**Session One - Handout**

**“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention,**

**on purpose**

**in the present moment**

**non-judgementally**

**and then I sometimes add, in the service of self-understanding and wisdom”**

**Jon Kabbat Zinn**

* The aim of this mindfulness course is to increase awareness so that we can learn to live more fully, responding to situations with choice rather than reacting automatically.
* We learn to do this by paying attention to all our experiences and responses - including our bodily sensations, thoughts, moods and emotions, and to the small changes in them.
* Mindfulness practices, are techniques which help us become more aware of our experiences and responses.
* The bodyscan helps us learn to place our attention where we want it to be, and to anchor our awareness in the present moment. In doing this practice we are likely to become aware that the mind has a mind of it’s own!, that the automatic pilot trys to take charge - our purpose is just to notice when this happens, and to place our mental awareness where we choose - we may need to do this many times during a bodyscan - we are practising taking control of our awareness.
* We may have unpleasant or difficult emotions and thoughts arise, when this happens you have a choice - avoid the difficulties by focusing on something else, like your feet or breath (when it is steady and slow) - or, explore what the difficulty feels like in the body with curiosity, acceptance and kindness for yourself. Just notice what is there, that is all. If you experience physical pain - this may be something you choose to discuss with me, I invite you to discuss with me anything which arises which is difficult for you.

**Being open to all our experience has the possibility of leading us to greater health and wellbeing**.

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 then be “miles away” without knowing it.

On automatic pilot we are more likely to have our “buttons pressed”: events around us, and our own thoughts, feelings and sensations (of which we may only be dimly aware) can trigger old habits of feeling, thinking and behaviour that are potentially unhelpful, and may lead to worsening mood, or to physical and emotional symptoms of stress.

By becoming more aware of our bodily sensations, feelings and thoughts from moment-to-moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice: we do not need to play out the same old patterns that may have caused problems in the past.

The aim of mindfulness practice is to increase awareness so that we can respond to situations with choice, rather than react automatically. We do that by practising becoming aware of where our attention is, and deliberately bringing the focus of attention back to our body and senses, over and over again.

**Mindfulness is not about trying to get somewhere else, but simply being aware of where you are - allowing yourself to BE where and AS you are.**

IF I HAD MY LIFE OVER

I’d like to make more mistakes next time.

I’d relax, I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been on this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice-cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I’d have fewer imaginary ones.

You see I’m one of those people who lived sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day by day. Oh, I’ve had my moments, and if I had to do it again, I’d have more of them. In fact I’d try to have noting else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I’ve been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot in the Spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies

*Nadine Stair, 85 years old, from the Stress Reduction Workshop, University of Massachusetts Medical School*

***One Persons Experience of the Body Scan***

*For the first ten days it was like a burden. I kept “wandering off” and then I would worry about whether I was doing the right thing. For example I kept having flights of fantasy.*

*After ten 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 him up again when I stopped thinking. Gradually the flights of fancy reduced. I was happy to listen to him and then I started to get some value from it. I began to feel very relaxed, when he got to the bit about the neck it felt like somebody was massaging my shoulders. I was able to breathe into my toes.*

*It becomes more real the more you try it. I began to look forward to it.*

*Soon I had developed so that I could actually feel the breathe 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 that there is no feeling”.*

*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”.*

*I tried too hard to start with. Eventually I just put it on and expected to go off into a realm of thoughts. I didn’t worry if concerns came in. Gradually the forty minutes passed without me losing him and from then on, the next time was more effective.*

*It’s not something you can do half a dozen times. It’s got to be a daily thing.*

Guidelines for doing the Bodyscan

* Regardless of what happens (falling asleep, losing concentration, being distracted by thoughts, emotions or other physical sensations, not feeling anything), just do it! These are your experiences in the moment - your purpose is simply to be aware of them. If you are distracted by wandering thoughts, emotions or other physical sensations, simply notice them as passing events, and then gently return to the instructions of the guide.
* Notice if you have ideas about “success”, “failure” or “doing it really well”. This is not a competition. It is not a skill that you are striving to perfect. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. See if it’s possible to cultivate an attitude of openness and curiosity about whatever you happen to experience during the body scan.
* Try to approach your experience in each moment with the attitude “OK, that’s just the way things are right now” - see if you can accept what is there, whatever it is, without seeking to change it.
* Before you start consider creating the most helpful conditions to support you: privacy and quiet, a comfortable place to lie (cushions and blanket).
* You can move and ease the body during the practice - this is not an endurance test :)
* **The most important guideline is: just do it!**

Home Practice after Session 1

1. Listen to the body-scan recording once a day.
2. Choose one routine activity in your daily life and make a deliberate effort to bring moment-by-moment awareness to that activity each time you do it: what can I sense (touch, smell, sound, sight, taste, feelings, thoughts). Possibilities include: waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, getting dressed, eating, driving, taking out the rubbish, shopping - anything you do every day - simply zero in on knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it.
3. Eat a meal mindfully

*I have attached a Home Practice Record for you to make notes on what you have done and how it was for you - this can help you reflect on what the experience has been - I will not be asking to see that you have done it - but it may help remind you about things you want to ask about in class.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Day/Date* | *Practice* | *Comment* |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |