

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Home Practice Manual



Mindfulness is about being fully awake in our lives. It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness of each moment. We feel more alive. We also gain immediate access to our own powerful inner resources for insight, transformation, and healing.

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D

HOME PRACTICE MATERIALS ALSO AVAILABLE AT
floridamindfulness.org/MBSRPractice

GUIDED AUDIO & VIDEO
floridamindfulness.org/MBSRPractice

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE FLORIDA COMMUNITY OF MINDFULNESS:
floridamindfulness.org

This program is based on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMass Program). With gratitude for the support of the UMass Program and that of the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness.

MBSR Home Practice Manual

Table of Contents

MBSR Expectations	1
5 Things that Need Your Attention in an MBSR Course	2
Day-To-Day Experiences.....	3
Home Practice Assignments	4
Staying Within the Window of Tolerance	5
Nine Dots.....	6
Mindful Eating Suggestions	7
Walking Meditation	8
Pleasant Events Calendar	9
Unpleasant Events Calendar	10
Mindful Yoga by Jon Kabat-Zinn.....	11
Mindful Hatha Yoga	13
Working with Resistance	20
Stress and Stressors	22
The Stress-Reaction Cycle	23
Mindfulness-Based Stress Response	24
A Mindful Turn from <i>Reaction</i> to <i>Response</i>	25
Mind Traps	28
MBSR Course - Midway Assessment	29
Difficult Communications Calendar	30
Guiding Principles for Mindful Communication	31
Appreciative and Generous Listening	32
Daily Practice Suggestions - Week #8	33
Suggested Reading	34

MBSR Expectations Practice & Learning Suggestions

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program is an eight week course designed to teach people how to better take care of themselves and participate fully in improving the health and quality of their lives as they work with various types of “stressors” or suffering that is limiting the life that they would like to live. Before participating in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course we ask that you please consider these few things before you enroll in class.

To make a personal commitment to MBSR meditation practice.

We encourage 45-60 minutes daily meditation at least 6 days per week for the next 8 weeks. Your commitment is essential. It is the *practice* of mindfulness meditation that will enable you to realize its benefits. This commitment can be a challenging one, and may require a lifestyle change. You may have to rearrange your schedule to allow time for daily practice, carving out time from other activities. Once you taste the benefits of MBSR, then you may find that maintaining a daily practice becomes easier and highly rewarding.

To make a personal commitment to practice mindfulness in daily living (informal mindfulness practice).

We can bring mindfulness to eating, walking, driving, interpersonal relationships, anytime throughout the day. This conscious act of remembering and bringing attention to the present moment and simple activities throughout the day enhances your formal meditation practice. Both formal and informal practice are just that, practice at being fully present to each moment as life unfolds just as it is.

To put goal attainment on hold.

Putting aside any desire to use MBSR to reach a certain objective (e.g., relaxation, pain relief, inner peace) will allow you to fully experience a primary part of the program, which is “non-doing” or “non- striving.”

To approach your practice with an attitude of kindness, compassion, gentleness, openness and inquisitiveness toward yourself and others.

Your role is to just observe, developing a deeper awareness.

I commit to practice mindfulness, formal and informal, daily (at least 6 days each week) for the next eight weeks.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

5 Things that Need Your Attention in an MBSR Course

Reprinted by permission from the blog of the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic at www.ottawamindfulnessclinic.wordpress.com

Getting through a mindfulness-based intervention program is a challenge for many reasons. We bring a lot of expectations that it will change our life in one way or another. We hope that we will find an answer to the questions that plague us and brought us to the course. We anticipate we will develop skills that will take away our pain and suffering.

These are very appropriate hopes and wishes to have when we are seeking relief from our life or lifetime situation. However, getting overly invested in these desires can be an obstacle to our ability to learn the very skills we are hoping for. So, here are 5 things we can pay attention to during the course that might help us get through the sticky parts of mindfulness training.

Be realistic. Expecting to change our lives in 8 weeks puts a lot of pressure on ourselves, not to mention the theory and techniques of the program. Treating this desire as a broad-brushed backdrop of our life as it is in this moment helps to change the perspective. When we want huge changes, every little action becomes infused with deep meaning and we feel there are huge consequences to failure. If we think that meditation will change our lives (and although it might), a moment of struggle during a meditation can fill us with anxiety about not getting to our goal. We can lose sight of the reality that everyone struggles at one time or another (and sometimes, a lot of the time) during meditation. Stay focused on the moment-to-moment practice and let the larger wishes slide into the background.

Set mini-intentions. When we start out on something new, it feels fresh and that gives us the sensation that anything is possible. Sitting meditation for 10 minutes feels good so why not 45 minutes the next time! Of course, we know what happens then; we push ourselves past our limits and feel discouraged. It's useful to remember how long it took us to learn how to walk, talk, read, write, drive a car, and so on. We didn't start at the endpoint of our expertise. We began with small units that were digestible and built our confidence from there, moment by moment, behavior by behavior.

Listen for the questions; don't look for the answers. The poet Rilke invites us to "to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves." Often we are so focused on the question as we have framed it that we don't hear answers that would have led us to better questions. Sometimes, participants sit hyper-focused on what the facilitator is saying, hoping that a word or phrase will contain the answer to their burning question. In doing that they miss their experience in that moment which is the very answer they are waiting for.

Taste everything once. Mindfulness training programs are by their nature general in their approach, even those that are adapted for specific issues. Often participants will feel the practices don't resonate with what they want or how they thought it would feel. Treat everything like a new tool that might come in handy one day. In the space of 8 weeks no single skill is going to reveal its full capacity to meet our needs. And, no specific skill will meet all our needs. Take this as a time to learn how to observe the process of inner and outer experiences; see it as surveying the building site rather than a boot camp for mental carpentry.

Meet yourself where you are. The beginning of each practice period is a new start. It doesn't matter what went before or may come after. In that moment of sitting, walking, eating, listening, speaking, we are beginning anew. When we meet ourselves right there, we are opening up a whole new range of possibilities. It's common to want everything to unfold simply because we're trying so hard. As counter-intuitive as it may be, not trying so hard can lead to better practice than having a death grip on the moment. Pain and suffering wax and wane through our life. In and of themselves they are not the cause of our dissatisfaction, but wanting them to be gone is.

**Suggested Use: Please complete twice;
once at the start of the program, once upon completion of the program.**

Day-To-Day Experiences

Instructions: Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what *really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Almost	Very	Somewhat	Somewhat	Very	Almost
Always	Frequently	Frequently	Infrequently	Infrequently	Never

I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later	1	2	3	4	5	6
I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find it difficult to stay focused on what’s happening in the present.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend to walk quickly to get where I’m going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I forget a person’s name almost as soon as I’ve been told it for the first time.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
It seems I am “running on automatic,” without much awareness of what I’m doing.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I’m doing right now to get there.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I drive places on “automatic pilot” and then wonder why I went there.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself doing things without paying attention.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
I snack without being aware that I’m eating.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

Home Practice Assignments

Home Practice Assignment after Class #1

- Complete the MBSR Commitment Form (for your own use)
- Complete “Day to Day Experiences”
- Body Scan each day
- 9 Dots Exercise
- Eat one meal mindfully
- Read “Mindful Eating Suggestions”
- Read “The Shorter Your Sleep, the Shorter Your Life” (on HPP)

Home Practice Assignment after Class #2

- Body Scan each day
- Complete “Pleasant Events calendar,” recording one event per day
- Sitting Meditation: Awareness of the Breath, 10-15 minutes per day
- Read “Working with Resistance”
- Practice informal mindfulness in routine activities: washing dishes, shopping, eating, brushing teeth, etc.

Home Practice Assignment after Class #3

- Alternate Body Scan with Yoga daily
- Sitting Meditation: Awareness Of the Breath, 10-15 minutes per day
- Walking Meditation
- Complete “Unpleasant Events calendar,” recording one event per day
- Mindfulness of going on “automatic pilot” and under what circumstances it occurs

Home Practice Assignment after Class #4

- Alternate Body Scan with Yoga daily
- Sitting Meditation: Awareness of the Breath, other physical sensations, 20 minutes per day
- Become aware of feeling stuck, blocking, numbing, shutting off to the moment when it happens.
- Review “Stress and Stressors” and “The Stress-Reactivity Cycle”

Home Practice Assignment after Class #5

- Alternate Sitting Meditation (Open Awareness) with either yoga or body scan daily
- Review “Difficult Communications Calendar,” recording one event daily. Begin to bring mindfulness into communication with others
- Bring awareness to moments of reacting and explore options for responding with mindfulness, spaciousness and creativity, in formal meditation practice and in everyday life. Begin to slow down and make more conscious choices
- Read “A Mindful Turn from Reaction to Response” and “Mind Traps” and “The Relaxation Response” (on HPP)
- Complete “Midway Assessment” and bring to Class 6

Home Practice Assignment after Class #6

- Alternate Sitting Meditation (Open Awareness) with either yoga or body scan daily
- Become awareness of the relationship between eating/consuming and mindfulness and complete the “Mindful Consumption Log” (on HPP)
- Practice with “Reflections for Cultivating Awareness” (on HPP)
- Prepare for all-day silent retreat (bring a vegetarian sack lunch)

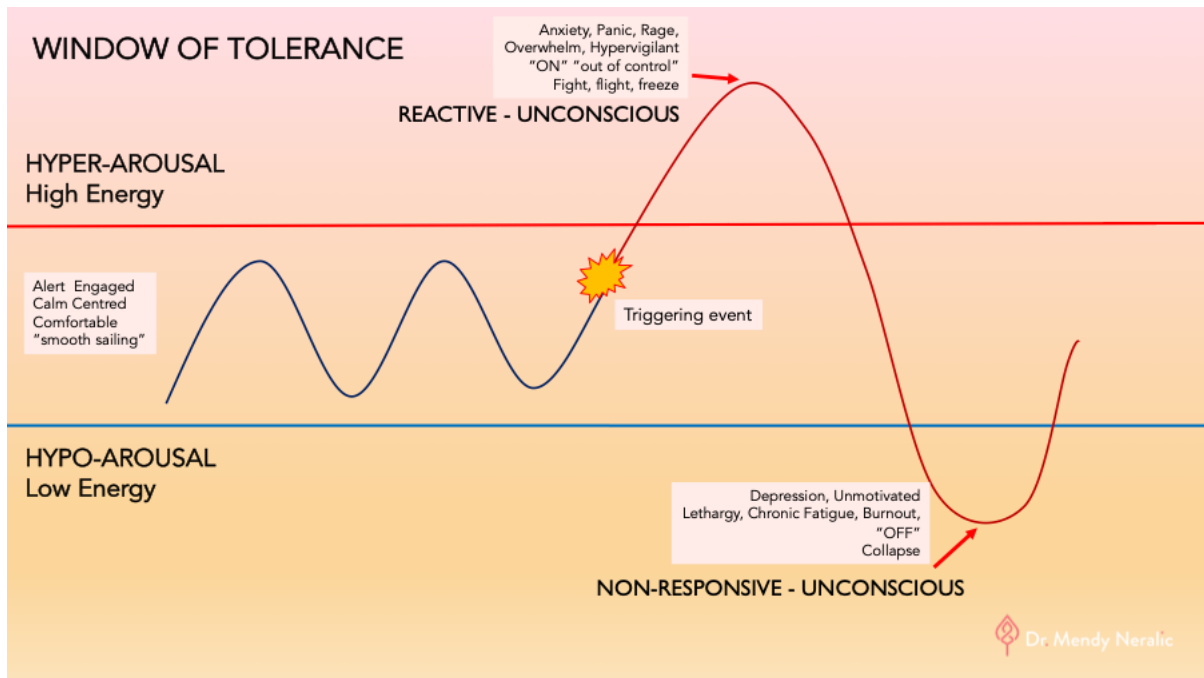
Home Practice Assignment after Class #7

- Work without the audio files this week, practicing formal sitting, yoga, walking and/or the body scan on your own daily for 45 minutes
- Concentrate on integrating informal mindfulness practice daily

Home Practice Assignment after Class #8

- Complete “Day to Day Experiences”
- Make the practice your own in whatever form it might take.

Staying Within the Window of Tolerance



For those with unresolved trauma, a seemingly “calming” activity such as breath meditation, where one focuses inwardly, can actually be a triggering event. Modifications to the practice may be helpful and called for in these cases.

‘Trauma’ refers to “any threatening, overwhelming experiences that we cannot integrate... After such experiences, we are often left with a diminished sense of security with others and in the world, and a sense of feeling unsafe inside our own skin” (Pat Ogden, *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy: Interventions for Trauma and Attachment*).*

Learning to manage your window of tolerance will enable you to deal with the demands of life. There are two ways to stay within your optimal zone:

1. Widen Your Window of Tolerance
2. Self-Regulate

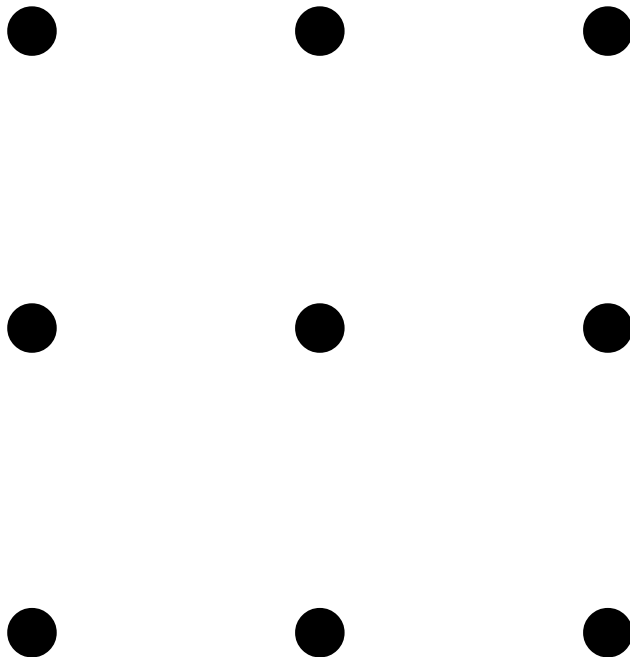
Widening your window of tolerance through practices such as mindfulness helps to keep yourself in the optimal zone longer so you are less likely to dysregulate when you experience stress or anxiety.

Self-Regulating through stopping and soothing/grounding helps you process stress and anxiety and bring yourself back into the window of tolerance so you can deal with the demands of life.

**MBSR is not a substitute for therapy; please see (or continue to see) a qualified therapist for help in processing and healing unresolved trauma.*

Nine Dots

Instructions: Placing your pencil on the page only once, draw four straight lines that pass through all of the dots without lifting your pencil from the page.



Mindful Eating Suggestions



Eat Slower

Eating slowly doesn't have to mean taking it to extremes. Still, it's a good idea to remind yourself, and your family, that eating is not a race. Taking the time to savor and enjoy your food is one of the healthiest things you can do. You are more likely to notice when you are full, you'll chew your food more and hence digest it more easily, and you'll probably find yourself noticing flavors you might otherwise have missed.

Savor the Silence

Eating in complete silence may be impossible for a family with children, but you might still encourage some quiet time and reflection. Again, try introducing the idea as a game — "let's see if we can eat for two minutes without talking" — or suggesting that one meal a week be enjoyed in relative silence. If the family mealtime is too important an opportunity for conversation to pass up, then consider introducing a quiet meal or snack time into your day when you can enjoy it alone.

Silence the Phone. Shut off the TV.

Our daily lives are full of distractions, and it's not uncommon for families to eat with the TV blaring or one family member or other fiddling with their iPhone. Consider making family mealtime, which should, of course, be eaten together, an electronics-free zone. I'm not saying you should never eat pizza in front of the TV, but that too should be a conscious choice that marks the exception, not the norm.

Pay Attention to Flavor

The tanginess of a lemon, the spiciness of arugula, the crunch of a pizza crust — paying attention to the details of our food can be a great way to start eating mindfully. After all, when you eat on the go or wolf down your meals in five minutes, it can be hard to notice what you are even eating, let alone truly savor all the different sensations of eating it. If you are trying to introduce mindful eating to your family, consider talking more about the flavors and textures of food. Ask your kids what the avocado tastes like, or how the hummus feels. And be sure to share your own observations and opinions too.

Know your Food

Mindfulness is really about rekindling a relationship with our food. From planting a veggie garden through baking bread to visiting a farmers market, many of the things we locavores have been preaching about for years are not just ways to cut our carbon footprint, but also connect with the story behind our food. Even when you have no idea where the food you are eating has come from, try asking yourself some questions about the possibilities: Who grew this? How? Where did it come from? How did it get here? Chances are, you'll not only gain a deeper appreciation for your food, but you'll find your shopping habits changing in the process too.

Walking Meditation

Like breathing meditation, walking meditation is a simple and universal practice for developing calm, connectedness and awareness. It can be practiced regularly, before or after sitting meditation or any time on its own, such as after a busy day at work or on a lazy Sunday morning. The art of walking meditation is to learn to be aware as you walk, to use the natural movement of walking to cultivate mindfulness and wakeful presence.

Select a quiet place where you can walk comfortable back and forth, indoors or out, about ten to thirty paces in length. Begin by standing at one end of this “walking path” with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Let your hands rest easily, wherever they are comfortable. Close your eyes for a moment, center yourself and feel your body standing on the earth. Feel the pressure on the bottoms of your feet and the other natural sensations of standing. Then open your eyes and let yourself be present and alert.

Begin to walk slowly. Let yourself walk with a sense of ease and dignity. Pay attention to your body. With each step, feel the sensations of lifting your foot and leg off the earth. Be aware as you place each foot on the earth. Relax and let your walking be easy and natural. Feel each step mindfully as you walk. When you reach the end of your path, pause for a moment. Center yourself, carefully turn around, pause again so that you can be aware of the first step as you walk back. You can experiment with the speed, walking at whatever pace keeps you most present.

Continue to walk back and forth for ten or twenty minutes or longer. As with the breath in sitting, your mind will wander away many, many times. As soon as you notice this, acknowledge where it went softly: “wandering,” “thinking,” “hearing,” “planning.” Then, return to feel the next step. Like training the puppy, you will need to come back a thousand times. Whether you have been away for one second or for ten minutes, simply acknowledge where you have been and then come back to being alive here and now with the next step you take.

After some practice with walking meditation, you will learn to use it to calm and collect yourself and to live more wakefully in your body. You can then extend your walking practice to an informal way when you go shopping, whenever you walk down the street or walk to from your car. You can learn to enjoy walking for its own sake instead of the usual planning and thinking and, in this simple way, begin to be truly present, to bring your body, heart and mind together as you move through your life.

Jack Kornfield
A Path With Heart

Pleasant Events Calendar

What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings <u>while</u> it 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 about this event?
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

Unpleasant Events Calendar

What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings <u>while</u> it 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 about this event?
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

Mindful Yoga by Jon Kabat-Zinn

For a number of years in the late 1970s, Larry Rosenberg and I taught back-to-back evening classes in a church in Harvard Square. He would teach vipassana meditation (a Buddhist practice of mindfulness), and I followed with mindful hatha yoga. The idea was that everyone would take both classes. But Larry and I were always bemused by the fact that most of the people in the meditation class didn't want to do the hatha yoga, and most of the "yogis" didn't come for the meditation class.

We saw the hatha and meditation as different but complementary doors into what is ultimately the same room--namely, learning how to live wisely. Only the view from the doorways was different. We had a definite sense that the meditators would have benefited from paying more attention to their bodies (they tended to dismiss the body as a low-level preoccupation). And the hatha yogis, we felt, would have benefited from dropping into stillness for longer stretches of time and observing the arising and passing away from moment to moment of mind/body experience in one sitting posture. We didn't push our view of this on either group, and we tried not to be too attached to who showed up for what, especially since we saw the essence of what we were both teaching as identical. Nonetheless, it was an interesting phenomenon.

Over the years, my own experiences of combining mindfulness meditation practices and hatha yoga into a seamless whole prompted me to experiment with different ways of bringing these ancient consciousness disciplines into contemporary mainstream settings. I wanted to explore their effectiveness in transforming health and consciousness. How might they be connected?

For one thing, the hatha yoga had the potential, I thought, to help reverse the huge prevalence of disuse atrophy from our highly sedentary lifestyle, especially for those who have pain and chronic illness. The mind was already known to be a factor in stress and stress-related disorders, and meditation was known to positively affect a range of autonomic physiological processes, such as lowering blood pressure and reducing overall arousal and emotional reactivity. Might not training in mindfulness be an effective way to bring meditation and yoga together so that the virtues of both could be experienced simultaneously as different aspects of one seamless whole? Mindfulness practice seemed ideal for cultivating greater awareness of the unity of mind and body, as well as of the ways the unconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can undermine emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

This personal exploration led ultimately to developing a clinical service for medical patients in which we used relatively intensive training in mindfulness meditation practices based on the vipassana and Zen traditions, along with mindful hatha yoga, with medical patients suffering with a wide range of chronic disorders and diseases. This program evolved into an 8-week course, now known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

MBSR is now offered in over 200 medical centers, hospitals, and clinics around the world. Many of these programs are taught by physicians, nurses, social workers, and psychologists, as well as other health professionals who are seeking to reclaim and deepen some of the sacred reciprocity inherent in the doctor-caregiver/patient-client relationship. Their work is based on a need for an active partnership in a participatory medicine, one in which patient/clients take on significant responsibility for doing a certain kind of interior work in order to tap into their own deepest inner resources for learning, growing, healing, and transformation.

Hatha yoga has played a large and critical role in this work from the very beginning, and many yoga teachers have been drawn to teach MBSR. Through a seamless integration of mindfulness meditation and hatha yoga, MBSR taps into the innate potential for healing that we all have. It mobilizes our ability to cultivate embodied wisdom and self-compassion; and by so doing it teaches us to live our life and face whatever arises with integrity, clarity and open-hearted presence.

Mindfulness lies at the very core of Buddhism in all its forms. Yet its essence is universal in that it is about refining attention and awareness. It is a powerful vehicle for cultivating deep insight into the ultimate causes of suffering and the possibility of liberation from that suffering. The ancient stream of hatha yoga practice is another of the great consciousness disciplines. My first taste came in 1967 at a karate school in Boston, where a young Vietnam veteran named Tex was using it as a warm-up. I quickly fell in love with the yoga. I was training in the Zen tradition at the time, and the two seemed to complement each other perfectly. That conviction has only deepened over time.

The appeal of hatha yoga is nothing less than the lifelong adventure and discipline of working with one's body as a door into freedom and wholeness. Hatha yoga was never about accomplishment or perfection, or even about technique by itself. Nor was it about turning one's body into an elaborate pretzel, although the athleticism that is possible in hatha yoga (if one can manage to steer clear of narcissism) is a truly remarkable art form in its own right. Certainly, we are seeing a marvelous flowering of interest in many different kinds of hatha yoga in mainstream circles now. The question is, how mindful is it, and is this flowering oriented toward self-understanding, wisdom and liberation, or is much of it just physical fitness dressed up in spiritual clothing?

Mindful yoga is a lifetime engagement--not to get somewhere else, but to be where and as we actually are in this very moment, with this very breath, whether the experience is pleasant unpleasant, or neutral. Our body will change a lot as we practice, and so will our minds and our hearts and our views. Hopefully, whether a beginner or an old-timer, we are always reminding ourselves in our practice of the value of keeping this beginner's mind.

Excerpted from the article "Mindful Yoga Movement & Meditation" ©2003 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, first published in Yoga International, Feb/March 2003. Visit www.yimag.org.

Mindful Hatha Yoga

Traditionally, yoga sessions begin with a centering exercise such as sitting meditation for 5 or 10 minutes and end with a re-stabilizing practice such as Resting Pose (Corpse Pose)

Instructions for Resting Pose

Lying down on your back on a mat on the floor or on a bed, arms by your sides, palms facing upward if it feels comfortable, and legs gently apart, feet falling away from each other. If you feel uncomfortable, feel free to place a pillow under your knees.

Allowing your eyes to close and, if doable for you without strain, keeping them closed until the practice has ended. Relaxing your shoulders away from your ears, shoulder blades touching the floor. Drawing your chin slightly back as to open up the back of your neck. Aligning your head over your torso.

Becoming aware of your whole body breathing:

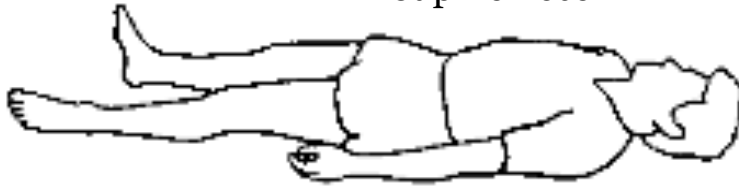
Breathing in I am aware I am breathing in
Breathing out I am aware I am breathing out

Maintaining awareness of your whole body. Feel the legs, the arms, the trunk, the neck and the head. Rest in this stillness.

Please use the link on floridamindfulness.com/MBSRPractice for helpful video instruction for lying down yoga and standing yoga.



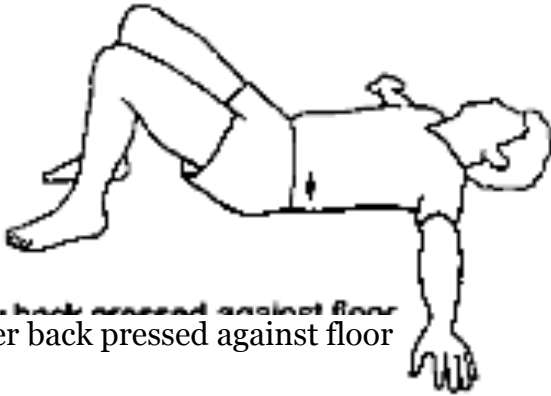
Supine Pose



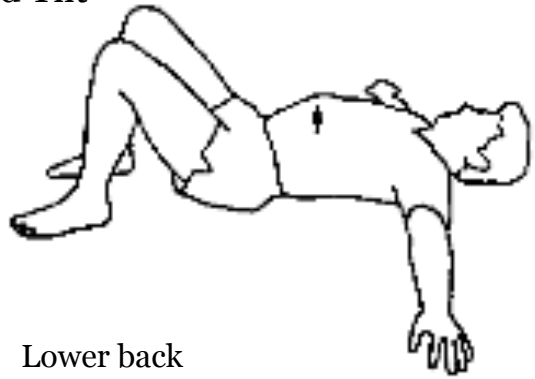
Full Body Stretch



Pelvic Rock and Tilt

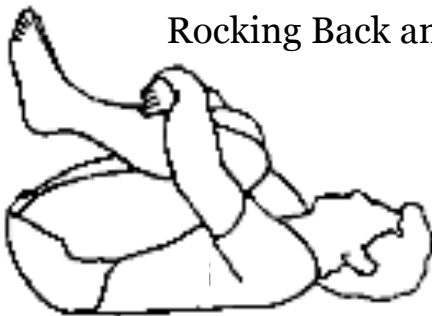


Lower back pressed against floor



Lower back arched; pelvis stays on floor

Rocking Back and Forth



Knees to Chest

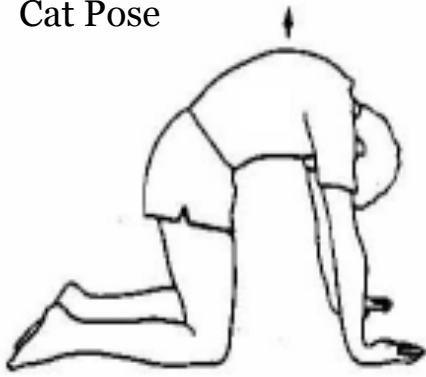
Both sides



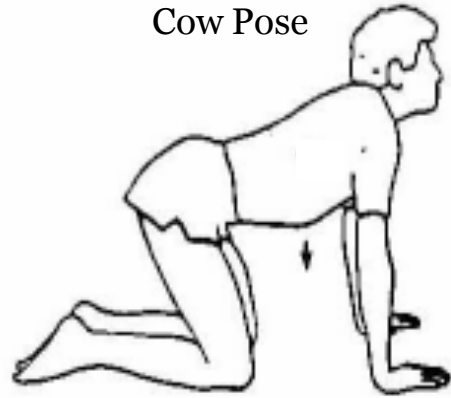
Both sides



Cat Pose

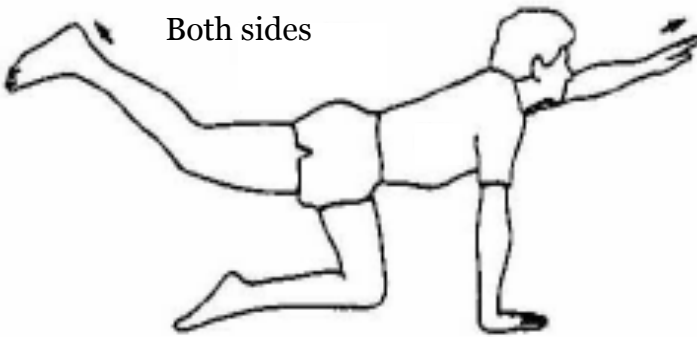


Cow Pose

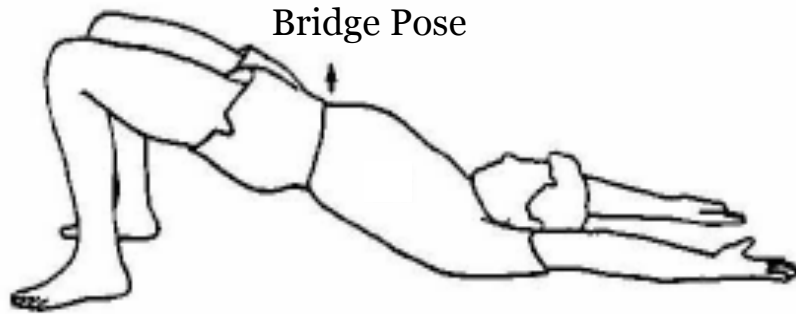


Bird Dog Pose

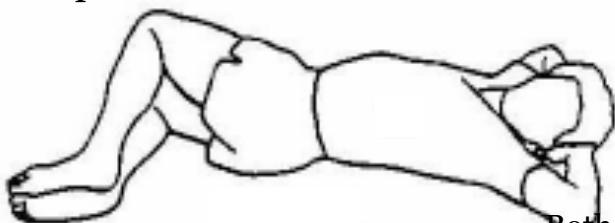
Both sides



Bridge Pose



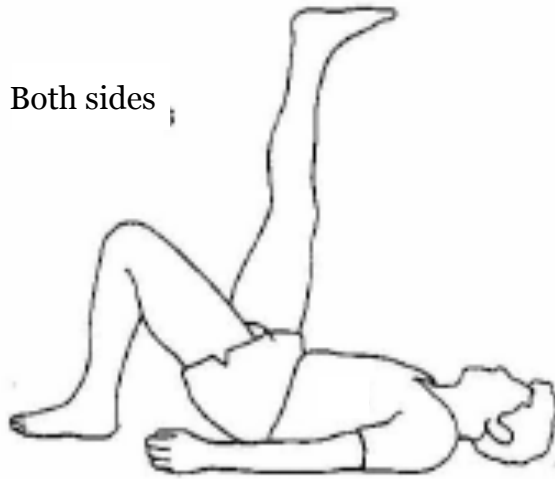
Supine Twist



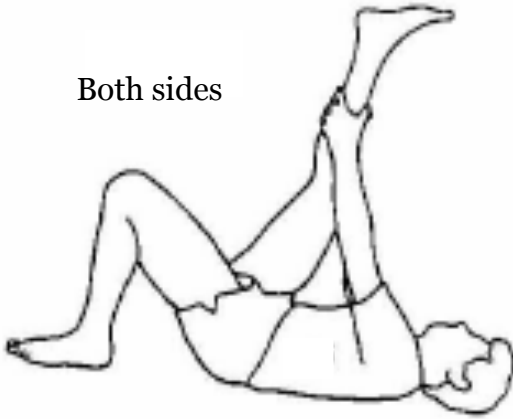
Both sides

Leg Stretches

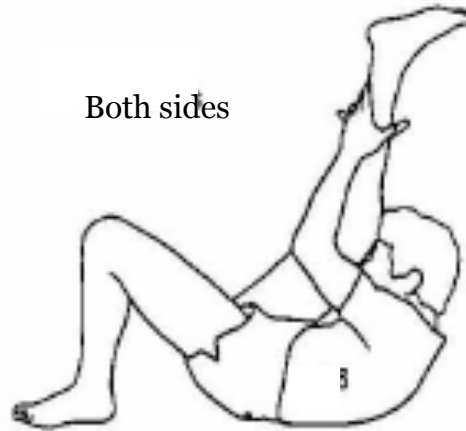
Both sides



Both sides

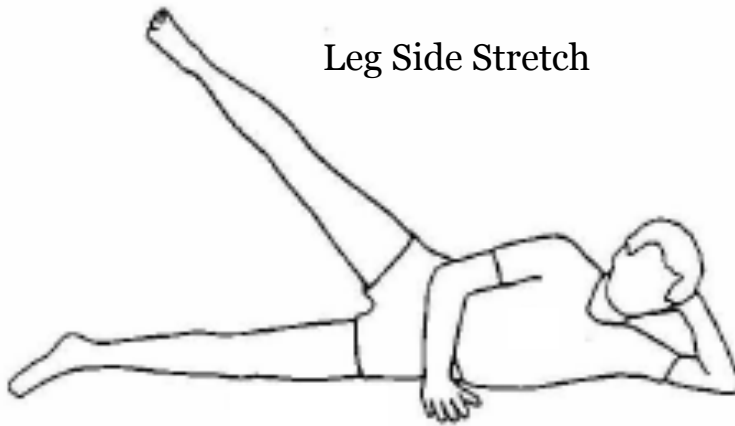


Both sides

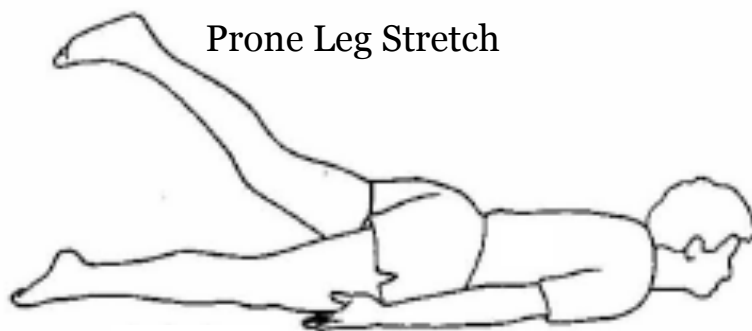


Leg Side Stretch

Both sides

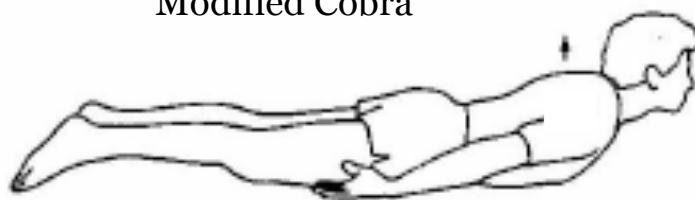


Prone Leg Stretch



Both sides

Modified Cobra



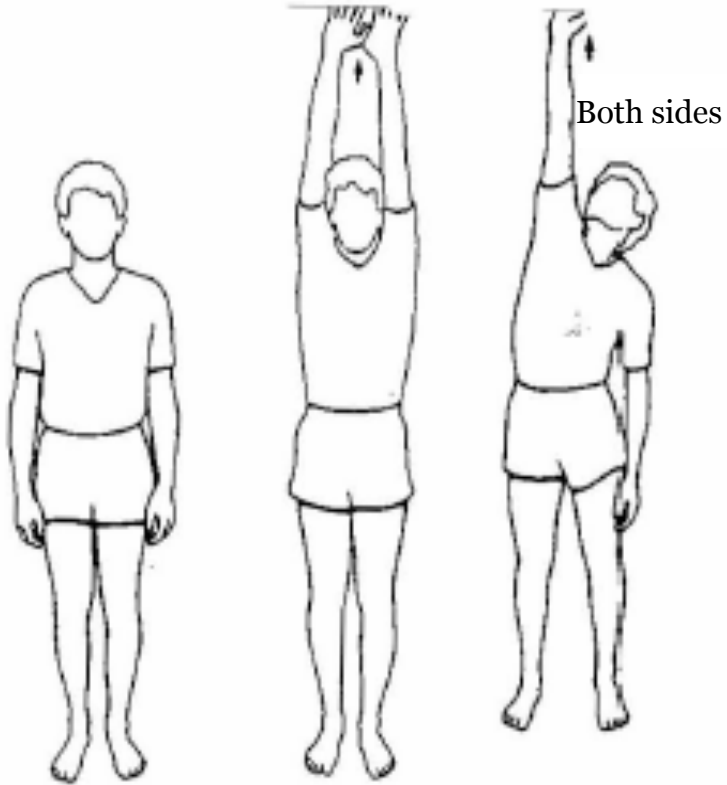
Back Stretch



Corpse Pose



Full Body Stretch

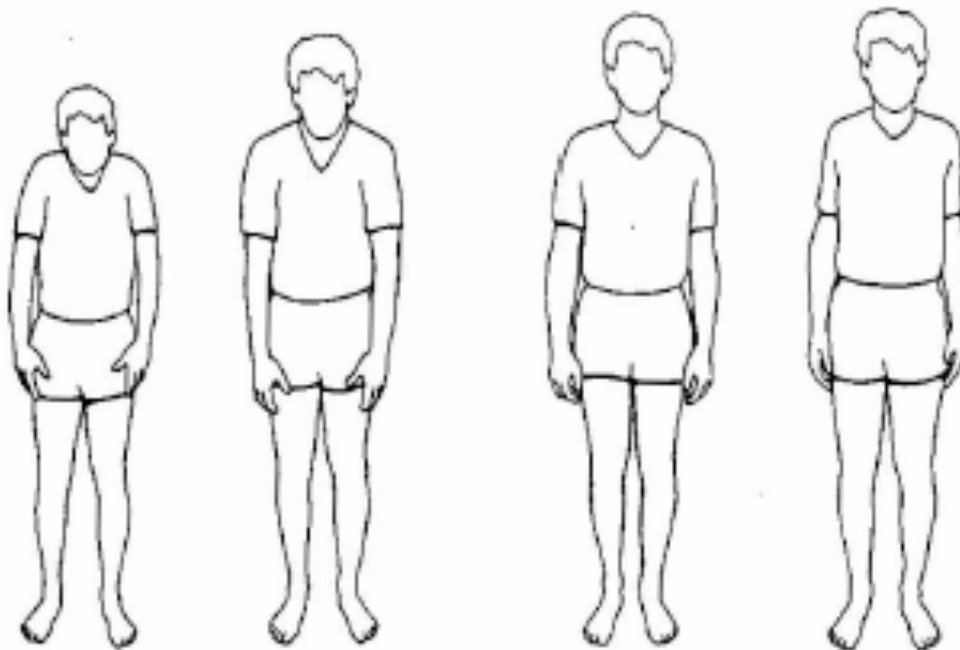


Side Twist



Shoulder Rolls

Do in forward, then backward directions

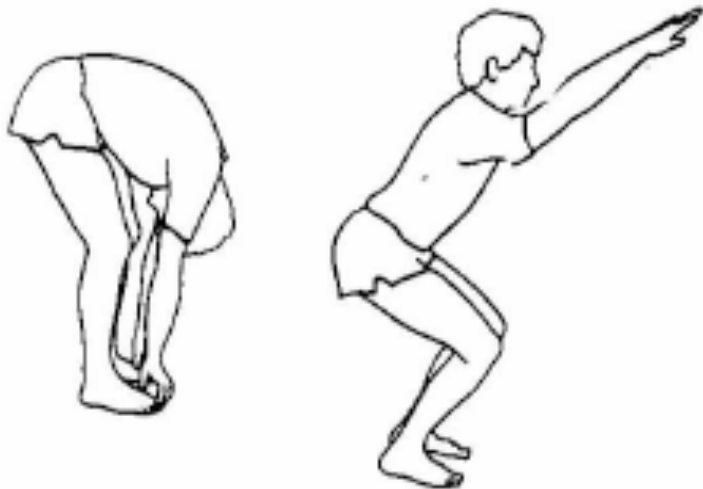


Raise up

Squeeze together

Let drop Squeeze together back

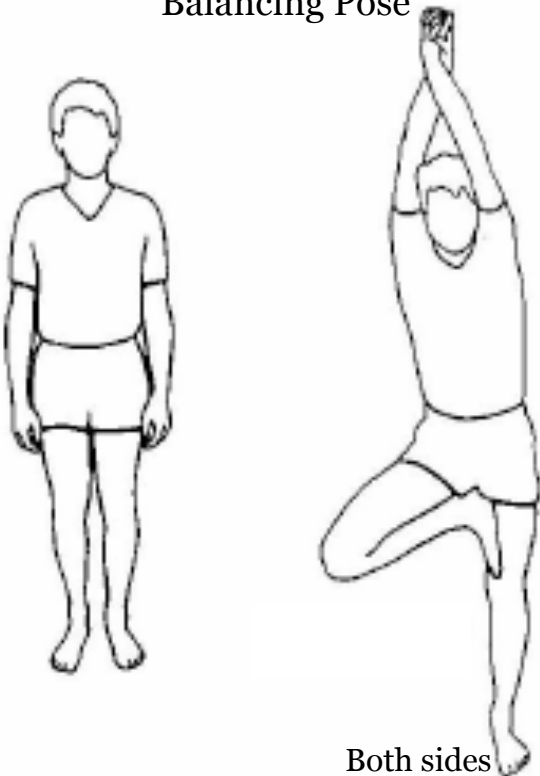
Centerfield Position



Forward Bend

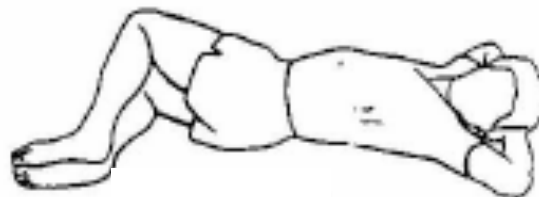


Balancing Pose



Both sides

Supine Twist



Both sides

Corpse Pose



Working with Resistance

Lately, I've been learning a lot about resistance. My cat, Leo, has an infection, so every day he has to take an antibiotic pill. Cats are picky about what they put in their mouths, and Leo hates the taste of the pills. When he sees one coming, he closes his mouth into a tight slit, and extends his claws in fighting position. Even after we've managed to get the pill in his mouth, he'll often hide it in his cheek, and then spit it out.

Leo's daily fight with the pills has begun to seem like a metaphor for all the ways we resist life-- not just life's pills, but also life's sweetness. It's not just that we resist facing, say, a difficult health issue, or the need to leave a relationship or a job. We've also been known to resist a new opportunity, a new friend or lover, an emerging state of inner expansion, even when we sense that something good could happen if we opened up to it. We resist creating space in our overscheduled lives. We resist our own intuitive understandings, and also the inward pull into meditation--often out of an unexamined fear of what we might find if we let ourselves move into our inner spaces. Especially, I've noticed, we resist letting go of our limitations--real or imagined--and stepping into our own largeness, our greater self.

Admittedly, there are times when resistance is an appropriate; if we didn't have the ability to say "No," to resist or filter some of what comes at us, we'd all be overloaded and overwhelmed. The body's immune system is built precisely for this purpose: to resist outside invaders in the form of bugs and bacteria. So is our psychological immune system, which by the time we're grown-up usually consists of a series of energetic boundaries and gateways that we've built to keep out invasive or hostile energies, potentially toxic situations and painful relationships. Obviously, if we didn't have that network of resistances, we'd be vulnerable to every form of suggestion or coercion, subtle and obvious.

The problem arises when we don't know when or how to let down the boundaries. Then our resistance stops being a useful filtering device, and becomes armor. Every one of us has some calcified resistance, and for some of us, resistance can become a rigid of energetic barrier that closes us off from change, from new ideas, from intimacy with people and situations that could take us deeper into our own truth. That's when we stagnate. And we can stagnate in any area of life--in our work, in our relationships, or in our spiritual practice.

What Are You Resisting?

So when I notice myself feeling constricted, or stagnant, or stuck--all words for the same phenomenon-- I usually begin by asking myself what it is that I'm currently resisting. If you try this yourself, you'll probably find that you know the answer. We usually know what we're resisting--often some necessary change, a shift in the nutrition you're giving yourself, a part of your body or psyche that is begging to be stretched.

Once you've determined where the resistance is lodging, you can start to work with it. The classic approach to resistance is to breathe into the feeling and say, on the out breath, "Let go!" However, for me, this doesn't work unless I've first spent some time actually listening to the resistance, getting to know it. The best way to do this is by asking questions and letting resistance 'talk' to me.

Dialoguing with Your Resistance

The idea of dialoguing with your resistance might sound slightly weird; nonetheless, you might like to try it.

Think about something in your life that you sense would be good for you, but that you're resisting. It might be a change of some kind, or perhaps a shift in diet or in your personal practice, or perhaps in your attitude towards your family life, your relationship (s), or yourself.

Once you've noticed the resistance, let yourself feel the actual sensation of resisting. What are you resisting? What does the resistance feel like in your body?

Once you've touched into the feeling-space of resistance, ask, "What do you have to tell me? What is this resistance about? Why are you there?"

Ask the question, and then just wait to see what arises. It may be a feeling, or a thought, a belief or a fear. It might be a practical sense that maybe now is not the time, or a desire to make the change more familiar before you give into it.

Keep asking until you feel that you've sensed as much about the resistance as possible. Feel that you are actually listening to your resistance.

Then ask, "What would happen if I let go?" Notice what arises. Then ask your resistance, "Would you be willing to let go--just for a moment?" As you ask this question, notice what arises in the wake of the question. There should be a sense of ease, relaxation, perhaps small, perhaps greater than you thought possible.

I've found that as I become present to my resistance in this way, with this questioning attitude, something always does let go. Resistance eases. Sometimes, I also discover that the resistance comes from a deeper intuition that something that seems desirable isn't quite right. But I'd never have found this out if I hadn't asked. Just as people want to be heard, so do our psychological states. Sometimes it's enough just to be willing to listen to what our resistance wants to tell us. That might be all it takes for resistance to be willing to let go.

*From: Awakened Heart Newsletter, July - August 2006,
from Sally Kempton*

Stress and Stressors

What is stress?

“Biologically-based body/mind evolutionary response of an organism due to disturbances of equilibrium characterized by: high level of activation (heart beats faster, adrenalin flows, mind starts racing), “negative” emotions and increased self-referencing.

What is a “stressor”?

A stimulus (disturbance in the equilibrium) - anything that causes the activation of the Sympathetic Nervous System and the consequent release of stress hormones.

There are a number of ways to categorize stressors.

- They can be physiological (e.g. something putting a strain on the body, such as extreme heat or cold, injury, chronic illness, pain, hunger, tiredness) or psychological (events, situations, individuals, comments, anything we interpret as a threat).
- They can be acute (temporary, due to something being “N.U.T.S” (Novel, Unpredictable, Threat to the Ego, loss of Sense of control), or they can be chronic (long lasting, like dealing with a sick relative, ongoing overtime at work, an ongoing relationship problem).
- They can be absolute (stressors that everyone exposed to them would interpret as being stressful. These are objective stressors that are universal (e.g. earthquakes, a tsunami, the events of September 11 2001, Hurricane Ian) or relative (these are stressors that only some exposed to them would interpret as being stressful. These are subjective stressors that cause different reactions in different people (e.g. public speaking, time pressure at work, traffic).

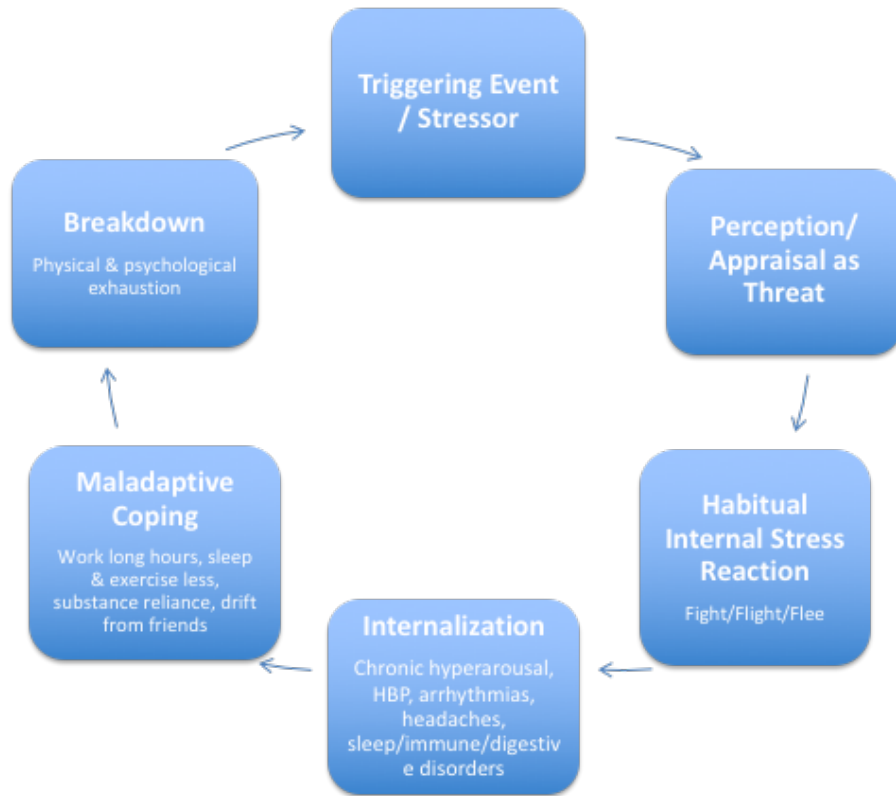
The role of perspective is extremely important in causing something to be a stressor or not for any given person. Psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

1. Perception and Cognitive Appraisal of Threat (pressure, demand)
2. Assessment of Perceived Access to Resources

D > R: Demands > Resources -internal/personal - external/social

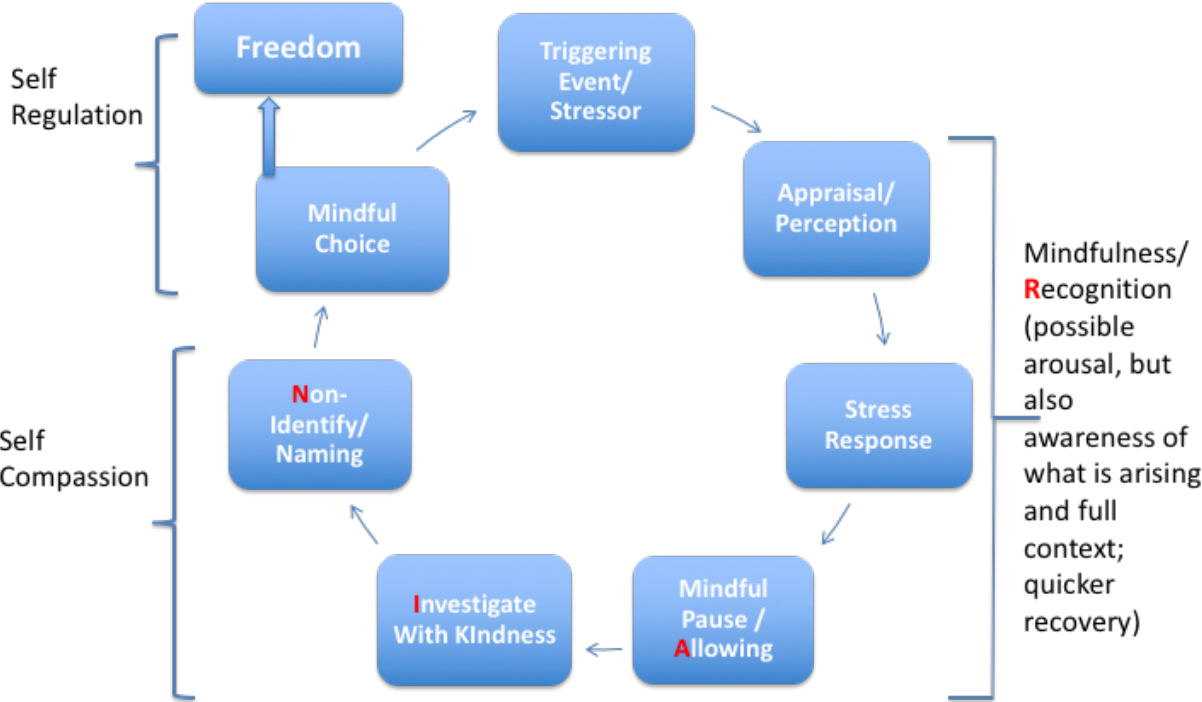
The Stress-Reaction Cycle

Cycle of Stress Reactivity



Mindfulness-Based Stress Response

Cycle of Mindful Responding



A Mindful Turn from *Reaction* to *Response*

As mindfulness grows, we can begin to recognize when stress is arising in our bodies, emotions, thoughts and behavior, and – using our breath as an anchor to put the brakes on stress reactivity – turn toward what has arisen with kindness and curiosity. We can then engage our natural wisdom to perceive the situation with more clarity and respond with wisdom.

One easy-to-remember tool for practicing mindfulness when stress arises is to use the acronym *RAIN*, coined by Michele McDonald.



RAIN has four steps:

Recognize what is going on;

Allow the experience to be there, just as it is, while calming with the breath;

Investigate with kindness;

Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience.

You can take your time and explore *RAIN* as a stand-alone meditation or move through the steps in a more abbreviated way whenever challenging feelings arise.

R—Recognize What’s Going On

Recognizing means consciously acknowledging, in any given moment, the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are present in us. The first step out of the cycle of stress is simply to recognize that we have left wellbeing and are experiencing difficult thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Common signs of stress include a negative inner voice, feelings of anxiety or frustration, and tension in the body. Each of us may have our own typical warning indicators that we want to learn to recognize as early as possible.

A consistent mindfulness practice helps us to increasingly live in the present moment rather than in past or future thinking, thus supporting our being present to what is arising in this moment. Because we may be very used to living with stressful thoughts, emotions, and the related physical manifestations, we may not easily notice the presence of stress at first. It may be helpful to develop a habit of checking in with ourselves often throughout the day: How is my mind? How is my body? Relaxed? Or not ... What is present right now?

A—Allowing: Taking a Life-Giving Pause with Deep Breathing

Allowing means taking a life-giving pause by bringing our attention very deliberately to the breath, while letting any thoughts, emotions, or sensations we have recognized simply be there in the background. Oftentimes, when we experience stress or other negative emotions, we react in one of a

number of unwholesome ways: we may numb ourselves to the stress through unhealthy consumption of food, intoxicants, media, and more; we may replay the stressful thoughts over and over in our mind, thus increasing our anxiety and physiological reactivity; or we may act out in anger or resentment toward those we perceive as the cause of our stress.

By pausing with the breath, we interrupt our patterns of reactivity and instead invoke what is known as the “Relaxation Response,” which is essentially the opposite reaction to the “fight or flight” response. The Relaxation Response is a physical state of deep relaxation which engages the other part of our nervous system—the parasympathetic nervous system – calming the body and mind and moving us out of the stress reactivity cycle.

As we pause with the breath, we allow thoughts that may be arising to pass through the mind like clouds in the sky, without fixating on the content of the thoughts or chaining them together. We allow sensations and emotions to be felt without feeding them with more thinking, holding them like a mother might hold a crying baby, with love and compassion. With an intention to relax our resistance, we allow the experience to be just as it is.

I—Investigating with Kindness

Investigating means calling on our natural curiosity and wisdom to direct a more focused attention to our present experience. Simply pausing to recognize what is happening within me can initiate recognition, but investigation adds a more active and pointed kind of inquiry.

Bringing the lessons of mindfulness to bear, you might ask yourself –

- What most wants attention? How am I experiencing this in my body?
- What am I believing? What is the story I’m telling myself about what is and could happen? Is it true?
- What inner rules and judgments am I (perhaps semi-unconsciously) holding as to how the world should be? Everything should happen the way I want it to ... Everyone should like and appreciate me ... Life should go my way ... Can I seek to better understanding others, and the unfolding of life?
- Can I reframe the situation, perhaps see this particular situation from a broader perspective? What are my aspirations for this relationship, my job, my life?
- What other resources could I bring to meet the demands of this situation?
- What is the wise response to this situation that is creating a demand for me?

In the midst of stress reactivity there will be times where it is not possible to investigate deeply in the moment. Bringing this investigation to your formal meditation for significant stressors in your life can help you to “practice” with this stressor in your laboratory setting and to more wisely perceive the bigger picture and re-frame as necessary. Then, when the situation is triggered again in the future due to our past conditioning, we can remind ourselves of this greater wisdom and more easily loosen the bonds of this habituated reactivity.

N—Non-Identification

Non-Identification occurs when our identification with our “small self” is loosened. This practice of non-identification means that our sense of who we are is not tied to any limiting emotions, sensations, or stories. We begin to connect with and live from the openness and love that express our natural awareness.

In the words of mindfulness author and teacher Tara Brach:

Though the first three steps of RAIN require some intentional activity, the N is the treasure: A liberating homecoming to our true nature. There's nothing to do for this last part of RAIN; we simply rest in natural awareness.

RAIN is not a one-shot meditation, nor is the realization of our natural awareness necessarily full, stable, or enduring. Rather, as you practice you may experience a sense of warmth and openness, a shift in perspective. You can trust this! RAIN is a practice for life—meeting our doubts and fears with a healing presence. Each time you are willing to slow down and recognize, oh, this is the trance of unworthiness... this is fear... this is hurt...this is judgment..., you are poised to de-condition the old habits and limiting self-beliefs that imprison your heart. Gradually, you'll experience (Non-Identification) natural loving awareness as the truth of who you are, more than any story you ever told yourself about being “not good enough” or “basically flawed.”

Mind Traps

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect you see it as a total failure.
- **Overgeneralization:** You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as “always” or “never” when you think about it.
- **Mental filter:** You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your vision of all of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water.
- **Discounting the positive:** You reject positive experiences by insisting that they “don’t count.” If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn’t good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.
- **Jumping to conclusions:** You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion.
- **Mind reading:** Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you.
- **Fortune-telling:** You predict that things will turn out badly.
- **Magnification:** You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the “binocular trick.”
- **Emotional reasoning:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are.
- **“Should” statements:** You tell yourself that things should be the way you hoped or expected them to be.
- **Labelling:** Labelling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying “I made a mistake,” you attach a negative label to yourself.
- **Personalization and blame:** Personalization occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under your control.

Reprinted from "CBT" issue of *Visions Journal*, 2009, 6 (1), p. 6



MBSR Course - Midway Assessment

1. How am I finding the course so far?
2. Any problems difficulties with Body Scan, Yoga or Meditation? If so, how am I addressing the problems?
3. Things I'm learning about myself:
4. Am I making time to practice? How often? –be honest!
5. Any comments, suggestions, requests.

Name: _____

Difficult Communications Calendar

Describe the communication. With Whom? Subject?	How did the difficulty come about?	What did you really want from the person or situation? What did you actually get?	What did the other person(s) want? What did they actually get?	How did you feel then? And how do you feel as you write this?
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

Guiding Principles for Mindful Communication

Aspire <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Create the “container” that guides our speech and relationships
Turn Towards <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Stop for a moment and connect with the breath❖ Relax and let go of thinking❖ Turn Towards, with openness and trust, what is present at this moment for me and the other❖ Bring this awareness and spaciousness into dialogue
Understand <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Extend friendly acceptance and mindfulness to the other❖ Offer agenda-free receptivity❖ Understanding – particularly in difficult situations – is the foundation for patience and
Nourish with Deep Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Listening from a place of openness, understanding and compassion to what is deeply present for the other❖ Offering full presence by letting go of unnecessary thinking (particularly our self-referential thinking of judging, comparing, and fixing) and multitasking❖ Opening up space by not interrupting, finishing sentences, rushing in
Express with HART <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Honestly❖ with Affection❖ at the Right time and place❖ To benefit all

“Attune”

Appreciative and Generous Listening

Listening is not passive.

To contain the distractions one's brain will generate requires a mindful and generous stance to become a non-judgmental, non-analytical presence for the speaker.

Consider the following techniques:

- Give the speaker your undivided attention
- Be present in the moment (“Pure Presence”) and enjoy listening
- Be quiet and calm without hurry or interruptions
- Silence is allowed as a means of reflection
- Focus on what is true for the speaker at the moment
- Suspend judgment and listen openly (let go of judging/comparing/fixing)
- Listen to the words & the underlying perceptions, beliefs and assumptions
- Attentive body language through soft eye contact, leaning forward slightly, open body stance
- Non-verbal encouragers such as head nods, concerned / responsive facial expressions
- Express empathy when appropriate
- Judicious use of clarifying / reflecting / detailing questions
- Paraphrase what the speaker has said when they are done
- Focus our attention on the speaker's experiences or ideas, noticing any self-referencing that might arise and letting that go

Daily Practice Suggestions - Week #8

(The Rest of Your Life)

Formal Mindfulness Practice

1. Keep up the momentum and the commitment to daily mindfulness practices developed over the past 7 weeks. Practice daily
2. Continue to practice with the audio files, as you feel ready, practice on your own.
3. Plan and practice your own “Day of Mindfulness”

Informal Mindfulness Practice

4. Remember to BREATHE
5. When you can, SLOW DOWN
6. When you must proceed quickly, then be mindful of the intention to move quickly, and of going fast
7. Re-visit the informal practice assignments from time to time; mindfulness of routine activities
8. Eat a meal mindfully once or twice a week
9. Appreciate the preciousness of each moment

Suggested Reading

Full Catastrophe Living

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Published by Bantam Books

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life Jon Kabat-Zinn

Published by Hachette Books

The Miracle of Mindfulness

Thich Nhat Hanh

Published by Beacon Press

How to Be an Adult in Relationships: The Five Keys to Mindful Loving

David Richo

Published by Shambhala

Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food

Jan Chozen Bays, MD

Published by Shambhala

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself

Kristin Neff

Published by William Morrow & Company

Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body

Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson

Published by Avery Publishing Group

No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness With the Internal Family Systems Model

Richard C. Schwartz

Published by Sounds True



“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Viktor E. Frankl