to perform your action as an experiment. Try not to prejudge how you will feel after it is completed. Keep an open mind about whether doing this will be helpful in any way.
2. Consider a range of activities and don't limit yourself to a favorite few. Sometimes, trying new behaviors can be interesting in itself. "Exploring" and "inquiring" often work against "withdrawal" and "retreat."
3. Don't expect miracles. Try to carry out what you have planned as best you can. Putting extra pressure on yourself by expecting this to alter things dramatically may be unrealistic. Rather, activities are helpful in building your overall sense of control in the face of shifts in your mood.

HANDOUT 12.2



When Depression Is Overwhelming

Sometimes you may find that depression comes out of the blue. For example, you may wake up feeling very tired and listless, with hopeless thoughts going through your mind.

When this happens, it may be useful for you to tell yourself, *“Just because I am depressed now does not mean that I have to stay depressed.”*

When things come out of the blue like this, they set off negative ways of thinking in everyone.

If you have been depressed in the past, it will tend to trigger old habits of thought that may be particularly damaging: full of overgeneralizations, predictions that this will go on forever, and “back to square one” thinking. All of these ways of making sense of what is happening to you will tend to undermine your taking any action.

Having these symptoms does not mean that it needs to go on for a long time or that you are already in a full-blown episode of depression.

Ask yourself, “What can I do to look after myself to get me through this low period?”

Take a breathing space to help gather yourself. This may help you see your situation from a wider perspective. This wider perspective allows you to become aware of both the pull of the old habits of thinking and what skillful action you might take.

HANDOUT 12.3



Homework for Week Following Session 7

1. From all the different forms of formal mindfulness practice you have experienced (Series 1 and 2 tapes, combined tape, mindfulness of breath/body without tape, etc.), settle on a form of practice that you intend to use on a regular, daily basis for the next 5 weeks. Use this practice on a daily basis this week, and record your reactions on the Homework Record Form.
2. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Regular: Practice three times a day at times that you have decided in advance. Record each time you do it by circling an *R* for the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.
3. 3-Minute Breathing Space—Coping plus Action: Practice *whenever you notice unpleasant thoughts or feelings*. Record each time you do the coping breathing space by circling an *X* for the appropriate day on the Homework Record Form; note any comments/difficulties.

RELAPSE PREVENTION

What are your warning signals that depression might be trying to take hold again (e.g., becoming irritable; decreased social contact—just “not wanting to see people”; changes in sleeping habits; changes in eating habits; getting easily exhausted; giving up on exercise; not wanting to deal with business such as opening mail, paying bills, etc.; postponing deadlines)?

Set up an Early Warning System—write down on the next blank sheet the changes that you should look out for (if it feels comfortable, include *those with whom you share your life* in a collaborative effort to *notice* and then to *respond* rather than to *react* to these signs).

Write down on the next blank sheet suggestions to yourself for an Action Plan that you can use as a framework for coping action, once you or your friends/family have noticed early warning signs (remember to address the frame of mind that you will be in at the time, e.g., “I know you probably will not be keen on this idea but I think that, nonetheless, it is very important that you . . .”). For example, you might put on a yoga, body scan, or mindfulness tape; remind yourself of what you learned during the class that was helpful then; take frequent breathing spaces leading into thought review or considered action; read something that will “reconnect” you with your “wiser” mind, and so on.

It may be helpful to remind yourself that what you need at times of difficulty is no different from what you have already practiced many times throughout this course.

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HANDOUT 12.4



Homework Record Form—Session 7

Name: _____

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Thursday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Friday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Saturday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Sunday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Monday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date:	Tape: R R R X X X X X X X X X X X X	

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HANDOUT 13.1



Summary of Session 8—Using What Has Been Learned to Deal with Future Moods

The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully *responding* to situations rather than immediately running off preprogrammed, “automatic” *reactions* has been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skillful action directed at achieving change in participants’ inner or outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that, by carrying on, trying to solve an insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up “banging one’s head on a brick wall,” exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one’s sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, *you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful, decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it. Choosing not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.*

In the so-called “Serenity Prayer,” we ask for the *grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.*

Where do we find this grace, this courage, this wisdom? At some level, we *already* have all of these qualities—our task is to realize them (make them real), and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

THE FUTURE

Remember Jon Kabat-Zinn’s advice to weave your parachute every day, rather than leave it to the time you have to jump from the plane!

Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be over the next weeks, until we meet again, and stick to it as best you can throughout this period. Note any difficulties that you have, so that we can discuss them next time.

Also, remember that the regular breathing space practice provides a way of “checking in with yourself” a few times a day. Let it also be your first response in times of difficulty, stress, or unhappiness—KEEP BREATHING!

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HANDOUT 13.2



Daily Mindfulness

- When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass by, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing—use any sound as the bell of mindfulness. Really listen and be present and awake.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something that nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while you walk or stand. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking, can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?
- Whenever you wait in a line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of excess tension. Is there tension stored anywhere in your body? For example, your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back? If possible, stretch or do yoga once a day.
- Focus attention on your daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing up, brushing your hair, putting on your shoes, doing your job. Bring mindfulness to each activity.
- Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.

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