

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

A WORKSHOP ON MINDFULNESS:  
"RECLAIMING SELF" FOR ADULT'S WITH HISTORY OF  
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment on the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy

By

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## DEDICATIONS

This graduate project is dedicated to:

My beautiful family: Melody, Eman, and Sam. Who make life meaningful, who stood by me, and who enthusiastically encouraged me throughout this journey. I thank you for your ongoing love, patience, understanding, and support.

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## ABSTRACT

### PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

#### A WORKSHOP ON MINDFULNESS: "RECLAIMING SELF" FOR ADULT'S WITH HISTORY OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

By

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Master of Science in Counseling,

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This graduate project offers a manualized mindfulness based workshop that allow mental health professionals to respond to the needs of adult's with history of adverse childhood experiences, ACE, whose daily functioning may be crippled with the residuals of their past experiences. The review of research literature presents the need for a replicable mindfulness based intervention that can increase stress tolerance and promote affect regulation in dealing with everyday life challenges. The workshop created is comprised of eight weekly sessions, and each session is divided into 5 segments with 3 experiential and 2 educational segments for a total of 90 minutes. This manualized workshop is recommended to be used as a preventative intervention to alleviate risks of future revictimization and perpetration for individuals with history of childhood trauma.



## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Economical melt down in the recent years have devastated many lives. Fear of instability and unpredictability of financial crisis affects individual's psychological and physical wellbeing. In such pressured circumstances, survival may depend on one's resilience, the capacity to regulate emotions, the openness to access resource, the ability to find adequate support system, and the understanding of useful adaptive strategies to reduce impacts of daily stressors. Conversely, in absence of these assets persistent life stressors can threaten one's integrity and existence. Such intensely pressured atmospheres are especially terrifying times for individuals with history of adverse childhood experiences, who may already be experiencing challenges with maintaining healthful boundaries, making them especially vulnerable to future risks for revictimization and perpetration.

Hence, providing accessible preventative interventions can greatly reduce risks for such population. Mindfulness meditation practices are a type of preventative interventions that can be used for stress management, improving psychosocial strengths, and promoting coping skills. Utilization of mindfulness skills and stance in everyday living can empower individuals to prosper and possibly reduce future risk factors. Mindfulness interventions facilitate insightfulness that promotes self acceptance and compassion leading to an inner equanimity that is essential for developing resilience and self reliance. Mindfulness practices can promote self reflective capacity, allowing for better internal regulation and reducing reactivity to external stressors; therefore, they can

be a helpful intervention to empower individuals to take charge and create new positive opportunities that promote transformation and reclaim self from childhood trauma.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem is expressed in terms of lack of availability of sufficient preventative intervention, a replicable mindfulness based intervention that is specifically designed for this target population and is easily applied for use. In the recent decade, the surge of demands for psychological services at many mental health organization and trauma centers show a dramatic rise in rate of re-victimization and an increased risk of perpetration; moreover, global budget crisis has lead to many cut downs of already scares public resources; therefore, these conditions illuminate the urgency of the matter and the deficiency in the system to put in place accessible preventative measures that is both useful and easy to imply.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this research is to develop a product: a curriculum for an eight weeks mindfulness based intervention in form of a group workshop that provides sufficient information and ample opportunities for skill development to address concerns with affect regulation and stress tolerability for adults with history of adverse childhood experiences. This workshop is intended to inform, motivate, empower, and teach mindfulness techniques to reduce sufferings and enhance self satisfaction in life.

From a broad survey of the available literature on the efficacy of mindfulness interventions used for treating variety of psychological and physical conditions, it was concluded that similar intervention can be useful in developing life skills to better

manage circumstantial stressors and empower individuals with history of childhood trauma to become active participants in their lives and enhance their present life satisfaction.

We first considered research on the impacts of adverse childhood experiences on development and particularly focused on influences on brain development and functioning throughout lifespan. We then assessed attachment studies to better understand correlation between early relational trauma and later life problems with psychosocial functioning. And lastly we reviewed the literature and studies on the efficacy of mindfulness interventions in ameliorating variety of psychological conditions, drawing out relevant information that paralleled with inter-intra-relational concerns of our target population; and ending with a brief review of the currently popular mindfulness based interventions, in which we highlighted their applicability and usefulness in addressing concerns of our target population.

**Terminology:**

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): trauma experiences during childhood consisting of but not limited to emotional abuse, neglect, and physical abuse, household dysfunctions such in exposure to domestic violence, parental separation and divorce, incarcerated family member, substance abuse in the family. The focus in here is adverse childhood experiences concerning early life relational issues.

Mindfulness: exercising intentional attention to moment to moment interactions of one's mind and body to gain better understanding about self and ways in which one interacts with the world around (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Attachment Pattern: referring to the overall dynamics of parent child relationship during the early years of life.

Primary attachment figure: usually the primary care giver, often mother.

Secure attachment suggests a warm and affectionate interaction, the child uses the parent as a secure base to explore the surrounding world, and their relationship is emotionally attuned.

Insecure avoidant attachment pattern, the child is encouraged to be independent and is left to console self when distressed; parent is not emotionally available to sooth the child when in need of comfort.

Insecure ambivalent attachment, the parent interactions are inconsistent, so the child cannot rely on parent's availability.

Disorganized attachment is when parents behavior is frightening and intrusive, often associated with abusive interactions, the parent is source of fear and distress for the child.

### **Organization of Study:**

The project is organized as follow: Chapter II presents a review of the literature related to impacts of adverse childhood experiences and associated risks. We then briefly evaluated relevant issues on attachment patterns and recognized their impacts on the developing brain of a child and shaping mind states. And lastly, after a slight introduction to mindfulness philosophy and practice, we examined the research on mindfulness interventions that are associated with issues of self regulation and emotional tolerance. Chapter III contains the development of the curriculum, characteristics, design,

qualifications for both the participants and the practitioner. Chapter IV demonstrates a summary and recommendation for future research and work in this area of study. Appendix A provides the curriculum for the program designed. Appendix B and C contain handout and contracts needed to apply the 8 week workshop.

The Following literature review gives an overview of research studies that proposes the links between struggles experienced by adults with history of adverse childhood experiences and mindfulness meditation practice as an intervention to enhance life satisfaction and prevent future risks for revictimization and perpetration.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

The presented literature reviews introduced here will highlight the foundation for the development of this project. Relying on the research and science in support of healing potentials of mindfulness meditation based interventions to enhance emotional stability and resilience, the studies focused on will signify importance, applications, and conditions for using this contemplative practice for adults with history of adverse childhood experiences and to eliminate future risks for revictimization and perpetration. Furthermore, an analysis is made based on the brief summary of presented literature on the developmental neurobiology underlining the suggestions of science in support of mindfulness based interventions as an effective approach for resolving emotional childhood trauma. Special focus to mindfulness based treatments are made to endorse efficacy of mindfulness interventions for addressing conditions found paralleled with the complaints commonly experienced by many survivors. The etiology of parental abuse and its detrimental effects are explored from attachment and interpersonal neurobiological standpoint to accentuate the subject matters.

#### **An Overview of Psychosocial and Biological Influences**

Large body of evidence supports direct correlation between adverse childhood experiences and disruptions in normal processes of psychobiological development (Schore, 2009). In the beginning of a life, interferences in developmental processes can result in disturbances in brain growth leading to problems such as difficulties with

affective expression, emotional regulation, language development, and future behavioral issues that can negatively influence quality of life throughout lifespan (Cicchetti & Toth, 1995; Post, Weiss, & Leverich, 1994; Glaser, 2000; Poon & Knight, 2011; Reder & Duncan, 2001; Schore, 2002, 2009; Siegel, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2003). The under developed brain of a child is especially vulnerable to its environmental interactions during the first few years of life, thus being exposed to adverse experiences, and in absence of nurturing a care, a safe haven to rely on, the maturing brain can be at great risk for developing future psychopathology (Longo, 2010; Schore, 2002, 2009; Siegel, 2007).

Adverse childhood experiences, particularly involving prolonged abuse and neglect during the developmental years unfavorably influences cognitive development, chiefly impacting areas of the brain associated with judgment and moral reasoning, communication, memory storage, and physiological processing involving hormones and neurotransmitters that are essential for normal functioning (Schore, 2009; Senn, Carey, & Vanable, 2008). History of childhood trauma is found to be associated with increasing chances for displaying inadequate behaviors during childhood such as age inappropriate sexual interactions leading to future problems with intimacy (Bengis & Cunningham, 2006; Tiecher, 2002; & Ziegler, 2002), and sexually abused children are most prone to become involved in perpetrating acts (Finkelhor, Hammer, Sedlak, 2008). Emotionally neglectful and abusive parental interactions are believed to be the underlying reason for experiencing problems with intimacy later in life (Glaser, 2000).

One study reports history of intrusive and unpredictable maternal interactions to result in greater vulnerability of a child to behave aggressively and impulsively;

moreover, history of avoidant attachment associated with having emotionally unavailable fathers are found linked with difficulties with emotional regulation and behavioral problems (Smallbone, & Dadd, 2000). History of childhood abuse by mother is found linked with sense of unworthiness, negative self esteem, and experiencing future relational dissatisfactions throughout life (Glaser, 2000).

From a survey of reports on perpetrating parents convicted for non-accidental children's death, Reder and Duncan (2001) found history of childhood sexual and physical abuse to be often along with history of severe neglect. From the same survey, it was found that poor impulse control, aggressiveness, coercive dependency, avoidance with partner, excessive need for control, short range of tolerability, and lack of responsiveness when in charge to care for others to be common characteristics shared among the convicted perpetrating parents. The two investigators concluded the same factors to be the cause for repeated engagement in perpetrating acts like domestic violence and being involved in criminal or illegal activities like substance abuse (Reder and Duncan, 2001).

Un-resolved adverse childhood experiences are found to be the greatest risk factor for low tolerance and leading to explosive emotional reactivity, impulsivity, and absence of internal locus of control (Schoore, 2002); therefore, the inability to regulate strong emotions and absence of adequate coping skills are thought to be the underlying reason for battering among perpetrators with history of childhood trauma (Reder and Duncan, 2001).



Poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, history of assault and/or abuse, as well as untreated chronic psychological and physical problems are often found coexisting with child abuse with greatest ratio of perpetrations among parents with history of severe childhood abuse (Mullen et al., 1996, Glaser, 2000).

Therefore, early life experiences appear to be an essential factor, determining risks for future psychological and physical wellbeing, and shaping one's perceptions for future interactions (Ziegler, 2002). And particularly in absence of nurturing parent child relationship, unmet needs of a child are internalized as negative images of self, adversely influencing a child's perceptions of self and others (Ziegler, 2002; Van der Kolk, 2003; Siegel, 2007). In contrast emotionally attuned parent-child relationship creates sense of security, forming a protective factor, by developing self trust and competency to handle future life challenges which are the requirement for emotional growth, self reliance, and future emotional balance (Van der Kolk, 2003).

However, in absence of parental protection, a nurturing early life relationship, individuals with history of adverse childhood experiences can develop many psychological and psychosomatic problems (Wilson, 2009; Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007). Some commonly reported problems experienced by adults with history of childhood trauma consist of challenges with: adequate discernment of boundaries, inappropriate affect expression, excessive emotionality, impulsivity, depression (Russel, Springer, Greenfield, 2010), inability to control anger (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007, attentional problems, psychosomatic complaints such as various bodily aches and pains. Furthermore, many survivors of childhood trauma continue to struggle

with issues like sleep disturbances, inability to feel connected with others, challenged with maintaining healthful relationships (Kia-Keating, Sorsoli, & Grossman, 2009; Wilson, 2009), and an internal sense leading to greater sense of dissatisfaction with self and ways in which they relate with others (Van der Kolk, 2003, 2005). Prolonged exposure to stressful conditions during childhood is thought to be the underlying cause for experiencing these problems, and in particular excessive relational distress in early years of life is found associated with future sleep disturbances like troubles with falling sleep, staying sleep, and experiencing nightmares well beyond childhood years (Poon & Knight, 2011).

### **Clinical Perspective on Adverse Childhood Experiences**

From a clinical perspective, prolonged unresolved trauma often presents constellation of symptoms that are collectively recognized as anxiety disorders, with PTSD, Posttraumatic stress disorder being the most profound diagnosis of all anxiety disorders. The DSM-IV (2000) delineates: PTSD is a chronic form of anxiety disorder resulted from persistence of intense symptoms pass one month after a trauma incident causing serious disruption of normal functioning. PTSD is caused by experiencing a trauma, an imposed real danger to one's life and physical integrity of self or loved one that has overwhelmed the person with extreme terror and/or pain. Regardless of the domain in which trauma occur whether in a war condition (Glynn et al., 1999), or in a familial environment, any experience of excessive threat which violates an individual's psychological and physical honor can result in post traumatic symptoms (Grogan & Murphy, 2011), . However, diagnosis of PTSD is dependent on the intensity, duration,

and frequency of present symptoms which are the determining characteristics setting PTSD diagnosis apart from other comorbid disorders; therefore, accurate diagnosis of PTSD demands exact fit with the constellation of symptoms with the diagnostic description of the disorder as prescribed in the DSM –IV, 2000.

According to statistical reports, life time prevalence of PTSD among female trauma survivors is double the rate of male survivors, and symptoms persistency are found up to 5 years after diagnoses of PTSD among one third of all trauma survivors (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995; Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005). PTSD diagnosis marks the pervasiveness of devastating effects unresolved trauma can have and the probabilities of continuation of trauma symptoms in ways they repel through an individual's life (Van der Kolk, 2003). The diagnosis of PTSD is often the key element and qualification factor for receiving clinical aid and accessing resources; however, many adults with history of adverse childhood experiences, early relational trauma, can not fit the characteristics of PTSD. As the result, many adult survivors of childhood trauma may be left deprived of the opportunity to access useful services and are left to rely on their own resources to cope with their daily challenges (Schore, 2009; Van der Kolk, 2002). Childhood adversities are risk factors for future vulnerability to develop PTSD later in life (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000), and in particular early life relational trauma can alter developmental processes making an individual more prone to PTSD (Daniels, Frewen, McKinnon, & Lanius, 2011).

Additionally, while trauma treatment has been the focus of many studies; yet there is a large number of adult survivors continue to struggle with after effects of their

childhood experiences (Van der Kolk, 2005) For one thing, trauma impacts people differently, depending on the stage of development at the time of event, available resources immediately after trauma, and subsequent life experiences; therefore, the extend of challenges experienced can vary among individuals (Schore, 2000). So, it is reasonable to say that the prevalence and severity of impacts on the developing brain may not be fully evident at the time; consequently, immediately observed symptoms may not tell the whole story (Van der Kolk, 2003). This explains why many survivors do continue to be affected by residual's of their early life experiences and with their symptoms masked off, their challenges may not come to clinical attention till much later time, like after all their resources have been depleted, been victimized again, or perpetrated (Ziegler, 2010; Van der Kolk, 2006).

This is an aspect of reality for many adult survivors with history of adverse childhood experiences as they go through life living with many challenges struggling daily and possibly never really understand their struggle or get a chance to resolve them so they can find fulfillment in life (Van der Kolk, 2006). On the other hand, those who remember their childhood trauma may still not reach out for help because they are ashamed and are feeling guilty for being abused by their own parents, so even years after in adulthood due to their internal negative sense of worth, many may never seek attention or ask for help until too late (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, Cranes, 2007).

Another reason for not seeking help is the intense inability to trust others. In particular in cases of child abuse, many survivors to cope with the helplessness of their daily conditions, particularly if abuse is happening by the parent, the young child may

develop coping strategies such as avoidance and denial to help with the immediate concerns about survival; however, these efforts often become maladaptive to normal developmental processes in the long run (Van der Kolk, 2005), and creating additional risks to the already difficult circumstances, as these maladaptive habits can chronically impair self awareness of one's internal experiences and result in inadequate reactivity to outside stressors (Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005; Amir et al., 1997).

This is not to say that all survivors are oblivious to their emotional vulnerabilities, in fact, many survivors in an attempt to actively reduce risks for being victimized, resolute to never trust or emotionally connect with another person; therefore, they choose to remain emotionally closed off to eliminate any chances for becoming vulnerable and in need for closeness with others (Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005; Marx & Sloan, 2002; Rosenthal, Rasmussen, Hall, Palm, Batten, & Follete, 2005). This is indeed a noble attempt for self reliance to protect self and to cope with everyday vulnerabilities; nonetheless, these avoidance strategies can become destructive of all future opportunities to experience positive interactions that are conducive for reaching resolution and repairing past traumas (Rosenthal et al., 2005).

Implementing interventions, particularly group work that aim to increase emotional stability is thought to be particularly helpful for women with history of adverse childhood experiences (Wolfsdorf & Zlotnick, 2001), additionally, such programs can reduce risk factors and deter survivors from isolation and increase willingness to approach difficult conditions (Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005) . These are foundational conditions for cultivating mindfulness meditation intervention for helping individuals

with history of adverse childhood experiences. Developing a regular daily regimen of mindfulness meditation practice can be a tremendous tool for ameliorating the underlying vulnerabilities and psychosocial challenges commonly faced by such population (Van der kolk, 2005; Kimbrough, Magyari, Langenberg, Chesney, & Berman, 2010).

### **Attachment Theory and Perspective**

Attachment theory describes early patterns in parent child interactions with the focus on parental sensitivity in responding to child's needs when distressed and defines proximity seeking behavioral patterns of the child (Schore, 2000; Reder & Duncan, 2001). Attachment plays an integral role in emergence of personality and in process of development (Schore, 2009). Disruptions in attachment can result in serious interruptions in development leading to many psychological and physical problems as well as much interpersonal problems later in adulthood (Schore, 2002; Siegel, 1999; Tiecher, 2002; Van der Kolk, 2003; Vala-Stewart, 2009).

The idea of studying mother-child relationship was first proposed by John Bowlby and was later methodologically tested, in 1978, by Mary Ainsworth. She created a condition to observe parent child interaction known as "Infant Strange Situation". Her findings provided the empirical support for Bowlby's assumption, leading to development of attachment theory that revolutionized prior psychoanalytical view of infant-parent relationship (Fredrick & Goddard, 2008).

"Infant Strange Situation" was an examination of mother-child interactions in a laboratory setting for understanding infant's patterns of responsiveness to mother's

separation and reunion (Siegel, 2007). From this observational study, Ainsworth developed three categories of attachment patterns: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent (Schore, 2009). The fourth category of attachment pattern, disorganized attachment, was later proposed by Mary Main and Judith Solomon (1990) from observing maltreated children that were displaying ambiguous behaviors. In 2000, Eric Hesse and Mary Main conceptualized disorganized attachment as an interaction where a child displays contradictory behavior appearing conflicted, frightened, and anxious in when interacting with the caregiver these suggests that the parents is possible the source of distress for the child.

In his book “ The Developing Mind” Daniel Siegel (2007) delineates that statistical information confirm that there is a larger ratio of secure attachment than insecure attachment in the general population, furthermore, the behavioral patterns among abused children concords with attachment theory. He shares for instance among a non clinical population of infants, it is reported that about 55% to 65% show secure attachment pattern and only about 23% show insecure avoidant attachment pattern, while about 5% to 15% of infants from the same non clinical population were found to show ambivalent/resistant pattern, and 80% of parentally maltreated infants are found to have disorganized attachment pattern.

Hinnen, Sanderman, and Sprangers (2009) report from a study to have found direct correlation between attachment patterns, childhood experiences, and overall satisfaction later in life. In their study, they used self evaluating questionnaire of find relationship between childhood memories and overall satisfaction later on in life. From

437 individuals who participated in the study, it was found that securely attachment individuals recalled more positive childhood experiences and reported greater overall self satisfaction in their life, whereas, insecurely attached individuals recalled childhood memories with dismissing parental interaction, less familial support and love, more adverse childhood experiences, and overall accounted to experience less contentment in their current living conditions (Hinnen, Sanderman, & Sprangers, 2009). The authors reported that their findings are in line with the attachment theory that suggests early life experiences greatly impact development of self perception and world view.

### **Neuro-plasticity: Brain & Attachment on Shaping Autobiographical Memory**

Early relational experiences can alter nervous system development while emotional attunement is thought to promote healthy brain wiring (Schore, 2009; Siegel, 2007). Neural development begins at time of conception when the interactions of environment and genes define the direction of neural connection and growth (Siegel, 2007). With birth, the nature of communication within the attachment dyad modulates neurobiological processes that activate neural growth in various regions of maturing brain, particularly pre-frontal cortex, impacting amalgamation of neural connections for future information processing important for creating mental representational models from which understandings of self and the world is shaped (Siegel, 2007; 2009).

To clarify the understanding about connection of attachment, brain development and future psychopathology, Allen Schore (2009) explains how early life parental interactions serves as a selfobject for the immature brain of a child, dictating the child's self and highlighting the importance of attachment dyad's emotional availability in



creating the child's self regulatory system which mirrors parent child interactions . Schore (2009) explains that childhood relational interactions greatly influences the early developing right brain of a child which is responsible for critical functions such as: information processing concerning the self of the child, maintaining inner sense of connectedness, stress response, and all the functions important in shaping autobiographical memory. Exposure to attachment trauma and adverse childhood experiences during the critical period of right brain development can severely disrupt coherency of self predisposing the child to future psychopathology (Schore, 2002, 2009).

Daniel Siegel (2007) in his book "The Developing Mind" describes this same phenomenon from a neurobiological stand point. Siegel (2007) explains that any experience is a process of neural firing and any neural firing creates change in concentration of neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers of the body that signal neural communication, thus responses to any stimuli can alter neural pathway altering connections between distinct regions of the brain, leading to integration. Moreover, one's genetic makeup sets the blue print of all neural growth and expression, defining both functions and connections; therefore, if relational experiences can alter neurons firing then it can also promote or inhibit gene expressions, altering the nervous system both its makeup and activities (Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Siegel, 2007).

This is a phenomenon known as neuro-plasticity. That explains the capacity of human brain to regenerate neural connections, recognized in recent brain studies which have been made possible with new advents in brain imaging technologies. These studies explain how experience can stimulate neurons to make new connections, integrating

previously distinct parts of the brain that may not have been integrated or rendered disconnected in past, thus new experiences can cause neural integration or disintegration modifying brain's function and structure (Siegel, 2003; 2007).

Conversely, attuned interactions promote neuro-plasticity, considering that mindfulness meditation promotes internal attunement, hence it cultivates increased self regulatory capacity that provides the bases for recovery through neuro-plasticity (Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Siegel, 2007).

Early attachment disruptions can negatively affect brain development (Schoore, 2000), and an important brain region that it is vulnerable to early relational trauma is early developing right brain and limbic system, particularly the amygdala (Schoore, 2009). Also known as the body's alert system the amygdala gets activated in response to danger lingering in active state until potential threat resolves (Siegel, 2003, 2006, 2007). However, repeated exposure to intense threat can desensitize the amygdala resulting in misinterpretations about the presence of real danger, and creating susceptibility to misevaluation of future risks leading to victimization (Van der Kolk, 2002). Furthermore, the inability to distinguish imagined danger from real threat can result in prolonged reactivity in the limbic area, thus causing impairments in the right brain functions such as in inhibitory controls and autobiographical memory (Schoore, 2000, 2002, 2009; Siegel, 2003, 2006, 2007).

## **Emotional Regulation and Future Expectations**

Future expectations and self perceptions are built around early relational memories. Emotional attunement experienced in secure attachment creates a sense of mutual respect and inner connectivity, leading to positive representational schemas forming future expectations in later interactions (Allen & Manning, 2007; Shore, 2002, 2009; Siegel, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2003); on the other hand, ruptures experienced in insecure attachment result in difficulties such as inadequate discernment of boundaries, inappropriate expression of affect, excessive neediness for affirmation from others, fearfulness of loss or rejection, and emotional detachment in future relationships (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003).

Furthermore, attuned parental interactions endorse neural connection resulting in lateralization on prefrontal regions of brain, necessary for maturation and proper functioning of right and left hemispheres that are essential for development of resilience and emotional self-regulation (Siegel, 2007, 2006; Schore, 2003, 2002).

## **Consequences of Insecure and Disorganized Attachment**

As it appears, absence of emotional affection and warmth in parent child relationship results in interruption in attachment bond; however, temporary ruptures in cohesion of relationship can be repaired with re-attunement once the parent becomes aware of interruptions and attempt to reattach (Schore, 2001). However, for adult survivors of child abuse and neglect there is no repair since parent is the source of threat, and in such environment, in absence nurturing relationship unresolved issues remain

intact and can lead to future difficulties (Van der Kolk, 2003; Fredrick & Goddard, 2008).

In absence of timely repair, disrupted attachment can predispose the brain to future mental health problems such as dissociative disorders (Schore, 2009), borderline tendencies and various anxiety disorders (Liotti, 2004), and PTSD in severe cases of abuse (Schore, 2002; Grogan & Murphy, 2011).

### **Clinical Application of Attachment Theory**

Attachment styles are believed to remain consistent throughout life and similar patterns of interactions are thought to be repeated in future relationships (DeBiase, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and persist through generations (Siegel, 2007; Hamilton, 2000). Attachment theory provides an in-depth knowledge about inner working model of the person, it is thought to be the blue print for one's cognitive, affective, and behavioral functioning (Schore, 2000), thus understanding the implications and nature of one's attachment pattern can help make better sense of one's life story (Siegel, 2007).

Attachment studies suggest attachment patterns can be useful in psychotherapy by shining the light on an individual's habitual patterns of interactions, defining future expectations, and can help to better understand individual's vulnerabilities later in life ((Hinnen, Sanderman, & Sprangers, 2009; Siegel, 2007); furthermore, understanding attachment influences can be useful for defining the problems and setting treatment goals that promote healing by speeding up the process for cultivating trust in therapeutic relationship (Slade, 2004; Van der Kolk, 2003). And lastly, for clinician's understanding,

attachment patterns can extend their awareness of hidden vulnerabilities for both the clients and the self of the therapist; therefore, it can be a useful tool in preventing risks that may otherwise jeopardize therapeutic bond (Slade, 2004).

### **A Glance at Future Generations**

Attachment patterns persist through generations; therefore, parents will most likely produce children with similar attachment styles (Pearson, Cohn, & Cowan, 1994; Siegel, 1999). Individuals with secure attachment patterns tend to produce children that are emotionally resilient, and those with disorganized attachment history are at great risk for repeating similar patterns (Sroufe, 1985). Thus, in absence of adequate and timely intervention disruptive patterns can get repeated, trapping generations in a maladaptive cycle and endangering the future of many generations to come (Hesse, & Main, 1999). None the less, the progressive nature of development according to neurobiological studies suggests that later life experiences can alter attachment's impacts (Siegel, 1997), and future favorable conditions may optimize adaptability among those with a history of adverse childhood experiences (Cordon, Brown, & Gibson, 2009).

Healing childhood trauma often requires extensive interventions, determination, and commitment to carefully attend to the little details of one's unraveling experiences along the process of recovery (Siegel, 2007). These are conditions not readily present in most adult survivors of childhood trauma; however, sufficient cognitive and behavioral modifications such as those learned in mindfulness-based interventions can help facilitate the emergence of new and more adaptive qualities through cultivating self-acceptance, trust, and compassion (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Siegel, 2007).

Mindfulness meditation practice analogous to secure attachment promotes internal attunement and lateralization of the brain (Siegel, 2007); and it is also found to increase gray matter density and enhance left brain activation that promotes self regulation (Davidson, 2004).

A controlled longitudinal study performed on individuals who meditate regularly found observable changes in area of hippocampus which is responsible for affective regulation, recollection, and development of future outlook (Hozel et al., 2011). In the recent decades the many studies on the variety of mindfulness based interventions also suggest they can help promote neural changes in the direction that alleviate symptoms of many psychological disorders and it can enhance overall acceptance and tolerance for present conditions (Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Siegel, 2007).

### **Chronological Context on Mindfulness**

Mindfulness meditations are used in design and as foundation for many contemplative interventions created in the recent decades and they are rapidly gaining popularity in western culture for addressing many physical and psychological conditions (Baer, 2003). As contemplative treatment approach, mindfulness interventions are often applied through meditation practices to reduce suffering and increase tolerance for emotional and physical pain (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006; Jimenez et al., 2010). Mindfulness practiced in most mindfulness based interventions has its roots in Buddhist traditions that is concerned with human living conditions in manners not affiliated with any religious practices; moreover, mindfulness is constructed around the belief that the absence of self awareness the inability to recognize mind and body

interactions in present moment, is the underlying reason for all human sufferings (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Engaging in daily mindfulness practices can help inner awareness that can lead to increase ability for better emotional regulation, promote responsiveness, alleviate impulsivity, and develop compassion, (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller et al., 2003; Jimenez, Niles, & Park, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2003; Siegel, 2007). Mindfulness practice promotes cultivation of empathy, thus it can improve individual's ability to become more emotionally connected with self and others (Block-Lerner, Adair, Plumb, Rhatigan, & Orsillo, 2007).

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), known as the father of mindfulness in western society, in his book "Full Catastrophe Living" gives detail description of historical context and a working definition for mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation is a practice that uses attending to one's inner experiences in the here and now to awaken the natural healing potentials of human brain, facilitated through awareness about one's body and mind interactions highlighting intermediary nature of human conditions that can otherwise be compromised with misperceptions about totality of human suffering (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Siegel, 2007).

Mindfulness interventions are designed on the foundational attitude defined by Kabat Zinn (1994) as qualities of self acceptance, trust, openness, curiosity, and non-judging that allow for cultivation of an inner peacefulness through increased insight and self compassion leading to development of new more positive self and outlook in life (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Cohen-Katz et al.,

2005). The key in mindfulness meditation practice is repeated redirecting of intentional attention that trains the mind to remain in tune with present moment interactions of internal and external experiences, reinforcing wholeness by embracing all intrusions rather than being consumed, avoid, or deny unwanted thoughts, emotions, and sensations (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1996; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Thompson & Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2008).

Regular mindfulness practices can help unmask buried potentials and aid to cultivate sense of mastery and competency to face issues concerning with and causing emotional suffering (Aftanas & Golosheykin, 2005, Jimenez et al., 2010). Cultivating mindfulness stance promotes empathy and reduces negativity in ways of relating to self and the world around (Hayes & Feldman, 2004), thus it develops optimism.

Furthermore, mindfulness meditations practices encourage staying with difficult emotions, highlighting the fleeting nature of emotions, as the result increasing tolerability of challenging experiences and empowering individuals to approach new experiences and to create opportunities for repairing past relational problems (Aftanas & Golosheykin, 2005; Brown et al., 2007).

### **Mindfulness Foundation and Meditation**

Various kind of mindfulness practices are used for developing mindfulness skills necessary to reach greater self awareness, and they all rely on a similar attitudinal foundations described clearly by Kabat-Zinn (1990) as: “non-judging”, “patience”, “beginner’s mind”, “trust”, “non-striving”, “acceptance”, “letting go”; from mindfulness



stand point. These are essential foundation suggesting that one is to enter each meditation experience without prior expectation, suspending all judgments, becoming a novice learner, being open to explore all the experiences of the mind and body states in each moment in time (Kabat Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness may be practiced formally or informally through various meditative acts such as in breath awareness, eating, body scan, sitting, sound awareness, and walking meditation practices, where special attention is held on to embrace all experiences of mind and body throughout the practice while allowing for all mind and body states to enter and exit one's field of awareness as they occur from one moment to next moment in time (Segal, William, &Teasdale, 2002; Siegel, 1997).

For instance, mindfulness breathing practice posed usually in a seated position with either open or closed eyes; uses the breath rhythm to focus the attention, while allowing for observation of the mind and body's interactions recognizing thoughts, sensations, and emotions as they enter the field of attention, but only noticing them for what they are and then letting go of them by redirecting the attention back to the breath and so on (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Thompson & Gilbert, 2008). Similarly, in the body scan meditation the intention of attention is on body sensations and breath is used for redirecting the attention back to various parts of body, reinforcing the intention of attention to focus on reflection of experiences, observed in each region of the body, thus connecting the mind's focus with the body's awareness of its sensations in particular moment in time; allowing for manifestation of all accompanying sensations, emotions, and thoughts that can be noticed and then letting go and moving on. And in walking meditation, the focus of attention is on the physical sensations of foot as it comes to

contact with the ground with each step and how the experience as a whole varies in each moment, recognizing all experiences observing all mind and body states as they come and go (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Moreover, Mindfulness eating usually used as an introductory practice to familiarize novice meditators with the concept of becoming aware of body and mind interactions in present moment, and it is a common informal practice helpful for integrating mindfulness meditation to everyday living tasks (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Practicing both informal and formal mindfulness can increase opportunities for new experiences and deepen self awareness (Hayes & Smith, 2005).

A randomized controlled trail study compared mindfulness meditation efficacy on enhancing stress tolerance, mood, repeated thoughts, and attention with the efficacy of relaxation training (Jain, Shapiro, Swanick, Roesch, Mills et al., 2007). This month long training program was performed on sum of 83 graduate nursing students with mean age of 25. This comparative study suggest both meditation and relaxation practices reduced distress reactivity and increased passivity, but mindfulness meditation practices proved to have larger effect size than relaxation practices; moreover, both mindfulness meditation and relaxation training were found to be more effective than placebo (Jain, Shapiro, Swanick, Roesch, Mills et al., 2007).

Cultivating mindfulness into everyday living takes many efforts and a lot of practice, thus most trainings takes through several weeks or months, home practices and journaling are recommended to increase motivation and to keep individual's engaged to self monitor their progress (Follette, Palm, & Pearson, 2006). Besides, in the process for developing mindfulness skills in any intervention program, discussions should be

implemented to regularly monitor, normalize, and address possible challenges experienced by participants (Thompson & Gilbert, 2008). Modification to length, duration, descriptions, and combination of meditation practices may be necessary to best serve the purpose for the program designed and best fit the needs of population served (Roemer & Orsillo, 2003).

Both group and individual trainings are often used for establishing mindfulness skills, but groups are thought to be more useful specially in the beginning where experiential practices along with discussions encourages everyone to engage and to persist through challenges and boredom until individuals learn to embrace all experiences and challenges as mind states (Verni, 2002), and for recognizing challenges as an internal calling for deeper self acceptance and non-judging attitude to reach greater flexibility and adaptability (Thompson & Gilbert, 2008).

Cultivating mindfulness stance in daily living fosters positivity toward self and others by increasing self confidence, self image, and self worth leading to greater self reliance and better emotional balance (Jimenez, Nile, & park, 2010; Siegel, 2007). Neurobiological studies suggest the optimism created later in life through mindfulness awareness can alter the way in which one relates to self, creating a buffer against negative mental states analogous to the security experienced early in life with in an emotionally attuned parent child relationship. In both instances, the trust and security of relationship set positive expectations in future interactions (Siegel, 2007); therefore, it can be concluded that creating opportunities to experience positive interactions can help

transform past negative interpersonal experiences and encourages flexibility and adaptability in future interactions (Van der Kolk, 2005).

### **Evidences on Utilization of Mindfulness Interventions**

Many mindfulness interventions with or without meditation are found to be useful in ameliorating variety of conditions like anxiety disorders (Arch & Craske, 2010), PTSD (Hill et al., 2011; Vujanovic et al., 2011), general anxiety disorder (Evans, Ferrando, Findler, Stowell, Smart, & Haglin, 2008; Koszycki, Benger, Shlik, & Bradwejn, 2007), panic attacks, as well as in depression and relapse prevention (Jimenez et al., 2010), ADHD, substance abuse and aggression (Wupperman, Marlatt, Cunningham, Bowen, & Berking et al., 2011), conduct disorder (Singh et al., 2007), and physical illness (Barnes, Treiber, & Davis, 2001), as well as in developing psychological resilience (Semple et al., 2009).

Mindfulness meditation is the most known practice of mindfulness; however, cultivating mindfulness does not always require constant meditation practices (Siegel, 2007). For instance, dialectic behavior therapy created by Linehan in 1993 is an intervention that is built on the attitudinal foundation of mindfulness, but it does not involve regular meditation practices, yet it is found to be very effective intervention in helping individuals with borderline personality disorder ((Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2011). Another very popular mindfulness base intervention is acceptance and commitment therapy that was created by Hayes in 2004 is used in treatment of social phobia, poly-substance abuse, and psychotic symptoms (Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2011). Both interventions are built around

mindfulness standpoint of acceptance, but only partially use meditation practices in their approach.

In a study, the brief acceptance and mindfulness based intervention was examined to reduce risks of sexual assault and revictimization among college women showed to be effective with no random sampling, among a group of 95 undergraduate students, 30 of which revealed to have history of childhood sexual abuse. The study shows a small sample size reducing its statistical insignificance, but reports of follow up evaluations suggest notable effect size since none of the females in the intervention group were sexually assaulted (Hill, Vernig, Lee, Brown, & Orsillo, 2011). This two sessions long program consisted of basic education on mindfulness and experiential practices; the study showed to be effective for reducing risks of revictimization; however, additional studies with more controlled methodology for larger sample size is needed.

Both MBSR and MBCT are the two practices that mainly rely on three core meditation practices of sitting meditation, yoga, and body scan. All mentioned intervention can be applied in both group and individual settings.

Mindfulness based cognitive therapy created by Segal in the 1990s for prevention of relapses of major depression that is built around the premise that how we relate to situations dictates how we behave, and it integrate regular meditation practices (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). Mindfulness based cognitive therapy is combination of mindfulness meditation and cognitive behavioral approach. MBCT emphasizes on development of attitudes of mindfulness for reshaping negative perspectives and developing skills for identifying false perceptions. MBCT is the most recognized contemplative intervention

useful for treating depression and useful in reducing risks of relapse (Teasdale et al., 2000; Segal, William, Teasdale, 2002; William et al., 2008), and is found to be effective for cultivating insight and skills to shift attention away from future expectation and past negative memories; therefore, reducing risks for developing or relapsing in depression (Watkins & Teasdale, 2004; William, Russel, & Russel, 2008, Jimenez et al., 2010). Cultivating an inner self awareness and training the mind to focus on the here and now can help release anxiety about uncertainties of future interactions; therefore, such intervention can increase tolerance of negative events and reduce anticipatory behaviors that are the underlying cause for much of anxiety disorders, (Arch & Craske, 2010).

MBCT was found to be an efficacious intervention in ameliorating symptoms of anxiety, worry, and depressive symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder (Evans, Ferrnado, Findler, Stowell, Smart, & Haglin, 2008). In this small open trial study group, from 36 individuals screened only 12 met the criteria and attended, the participants consisted of a group of five males and six females with mean age range of 49 which attended the eight weeks along MBCT program for two hours per weeks. The group was lead by MBSR trained leader that also provided cognitive practices to increase reflective abilities to monitor mood and behavioral patterns. The group was instructed to engage in daily formal practice for minimum of 30 minutes that were guided by meditation CD. Inclusion Criteria consisted of being of the age of about eighteen to eighty; English speaking, medically stable, meet criteria of GAD. On the other hand, exclusion criteria consisted of existing suicidal/homicidal ideation and dissociative tendency. The results suggest that as a group there was a considerable decrease in anxiety and worry by the end of the treatment course. Limitation of this study is that it was a very small nonrandomized

trial study, so more studies of such can strengthen the claim for usefulness of this mindfulness intervention for GAD (Evans, Fernando, Findler, Stowell, Smart, & Haglin, 2008).

In another randomized trial study, MBCT efficacy to improve psychosocial functioning was tested in a school setting among 25 boys and girls aged nine to thirteen, who showed reduction in anxiety symptoms and enhanced cognitive and behavioral patterns. The findings of this study suggest noticeable change in emotional and social adaptability of participants can be expected when attending such intervention program (Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010).

Mean while, mindfulness based stress reduction created by Kabat Zinn in 1979 is a useful intervention that aims to reduce stress reactivity in general, and it has been found to be helpful intervention for addressing psychological concerns such as anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, and for reducing depressive rumination (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Toneatto & Nguyen, 2007). Mindfulness based stress reduction aims to increase tolerance of difficult emotions, and improve adaptive responsiveness to anxiety provoking stimuli (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1995; William, Crane, Barnhofer, Fennell, Duggan, Hepburn, & Goodwin, 2007).

A randomized trial of MBSR program for treating generalized anxiety disorder conducted among 53 individuals found that MBSR can help improve core symptoms of this disorder; however, comparing MBSR to cognitive behavioral group therapy showed both treatment are useful in ameliorating mood, but the latter is more effective as a group intervention (Koszycki, Bengler, Shlik, & Bradwejn, 2007). Another, a nonrandomized

study performed by Kabat-Zinn et al. (1992) compared with a similar study by Miller et al. (1995), they both report mindfulness based stress reduction program can alleviate conditions of panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.

Moreover, mindfulness practice has also been found successful in treatment of depression and reducing chances of relapse (Teasdale, 1999; Segal, William, & Teasdale 2002)).

Mindfulness meditation is found to increase cortical thickness, increase positive affects, and enhance overall immunity (Davidson et al., 2003; Siegel, 2007). A controlled longitudinal study examined changes in thickness of brain gray matter among participants of MBSR program compared with those of controlled group (Holzel, et al., 2011), the study's findings suggests observed changes in the gray matter thickness in areas of the brain involved with emotional regulations, learning, moral judgment, and memory (Holzel, et al., 2011). Besides, two distinct studies on mindfulness meditation, one on skilled meditators, Tibetan monks, and one on employees of a biotechnology company who participated in an 8 weeks MBSR training program, both report significant increase in left sided brain activation indicating increased neural connectivity in area of anterior cortical area associated with positivity and motivation (Davidson, 1992; Davidson, Ekman, Saron, Senulis, & Friesen, 1990; Goleman, 2003).

Furthermore, a cross sectional study of some 514 students reported direct association between cultivation of mindfulness attitude and increase in self regulation, positivity, and overall self satisfactions (Jimenes, Niles, & Park, 2010).



The first study of MBSR on adult survivors of childhood abuse reports mindfulness based stress reduction is a sensible, not a dangerous, and a successful intervention for ameliorating conditions for this population (Kimbrough, Magyari, Langenberg, Chesney, & Berman, 2010). The results suggest significant reduction on depressive symptoms as well as PTSD symptoms and most specifically avoidance tendencies. This open discussion pilot study was conducted on a small sample size of some twenty seven adult survivors who also attended individual psychotherapy simultaneously. Observed limitation of this study is its lack of randomized control group; however, the authors highlight that its' large effect size suggests that this intervention was useful when compared with placebo. Moreover, this study identified as the only study of its kind, it has a special significance; nonetheless, the researchers admit that future studies with larger sample size and a more carefully controlled methodological design, preferably with random control group can help strengthen their findings. The inclusion criteria in this study were identified as history of childhood sexual abuse, but the exclusion criteria consisted of diagnosis of borderline personality, dissociative disorder, schizophrenia, active use of illicit drugs, and inability to attend all sessions (Kimbrough et al., 2010).

A review of various mindfulness interventions compares these approaches for their applicability for treating war veteran's challenges with PTSD diagnosis (Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2011). The study highlights parallel and co-occurring symptoms may imply usefulness of these interventions for treating PTSD; however, due to pervasive nature of PTSD diagnosis and to prevent revictimization more specifically designed intervention with direct attention to war veteran's conditions can be

useful (Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2011). The authors of this study, Vujanovic and others point out the need for caution when implying prolonged mindfulness practices like silent meditation for trauma survivors; and they also suggest that adjustment to treatment modality may be required to ensure adequate measures are in place to manage and tolerate emotional difficulties that may surface, also that using short segments of guided meditation are recommended to reduce over stimulation and ensure safety (Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2011; Kornfield, 2003, Van der Kolk, 2005).

On the other hand, an attachment related study on two groups of individuals categorized by their attachment patterns consisted of a group with an insecure attachment pattern of about 66 participants and a group with secure attachment history consisting of 65 people (Cordon, et al., 2009). The researchers had intended to find differences and association between attachment and the effects of mindfulness based stress reduction on individuals with the identified attachment history. The study found that MBSR intervention is most useful to individuals with insecure attachment as compared with those with secure attachment (Cordon et al., 2009); the researchers point out the need for more studies among populations with greater specificity will strengthen these findings (Rosenthal, Rasmussen Hall, Palm, Batten, & Follete, 2005).

One review on mindfulness meditation for treatment of generalized anxiety disorder found treatment successful in reducing symptoms, this study suggests the ability to shift attention away from undesired activity, anticipation of future, to present moment interaction creates the mechanism that is helpful in reducing anxiety (Brokovec, 2002).

## **A Brief Evaluation of Commonly Used Treatments for Trauma**

Much of the interest given to resolving issues of trauma exposure in the past few decades has led to development of many interventions and approaches. This is a hopeful message for many trauma survivors, where promise of recovery has been scientifically studied. A meta-analysis recognizes exposure therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and EMDR as the most efficacious treatments for trauma (Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005; Davidson & Parker, 2001). These researchers delineate CBT and exposure therapy to be similar in ways that they both emphasize on developing anxiety reducing skills (Wisner, Jones, & Gwin, 2010), and replacing automatic cognitions and ruminating tendencies (Wilkinson-Tough, Bocci, Thome, & Healiy, 2010), and differ by the means that exposure therapy focuses on repeated contact with trauma related memories while CBT focuses on anxiety management strategies (Batten et al., 2005; Foa, Dancu, Hembree, et al., 1999; Glynn et al., 1999; Tarrier et al., 1999). EMDR, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing is a useful method for to reduce reactivity to trauma related stressors (Batten et al., 2005).

A combination of trauma exposure treatment and cognitive behavioral therapy is reported to be most helpful treatment for use for most trauma survivors (Frueh, Turner, Beidel, Mirabella, & Jones, 1996; Resick & Schnicke, 1992). Cognitive processing therapy by Resick and Schnicke (1992) was developed specifically for treating rape survivors diagnosed with PTSD. Cognitive processing therapy aims to restore normal brain functioning by redirecting brain's circuitry that is thought to ultimately help with reshaping emotions (Begley, 2007).

## **A Call for Precaution**

When working with trauma survivors the most essential element in healing childhood abuse is establishment and maintaining security and trust in the therapeutic relationship, and additionally, the consistency and predictability in the therapeutic process and interaction can tremendously help reduce anxiety and promote trust (Van der Kolk, 2005).

Furthermore in choosing any intervention, the program should fit the needs of the client, so careful screening of symptoms and understanding client's characterizations are essential to reduce risks for revictimization and safeguarding trust in therapeutic alliance (Batten, et al., 2005). For instance, CBT a recognized treatment in trauma therapy may not be a best approach when working with resistant individuals, while those with explosive affect may not be good candidate for exposure therapy (Batten, et al., 2005; Foa, Riggs, Massie, & Yarczower, 1995; Pitman et al., 1991).

On the average reports suggest a 67% recovery among individuals who engage in at least one form of treatment after trauma, but procedural concerns warn for caution before generalization and post-treatment follow up in needed to monitor for prolonged effects and usefulness of any intervention when working with vulnerable population such as adults with history of adverse childhood experiences (Bradley, Breene, Russ, Dutra, & Watson, 2005; Batten, 2005).

## **Synthesis of Literature Review**

This literature review attempts to make evident the significance of impacts of adverse childhood experiences and usefulness of mindfulness based interventions to ameliorate everyday living challenges of this population. Moreover, the presentation of attachment theory and its influences on brain development and affect regulation highlights the linkage between the relational trauma experienced in childhood and interpersonal problems experienced later in life. Additionally, the neurobiological studies also find understanding of attachment theory to be useful in treatment of trauma, while research in support of neuroplasticity confirms efficacy of mindfulness based interventions for integration and repairing past disruptions. Lastly, the growing challenges in economical circumstances is a clear evident for need for increased tolerability of everyday life stressors, demanding for more accessible programs that can be easily applied to promote individual's self reliance and reduce future risk for revictimization and perpetration.

Preventative programs that promote stress tolerance are found to be especially helpful in alleviating risk factors among vulnerable individuals such as those with history of childhood trauma can (Van der Kolk, 2005). Psychoeducation on significance of nurturing interaction and recognition of adequate boundaries can help prevent future risks for perpetration, while addressing unresolved childhood issues through insight can motivate individuals to actively engage in learning and implying adaptive strategies that help reduce probabilities for revictimization (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004).

Mindfulness practices can help with this endeavor (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Siegel, 1997, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2003). Continual engagement in various forms of mindfulness meditation practices help develop an internal awareness, increasing one's ability to adequately discern unwanted intrusion and identify undesired past experiences to reduce habitual maladaptive reactivity (Siegel, 2007). Daily mindfulness practices allow for creating new relationships with self; moreover, repeated new positive experiences can help increase individuals opportunities to become better skilled at handling and attending to unwelcomed difficult emotions in the here and now. Openness and acceptance of all state of being also help reduce intensity of challenging emotions; therefore, allow for sufficient space to practice mastering skills that promote emotional balance and reduce reactivity (Siegel, 2007). Daily mindfulness meditation practices recognized to be analogous to gradual exposure highlighting transient nature of emotional experiences (Kabat Zinn, 1997) Additionally, mindfulness based interventions can empower individual to trust and accept self, thus they help develop self compassion. Mindfulness meditation helps deepen one's internal capacity to repair past relational disruptions and integrate the fragments to reduce future risk for revictimization and perpetration (Batten, Orsillo, & Walser, 2005).

## **Chapter III**

### **Development of Project**

#### **Introduction**

The 8 weeks long Facilitator's Guide, *A Workshop on Mindfulness: "Reclaiming Self" for Adults with History of Adverse Childhood Experiences* can be found in Appendix A on page (55). Below are the guidelines for implying this intervention.

1. Practitioners are directed to follow the scripted manual both in its order and content.
2. Safety and regulation contracts must be signed and kept in client's file and made accessible to the therapist during each session.
3. The practitioner/therapist must be skilled in implying crisis intervention in case of emergency.
4. Qualifications of participants must be closely evaluated prior to attendance.
5. Participants with recent trauma should delay attendance to later time.
6. Regular monitoring of participants is needed on watchfulness for possible activation of post traumatic symptoms, and such individual should be referred to appropriate resources. In such events supervisors must be consulted with immediately.
7. Practitioner/therapist must follow the guideline and consult with supervisor as needed.

## **The Curriculum**

The curriculum created is comprised of psycho-educational and experiential segments planned as to promote participant's engagements and reduce chances of drop out. The psycho-educational aspect of the workshop serves to educate about the importance of acknowledgment of past life story while providing information and skills as how to neutralize negative past influences in the here and now. Conversely, the experiential aspect, built around proven mindfulness interventions shared in the literature review, presented in small divisions to extend the many opportunities for practice during each session and to promote mastery of mindfulness skills. Daily home assignments and repeated practices throughout the sessions highlight the importance of active participation and regular practice for application in daily living.

## **The Environment**

This workshop will be most beneficial to be used in clinical setting, such as in crisis prevention and trauma centers. It is highly recommended to be used in conjunction with or post-treatment with individual psychotherapy to maximize benefit, reduce re-traumatization, and ensure safety for all participants.

## **Control within the Environment**

The workshop will be gender specific and individuals with active posttraumatic symptoms are to delay attendance till later time and referred to adequate resources. The group size should be kept single even digits.

The sessions may be extended to 120 minutes to accommodate for extra time to address concerns and Q &A.



**Time for Entry**

All participants are to start on the first day of the workshop and attend all sessions in order to get the most benefit. Individuals who miss more than one session are recommended to drop out and attend later workshops from the start.

**Intended Audience**

This workshop is intended for adults, 18 years and older, specific for adults with history of adverse childhood experiences. It is highly recommended that participants have previously either completed series of individual therapy or be attending individual therapy simultaneously. The participants must not have recent trauma or be actively experiencing psychotic features.

**Methodology of Treatment**

A key component of the treatment methodology is to help the participants to use and apply mindfulness practice to reduce their suffering as they develop increased capacity to tolerate difficult emotions and learn strategies to better cope with daily life stressors. Secondly, participants are provided with much information intended to deepen self understanding in order to make sense of their experiences, and learn how to actively take charge in their relationships and life. To increase engagement and promote mastery of skills, participants are given handouts and instructions for daily home practices. While there are no lengthy discussions in the group, each session begins and ends with a short period for Q & A, and throughout participants are kept actively involved by engaging in each of three experiential practices. Respectful conduct and privacy is reinforced throughout the workshop. The sessions may be extended to 120 minutes to

accommodate for extra time to address concerns and Q &A, to be decided by the practitioner based on the availabilities and accommodations.

### **The Facilitator**

The treatment can be implemented by a marriage and family therapist, psychologist, social worker, school counselor, or any mental health professional. To successfully apply the manual, it is necessary to have prior understanding of the information and particularly be actively involved in mindfulness meditation practice of one's own to reduce challenges of countertransference. The workshop can sufficiently be lead by one leader.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Summary and Recommendation**

Inspired from working with trauma survivors, it was observed that with the rising economical pressures, adults with history of adverse childhood experiences appear to be at greater risks for endangering themselves and others with subsequent trauma, because of their inability to discern adequate emotional regulation when faced with unexpected stressors. Additionally, with rapid depletion of public resources, meeting everyday life demands are becoming ever more stressful than ever before, thus in such tense conditions at risk populations are particularly at greater risk for revictimization and possible perpetration. In here, we focus on adults with history of adverse childhood experiences that are especially vulnerable due their low stress tolerance. It is the conclusion of this researcher that this population can benefit from engaging in a workshop series that can provide basic information and practice on stress management skills that endorses self reliance and emotional resilience such as mindfulness meditation based intervention, to increase emotional flexibility and encourage active participation for utilizing adaptive strategies that can reduce suffering and sanction positive transformation.

It should be noted that this author supports the suggestion of Child (2007) and others, on the belief that clinicians teaching contemplative practice such as mindfulness should themselves acquire some form of training and be engaged in daily practice in order to better tune self with the process and ensure clinical presence when utilizing such interventions. And, with rapid popularity that mindfulness based interventions and meditation practices have gained, many centers can easily be found in many cities and in

variety of locations. Attending extended retreats are suggested as good place to start; however cultivating mindfulness stance usually takes longer practice, and often some form of extended training over a several weeks or months is required. This emphasis is based on the belief that mindfulness meditation practices lead to an emergence of underlying issues; therefore, deep understanding of the nature of one's mind and body, developing an inner insight, can provide the practitioner with a unique opportunity to remain aware of distinction between client's issues and those of self. This can also serve as helpful asset to therapist preventing risks for violating boundaries of therapeutic relationship, minimizing risks for counter-transferences, and promoting participant's safety.

### **Summary**

It has been established through research and literature review that adverse childhood experience can hurt a person throughout lifespan. Attachments studies reveal unrepaired early life relational trauma prevail through generations; therefore, highlighting the probable risks that threaten the wellbeing of future generations. In neuroscience, relevant brain functional studies suggest early disruptions in neural connections create disengagement of the mind from the body, and that without sufficient intervention even in adulthood, chaotic patterns can persist and lead to insufficient emotional tolerance. Excessive reactivity to life stressors can hinder individual's relationship with self and others, reducing self satisfaction in life. However, in recent decades the new discoveries in neurobiological studies, neuro-plasticity, has further solidified the beliefs on usefulness of contemplative approaches and supported the efficacy of mindfulness based interventions, as a successful treatment approach that can help ameliorate many concerns

about human sufferings by promoting neural regeneration, making future more hopeful for many survivors, and creating new possibilities for reclaiming self.

### **Future Research**

Additional studies are needed to draw more clear connections between impacts of adverse childhood experiences and mindfulness intervention's efficacy to resolve past trauma and reduce risk factors. Future studies with methodological design specific enough to directly address the needs of a population with adverse childhood experiences can help strengthen present claims and increase understanding about the mechanism of change in mindfulness based interventions.

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**Appendix A**  
**Session I: Mindfulness and Early Life Trauma**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Greetings,</li> <li>b. Getting to know one another</li> <li>c. Rules and regulation</li> <li>d. Confidentiality contract</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>1.2 Experiential I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An introduction to mindfulness practice, Mindfulness eating.</li> <li>b. Brief discussion</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>1.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Defining the problem w. focus on Strengths</li> <li>b. Recognizing present challenges</li> <li>c. Shining light, breaking away from vicious cycle of old patterns.</li> <li>d. Setting reasonable expectations.</li> </ul>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>1.4 Experiential II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness Breathing Meditation</li> </ul>	<b>10minutes</b>
<b>1.5 Psychoeducation II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Defining our goals: useful strategies we know and want to keep vs. unhealthy coping we need to replace</li> <li>b. Who should not be attending the workshop</li> <li>c. Who can benefit most from this workshop</li> <li>d. Acknowledging the</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>

	<b>need for commitment for adequate result.</b>	
<b>1.6 Experiential III:</b>	<b>Mindfulness body scan meditation</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>1.9 Discussions:</b>	<b>a. Wrap up &amp; summary</b> <b>b. Q &amp; A</b> <b>c. Safety contract</b> <b>d. Homework</b>	<b>10 inutes</b>

<p><b>1.1 Introduction:</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Duration: 20 minutes</b></p>
<p><b>-Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Greeting</li> <li>○ Getting to know one another</li> <li>○ Group's rule</li> <li>○ Confidentiality</li> </ul>
<p><b>~Supplies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Name tags, self adhesive labels</li> <li>○ Dry Erase board</li> <li>○ Some Colored Dry Erase Markers</li> <li>○ Dry Erase Cleaner</li> <li>○ A small bowl of raisons or chocolate pieces</li> <li>○ Handouts:</li> <li>○ Confidentiality and rules contract</li> <li>○ Safety Contract</li> <li>○ Instructions on mindfulness eating and breath awareness exercises</li> <li>○ Home Journal sample, and home work instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>~Logistics:</b></p> <p>Room set up: The room should be chosen with these considerations in mind: away from too much noise, preferably in the area of the facility with the least foot traffic and noise, chairs to be arranged with adequate space in between to allow participants to</p>

easily extend their arms without a contact with neighbors, the chairs set up will be semicircular mostly facing toward the group leader. The dry erase board may be positioned on the wall or on the stand adjacent to the leader facing the audience.

### **1.1a Greetings:**

Welcome people with a warm soft smile as they enter, invite them to sit, once everyone is seated, have the name tags go around, ask each person to write their name on it and position it over their heart, where everyone can visibly see it. Mentions this may be their real name, but preferably a name they like to be known by here, just so long as they stick with the same name throughout the length of the workshop. Next, have the bowl of raisin go around and ask everyone to help themselves to them. Once everyone has done this and put on their name tags, okay we are now ready to begin.

#### **Next: Introduce yourself by your first name, making sure you are making eye contact with each member.**

For instance: Hello everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I like to first welcome you to this workshop; which lasts for total of eight weeks, so we will be meeting here, in this very room, at the same time and day for the next 7 weeks. I feel honored to be having this opportunity to be here with you, and stand by your side along this journey. While this workshop is designed for you, but before we start on with our work I like to let you know a little bit about myself and my qualification and profession. Identify your qualification, Such as saying I am a MFT (marriage and family therapist) or therapist and I have been doing this work for #\_\_\_\_\_ years/months; you may add few short descriptions about what you do specifically.

### **1.1b. Getting to Know Each Other:**

Now, ask everyone to introduce themselves and give a loose piece of paper around for everyone to write down what they hope to accomplish by the end of these 8<sup>th</sup> weeks.

For instance, you may be here because you want to learn about mindfulness, heard it may help to ease anxieties, you learned about this workshop through friends and felt that it may be interesting but not sure how it will be useful to you, or you want to learn better coping techniques and decided to give this a try, you were told by therapist that you may benefit from this, etc.....; whatever reason brought you here, just write it down and put your name on it. We will keep these in your files and give them back to you in the end of your 8 weeks and you can decide if you accomplished them or maybe along the path you developed other goals and perspectives.

### **1.1c. Rules and behavioral contract**

- First and foremost issue is confidentiality, what we discuss in here will remain between us, any personal information shared in here we are all bound to respect the individual's trust on us and will not discuss anything with anyone else.
- All participants must sign a confidentiality contract in order to attend these workshops.
- Respectful conduct and interaction is a must for creating a safe and trusting environment for all.
- Attendance of every session is required and essential to get the full benefit of the workshop.
- Please be on time, it will be very difficult to reach our goals if we are to hold each session for late arrivals,
- You are required to stay the full duration of each session
- We understand life happens, and we do not penalize anyone for emergency events. You may notify us through the contact information you are given on the forms, but please do your best to plan ahead and to be here on time and every session.
- You are also required to complete your home assignments to the best of your abilities, they are essential for achieving adequate results; these are very simple practices that you will be given instructions about and will only take a few minutes of your day, but again they are instrumental for your learning.
- There will be no cross talks and advice giving, but time permitting you can share your experiences during the discussion period

## **1.2 EXPERIENTIAL**

**Duration 10 minutes**

### **1.2a. Introduction to mindfulness practice**

Appendix C: "Mindfulness Eating Practice" 10 minutes

Earlier today you were invited to help yourself to some raisins, if you ate them you probably noticed them to be tiny, so very sweet, and hopefully you enjoyed them. We now will try eating only one raisin or a prune mindfully.

### **1.2b. Discussion:**

Process individual's experience of this practice by asking how this experience was for them. Did they feel similar or different from earlier eating experience in the day,

how they felt during the experience, did they notice any distractions like thoughts, emotions, or bodily sensations.

### **1.3 Psychoeducation I:**

**Duration 15 minutes**

#### **1.3a. Defining the Problem with Focus on Strengths.**

If you are here today, it is most likely because it has come to your attention that the quality of your life at the present time is negatively influenced by residuals of your childhood experiences. The fact that you are aware and are willing to address and heal old wounds. I must start by saying that you should feel so very proud, I congratulate you for having taken an important step on path of healing, connecting with others with similar experiences and attending a support group such as this workshop.

For the next few 8 weeks, we will gather together, in here, to work as a group and learn more about ways to unlock our inner healing potentials, with the goal to neutralize the negative influence of our childhood experiences. We hope this workshop aids in developing deeper insights about common roots of childhood unresolved issues, and how to utilize mindfulness practices to unmask hidden potentials of your mind and body to reduce your overall stress, enhance your emotional resilience, and increase your overall life satisfactions.

Emotional, physical, psychological challenging experienced in childhood can leave us with deep scars and hurts, and in absence of adequate parental care and nurturing support; these early wounds can continue to negatively impact us throughout our life.

Early in our life, particularly in early childhood, we are most vulnerable to the influences of our environment, any developmental disruptions can have negative effects; however, most people move passed these adverse experiencing by developing coping strategies, so they can go on with the business of living. However, unattended and unrepaired childhood wounds and trauma do not heal themselves; besides our early upbringing and parental interactions greatly shape our perceptions about ourselves and way in which with relate with others.

Unfortunately, many adults go through life never recognizing or finding the courage to face past issues. Recognizing that our past will always remain as part of our life history does not mean that it will have to continue affecting our lives negatively. Learning in what ways our past is influencing us, and how we can deal with them more productively, can help heal old wounds.

There is no denying that dealing with past can be difficult, but living a life time with

denial and avoidance is more exhausting. Living with denial and avoidance day after day takes huge amount of life energy; however, once we work passed initial fear and anxiety of facing old challenges, we can with proper support re-channel that life force and energy in direction of healing and finding emotional freedom from our past. With proper mindset, we can develop strategies to neutralize negative experiences and learn to transform old negative patterns with new positive experiences in present time, thus enhancing the quality of our lives.

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### **1.3b) Recognizing Present Challenges:**

While everyone is unique, common challenges are often shared among adults with childhood trauma, but with varying degree of intensity and effects. In summary, to name a few of these common difficulties may be: an overall sense of life dissatisfaction, relational problems, intimacy problems, an overall sense of low self-esteem, difficulties with emotional regulation; easily over whelmed, frustrated, angered, excessive shyness, easily intimidated, difficulties with attention and sleep patterns as a result many experience frustration for not being able to perform well at work or school. Some complain of feeling challenged for trusting others, unable to set or define boundaries, or assert themselves in their communication with others, so they may settle for avoiding potentially difficult situations and interactions.

In these conditions, it is not a surprise that making or keeping meaningful relationships are most often a big challenge. Inability to communicate our needs, fears, likes, and dislikes, we are not likely to connect or feel connected with others in our relationships.

How these circumstances were created and what we can do about them at the present time requires self-understanding and proper communication strategies, some which you will learn by the end of these workshops.

Understanding our current ways of reacting and responding in the here and now, present moment, even after so many years of disconnection with self and others, we can learn to repair our inner sense of detachment.

Unhappiness with self, blaming self and others for our inabilities to deal with life challenges, can burden us with excessive anxiety, increasing internal sense of emptiness pushing us down and toward negative psychological patterns, such as post traumatic experiences, depression, so on, and at its worst making us believe that there is something inherently wrong with us; so many may settle to accept going through life always feeling detached, broken, unfitting, and undeserving for living a happy life.

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### **1.3c) Shining the Light of a Awareness to Break the Vicious Cycle.**

What happened is that they have fallen trapped, in a vicious cycle of self-sabotage

because of their internal negative self-talk; internal dialogue of guilt and shame keeps them imprisoned in negative patterns in reaction to intrusions of their unmet childhood demands.

However, without understanding these disruptive patterns, there is no breaking away from these vicious cycles. However, awareness and facing underlying childhood issues can liberate us from unnecessary guilt and shame, healing our old wounds, breaking away from unhealthy patterns and develop new sense of self and understanding to reclaim our life.

Emotional liberation from past challenging experiences begins with acknowledgment, but it also requires determination and commitment to transform old habits to new ways of relating with self and others.

Each mindfulness practice shared here, each practice is a new opportunity, a step toward deepening our awareness and an aid in unmasking inner healing potentials toward greater emotional tolerance and resilience.

### **1.3d. Setting Reasonable Expectations, Clarifying Our Intentions:**

It is important to understand that each person responds differently to a similar situation, so no two individual's journey is identical. While we use similar strategies and practices in here; however, the outcome can be as unique as the person can be. Therefore, we ask you to be mindful of your expectations and do not judge your experience based on other's perspectives, while evaluating your progress is useful the end result may be far different than what we anticipate in the beginning and throughout. This is also why we ask you to keep sharing to minimal and only generalized issues and refer you to continue investigating and exploring your personal journey in your journals and if needed in your personal therapy.

Healing from trauma is possible even years after the fact, we now have the science to support this idea, and there are many ways to attain this goal. As we mentioned earlier, the very first step is acknowledging the problem exist, and then comes the task of choosing a course of action, planning an approach toward reaching desired reasonable goals.

What can you do?

Working with experts and professional help is always the best first approach and most useful strategy. But the biggest dilemma for many even after years of successful therapy is that life is unpredictable therefore, it requires long term strategies and attention to undo years of maladaptive coping strategies. Long term therapy, however, is not often an available option for most people; therefore, taking charge and staying motivated to connect with various resources can help us transfer and maintain learned skills to everyday living situations.

Why group work?



In here, we hope this group experience will provide you with additional opportunities to explore your journey in a different setting. Knowing that you are not alone, working alongside with others on similar journey, we empower one another by just coming here week after week, staying positive, hopeful, and motivated to make most out of all that is being offered here.

By the end of these workshop series, experiencing various mindfulness practices, you can better strategize a personalized style of practice that best fit your needs and life concerns.

#### **1.4 Experiential:**

**Duration: 5 minutes**

##### **1.4a. Mindfulness Breathing Meditation**

**Appendix C: Mindfulness Breathing Meditation, 5 minutes**

#### **1.5 Psycho-education II:**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

##### **1.5a) Ways We Cope with Challenging Experiences.**

There are many ways of coping with past or current life difficulties and emotional challenges, a few of which you have been doing throughout your life. These are strategies that you may have developed on your own or learned from others to help you better tolerate and adapt to your life circumstances.

##### **Useful coping strategies we have and want to keep:**

Some useful coping strategies, you may do when experiencing difficult emotions or face with challenging experiences, maybe such as talking with trusted friends, journaling your thoughts or emotions, physical exercises, having some sort of supportive group, and certainly personal therapy, and etc. These are positive ways of dealing with negative experiences, recognize these as your strengths that you already have we encourage you to continue with them, if you find them helpful.

##### **Unhealthy coping strategies to replace:**

On the other hand, if your cope with your life challenges by isolating yourself from others, or if you tend to avoid doing certain things and going to certain places, tend to react by taking your frustration on others, are too easily frustrated and have anger outbursts, experience repeated negative thoughts, have difficulties with falling sleep and staying sleep, too often find yourself coping with using alcohol or self medicating; then these are unhealthy coping ways that are most likely negatively affecting your life, learning more adaptive and useful skills you can increase your life satisfactions.

**1.5b) Who should not be attending this workshop**

If you are presently experiencing flash back and are in active state of depression, if you are presently using alcohol or drugs on daily bases, we require that you will wait till later time, when you have you have properly addressed these concerns before attending this workshop. It is highly recommended that you must have reached sobriety for at least six months, must continue to attend adequate support group such as NA or AA groups simultaneously or at least be successfully sober for minimum of a year before attending this workshop. And you should not be attending this group if you are actively suicidal or have made an attempt in the last six months. This is because the nature of this workshop does not allow sufficient time and attention required for attending to individual needs.

**1.5c) Who Can Most Benefit from This Workshop**

It is recommended that you must have completed series of at least 3 months of continual personal therapy or are currently working with an individual therapist. If you have completed series of therapy and made some progress, but still feeling challenged, know that this is normal, recognize that everyone’s level of success varies, and in most cases the ability to carry the work of therapy into everyday living often requires additional support system. Therefore, attending workshops such as this, you can learn additional strategies or sharpen your present skills to better cope with your present challenges.

**1.5d) Acknowledging the Need for Commitment to Stay the Course of Workshop to Reach Sufficient Result:**

Understanding the difficulty of the nature of journey is another step on the direction of healing; the closer we are with reality and nature of tasks we take on, the better prepared we can be to plan and strategies our approach to reach our desired goals. With this said we require your full commitment to attend all weeks of workshop and to carry one the practices in order to reach best outcome by the end and to develop proper foundations to carry the work here and after into your own lives. We these said we invite you to another mindfulness practice that is considered to be the foundation of all mindfulness practices.

**1.6 Experiential III**

**Duration 15 minutes**

**1.8a. Mindfulness Body Scan Meditation**

**Appendix C: Mindfulness Body Scan Meditation, 15 minutes**

<b>1.7 Discussion</b>	<b>Duration 10 minutes</b>
<p><b>1.7a. Summary</b></p> <p>With adequate knowledge and proper tools, such as mindfulness meditation and yoga practices, you can deepen your understanding of your conscious and subconscious states. You will learn to utilize the power of focused attention to neutralize the effect of difficult emotions and challenging experiences. Repeating practices, you can develop a new perspective, a deeper understanding about yourself and the world at large. Learning to observe your internal experiences from a gentle kind stance with mindfulness practices, you learn to embrace both your strengths and vulnerabilities, consequently, you can create a sense of peacefulness that is promotes emotional and psychological growth as well as better physical health.</p>	
<p><b>1.7b. Q &amp; A</b> Address questions and concerns</p>	
<p><b>1.7c. Safety Contract</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Please complete the safety contract form at home and bring it to the next session. The information will be held in your personal file and will only be used in an event of an emergency.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.7d. Home Assignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Daily 10 minutes mindfulness breathing meditation</li> <li>○ Choose an informal mindfulness practice for a few minutes each day and try to stick with it throughout the week, such as when brushing your teeth, drinking your coffee, eating lunch, etc.</li> <li>○ Journal your personal experiences that feels significant to you.</li> </ul>	

## Session II: Brain's Potential

Category	Activity	Duration
<b>2.1 Checking in:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Settling in</li> <li>b) A brief Q &amp; A about earlier session</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>2.2 Experiential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Toning in with purposeful attention to mindfulness breath meditation</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>2.3 Psycho-education I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What can research and science tell us about healing trauma</li> <li>b. How does mindfulness fit in</li> <li>c. Developing resilience begins with self reliance</li> <li>d. Mindfulness philosophy and foundation</li> <li>e. Various mindfulness practices</li> <li>f. Science view on Mindfulness potentials for healing</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>2.4 Experiential II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Mindfulness yoga practice</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>2.5 Psychoeducation II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Mindful being or automatic doing</li> <li>f. Intentional focus on mind modes of functioning</li> <li>g. Past associations and present functioning</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>2.5 Experiential:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness Body Scan</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>2.6 Discussions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 Wrap up &amp; summary</li> <li>12 Q &amp; A</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>

	<b>13 Homework</b>	
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<b>2.1 Check in:</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<p><b>2.1a) Settling in</b>  <b>2.1b) Q &amp; A</b></p> <p>Allow for open discussion or short questions about the earlier week’s session.</p>	

<b>2.2 Experiential</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<p><b>2.2a. Toning in With Mindfulness Breath Awareness Meditation</b></p> <p><b>Appendix C: Mindfulness Breath Awareness Meditation</b></p>	

<b>2.3 Psychoeducation I</b>	<b>Duration 20 minutes</b>
<p><b>2.3 a) What Can Research and Science Offer Us with Respect to Healing Trauma.</b></p> <p>Recognizing scientific findings that support our approach and strategies can be motivating and empowering, making our efforts worthwhile. Fortunately, in recent decade’s new scientific works and research support that healing from past trauma is possible.</p> <p>For instance, advances made in technology such as FMRI, functional magnetic resonance imaging allow for visualization of brain’s structure as it functions. With these advances, the science can now visually measure effectiveness of intervention in improving posttraumatic symptoms.</p> <p>Also, new understandings in the field of developmental psychology on attachment that is studying the nature of parent child relationship suggests that early parental relationship plays a great role in on development of resilience and ability for emotional regulation. And it appears that supportive parenting leads to emotional balance, and the absence of supportive parenting can result in emotional instability; however, in adulthood with adequate self understanding we can re-parent ourselves to reach security and develop sense of resilience and achieve greater emotional stability.</p>	
<p><b>2.3b) How Does Mindfulness Fit In?</b></p>	

The good news is that western science has finally come to accept traditional healing methods many of which have had been around for thousands of years and used to reduce human suffering. We now have science supporting these ancient techniques to have healing effects for transforming traumatized brain. These studies suggest that human brain possesses incredible ability that can repair itself. These are inherent human potentials that is activated with regular practices of traditional healing practices such as mindfulness meditation.

### **2.3c) Developing Resilience Begins With Self Reliance.**

Mindfulness is built on the foundation of relying on self for approaching life in present moment, experiencing each moment in time from a nonjudgmental, accepting, and open stance. Mindfulness calls our attention to embrace our whole being and investigate our interaction by relying on our understanding of internal messages communicated between the mind and body in the here and now. Practicing mindfulness we become more aware of our internal world; therefore, we gain greater insight about how we react to external stressors. Being able to observe our reactions we can begin to rely on our awareness to approach life challenges, increasing our tolerance of difficult situations that leads to development of resilience.

### **2.3d). Mindfulness Philosophy and Foundation.**

Mindfulness is giving intentional attention to one's internal experiences in present moment. It means being awake, aware, and recognize the manners in which our mind and body interact with the outside world in any given moment. Mindfulness is acknowledging our thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations as they fill the field of our attention, without any judgment, observing them with patience, trusting, accepting and then letting go of all expectations. Using the power of focused attention, we learn to center ourselves over and over again, gently directing the mind each time it wanders off with a distraction, be it: a thought, a feeling, or a sensation, we continue to repeatedly with a gentle and kind attention redirecting it back to the intention of our practice, which is commonly the breath.

### **2.3e) Various Forms of Mindfulness Practices:**

Mindfulness practices consist of variety of forms of meditation which maybe done in stillness in sitting or lying down or it may be done walking, at times we meditate with mantra or just sit in silence, various yoga poses done mindfully to increase flexibility and tolerability for developing longer practice in stillness. Also, many informal practices like eating meditation that we had this morning can be performed with any everyday living tasks.

### **2.3f. Applications of Mindfulness, Potentials on Healing:**

These are practices that can help deepen our self-understanding through observing moment to moment interaction to develop understanding and acceptance of our vulnerabilities. While the healing potentials of these practices only recently recognized by western science, they have quickly gained great popularity; for instance, Mindfulness practices are now used in treating various psychological and physical illnesses such as pain management for chronically ill, cancer, and after surgical procedures, mindfulness stress reduction and mindfulness based cognitive therapy are used for relapse and preventions in recovery. Mindfulness practices are found useful in addressing issues such as depression, ADHD, anxiety disorders, panic attacks, and many others psychological disorders.

Comparison studies on Buddhist monks, long term meditators, and regular people, novice meditators of mindfulness meditation, suggest that regularly practiced mindfulness can enhance immune system. Studies on these meditators' brain suggested that long term meditators have larger over all brain, showing more activities in regions that are responsible for intellectual reasoning, and showing lower sensitivity emotionally difficult stimuli. Both long term and novice meditators were found to have improved psychological and physical health, an overall general sense of well being was reported among individuals who completed eight weeks mindfulness training.

To deepen our understanding of our mindfulness and let you move around a bit, we will at this time have a short standing yoga exercise.

### **2.4 Experiential**

**Duration: 5 minutes**

**2.4a) Mindfulness Standing Yoga Practice**  
**See the handout on 5 Minutes Mindfulness Standing Yoga Practice**

### **2.5 Psychoeducation**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

#### **2.5a) Mindful Being vs. Mindless Doing**

We are being mindful when we recognize what is going through our mind and body, and we are mindless when we are doing one thing without knowing where are mind is, so there is a disconnection between our mind and body.

Imagine you are hiking with your friends on a trail on a Sunday morning, enjoying yourself being in company of your friend, walking, listening to the birds, listening to a pleasant conversation you are having with your friends; then suddenly you spot a rattle

snake further up on the trail. You immediately stop, in that split of moment all the pleasantries of the early moment become still the sounds of the birds, your friends voice, the scenery all disappear, your mind becomes hyper focused on evaluating the danger for chances of your survival; you may feel your heart racing, your leg muscles tighten, you are ready to flee from the danger zone. The perception of possible threat disconnected you from all other events occurring in that moment in time. You then realize that it is a dried tree branch and once you acknowledge danger is gone, you can once again hear, see, sense, communicate, and connect with the environment.

Yes, perceived threat to our survival can create a disconnection in parts of our brain and body to promote survival, shifting our attention toward possible danger.

Human brain is like a command center for our body. The brain organizes, interprets, and directs information taken from the environment and creates responses to them such as in perceptions, feelings, or in forms of sensations. The interpretations made in various brain regions are communicated with the rest of our brain regions and body through chemical exchanges, known as neurotransmitters. The intensity and duration of presence of these chemical messengers in our brain and body can determine when, how, and what bodily functions are encouraged or disrupted. Disruptions on these processes can mess up brain and body normal work.

This means when a perceived real or imagined threat both can create disconnections in our thoughts, emotions, and senses, causing sudden shifts in attention. However, when we are aware of these attentional shifts we understand the message is to let go of something that is trivial for the sake our safety and survival. But if these shifts are done at unconscious level, we are not aware, unable to recognize the underlying need for sense of threat; we may experience confusion resulting in frustration with our internal experiences causing distractions and interruption on our experiences of the moment.

Mindfulness meditation practices promote awareness of sudden attentional shifts from present to past experiences. Next week we will learn how practicing attending to one's experiences in here and now can stimulate brain to repair its past disconnections.

### **2.5b) Understanding Mindfulness, Conscious Being, Vs. Mindless Doing.**

To best understand the difference between mindfulness and mindlessness, let's use an example

1<sup>st</sup> instance, if you drove yourself here today, then you at some point in time made the effort and got the direction as how to get here. And along your path to come here, you needed to pay attention to what streets or directions to follow along. Now If you have never been here before and did not have any familiarity with the surrounding areas, then driving here was rather a unique experience, meaning it required you to possibly pay attention street names, turns to make such to find the one you were looking for.



In this process, you may at times have gotten distracted with other thoughts, memories, body sensations like hunger or thirst, but along the way you continually and effort fully pay attention to the details of your direction, so you will be certain to arrive at our desired location in a timely manner, in this process you needed to remain mindful in your interaction attending to details to reach your goal.

You see that just finding a location required effortful attention to details, then how it is we often expect to live life effortlessly and still arrive at our desired destination, may it be finding happiness and fulfillment in our lives. Just a thought to ponder on in your free time at home.

On the other hand, if you drive along a same path day after day let's say to go to work or school, you may after a couple of times, not even pay attention to where you are going you just get there, the map of your destination is stored in your memory and your mind activates it without requiring your conscious or effortful attention; day after day you come and go on automatic pilot mode. You still make all the right turns and stops; but you are not consciously attending to the details.

This is merely because you have a prior association with the experience; therefore, the more common/routine an event or interaction is the less consciously we attend to its present moment interactions for as long as the outcome is the same and we do not take notice of it, and in this example is arriving to school or work.

In both of these instances of driving, mindfully and mindlessly, the information coming from the outside was processed so that we arrived at our destination. The first experience required effortful attempts, you needed to stay attentive to take notice of route; however the second example, because of prior associations in the past, it required no conscious attention or efforts so your mind shifted to mindless doing mode. This is an overly simplified example to show you how our mind shifts in and out of mindfulness, now if you consider life a journey that you drive through, would you want to live life being mindless reaching the end of life without knowing how you got there. Or would you rather live life knowing how it occurred as it actually occurs. These

The similar principle can be applied to everyday living conditions, the intention we hold in our mind can become the driving force in life or it can conversely keep us from fully experiencing life.

### **2.5c) Identifying mind's Mode of Functioning:**

To simplify these to serve our purpose, in here, we will categorize human mind to function into two modes: one is conscious or effortful mode of functioning, we call this mindful being; the second is subconscious or effortless mode of functioning, we call it automatic or mindless doing. As we described both of these modes of functioning can have their usefulness; however, things get challenging when the mind shifts from conscious being to automatic doing when in fact it needs to stay in a mindful mode.

We all have at least one experience when someone is telling you something but in the end you have not heard a word of what it was said.

Going back to the our original example, if on your way to get here when you needed to be aware of the route, your mind shifted to automatic or mindless doing, you may have lost track of where you needed to go and ended up lost. For instance, if you were anxious about coming here today, but did not acknowledge how you feel, and your mind becomes preoccupied with anxious thoughts and feelings, then the mind can shift in an out of the conscious mode without your awareness. What happened is that your zone of attention was high jacked with the anxiety and anticipation as they were dictated by your internal negative messages.

### **2.5d) Past association and Present Functioning**

The more routine or common an experience is the more likely that the mind may shift to automatic or effortless doing mode. Not having the skills to focus the mind's attention to present moment, then the old patterns of similar experience can override the present moment interactions. Thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and sensations of present moments can easily become distorted with ways of past and emotionally charged experiences often prevails. The new experience will be drawn to memory as it was dictated according to old interpretations from similar interactions.

**Example:** To better help you understand this, imagine you are eating a new food, an ethnic food that you had never eaten before, the chances are that you will approach this based on your earlier experiences of trying new food; if you have had earlier positive experience then you are likely to try new thing again; and if it had been a negative experience, then you are likely to feel uncomfortable and anxious even about it; and if your earlier experience have been traumatizing, then the chances are you anticipate this event to be identical to the earlier one can possibly do what you can to avoid any attempt to repeat similar experience. You are referencing to your earlier experience for evaluating the probability of the nature of this new experience.

Then awareness of distinction between the present moment experiences and of past experience can set a foundation to break away from maladaptive cycles of these unwanted intrusions. In our mindfulness meditation we practice through focused attention in the here and now, learning to be in tuned with our mind and body, we can better distinguish and interrupt undesired intrusions of our past in present time.

## **2.6 Experiential Practice**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

### **2.6a) Mindfulness Body Scan:**

**Appendix C: Mindfulness Body Scan, 20 minutes**

**2.6b) Grounding practice: Progressive relaxation**  
**Appendix C: Progressive Relaxation**

**2.7 Discussion and summary**

**Duration: 10 minutes**

**2.7a) Wrap up & summary:**

**2.7b) Q & A**

**2.5b) Homework**

- This week your practice should consist of daily 10 minutes mindfulness yoga or breathing meditation, remember to always conclude your practice with grounding technique.
- Continue with your daily informal mindfulness practice of your choice
- Continue with journaling your daily experiences

### Session III: Looking From the Inside Out

Categories	Activity/objectives	Duration
<b>3.1 Checking in:</b>	a) Q & A concerns of earlier sessions	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>3.2 Experiential I:</b>	a) Toning in w. Breath awareness	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>3.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Understanding brain's function and structure</li> <li>b) Integration is flow of energy through body and mind</li> <li>c) Healthy mind, healthy body = integration</li> <li>d) Disconnection in undeveloped brain of a child</li> <li>e) Awareness + Repair = integration</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>3.4 Experiential II</b>	a) Mindfulness body scan meditation	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>3.4 Psychoeducation II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Our brain is plastic!?</li> <li>b) The role of relationship and empathy in healing.</li> <li>c) Self awareness is foundation for empathic connection</li> <li>d) Mindfulness in creating internal attunement</li> <li>e) Recognizing mindfulness attitude in practice and life</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>3.6 Experiential III</b>	a) Mindfulness yoga	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>3.7 Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Summary &amp; wrap up               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making sense of our story</li> <li>2. Repair is possible</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>15 minutes</b>

	<p><b>b) Homework:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Daily mindfulness yoga</b></li> <li><b>2. Continue with Journaling</b></li> <li><b>3. Continue with informal mindfulness practice of your choice with an every living task.</b></li> </ol> <p><b>c) Q &amp; A</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Inquire about concerns &amp; possible challenges</b></li> <li><b>2. Reinforce self care measures as needed</b></li> </ol>	
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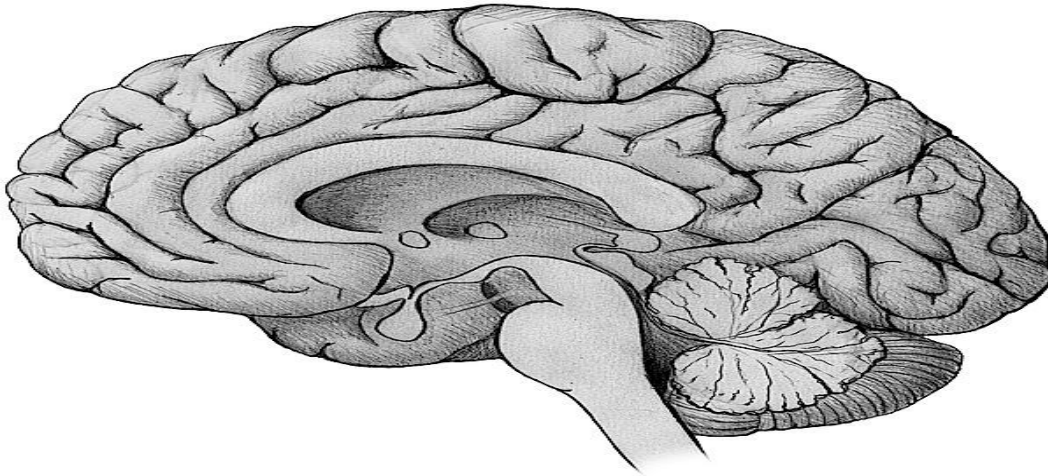
<p><b>3.1 Checking in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Duration: 10 minutes</b></p>
<p><b>3.1a) Settling in</b> <b>3.1b) Q &amp; A</b></p>

<p><b>3.2 Experiential I:</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Duration: 5 minutes</b></p>
<p><b>3.2a) Toning in With Mindfulness Breath Awareness:</b></p> <p>Refer to handout on mindfulness breath awareness</p>

<p><b>3.3 Psychoeducation I:</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Duration: 20 minutes</b></p>
<p><b>3.3a) Understanding Our brain's Function and Structure</b></p>

Last week we introduced the idea that human brain has the potential to heal itself by using the power of focused attention in present moment experiences our mind can activate our brain to reach its potential. Today we will continue with learning more about our internal world, our brain and how it functions, as well as the role of integration and relationship in healing old wounds.

Brain is made up of millions of nerve cells can be separated to two identical halves. Looking at the half brain image we identify important brain parts to better understand their purpose.



- a. Cortex, the outer layer, known as mammalian brain, divided to various regions, recognized as thinking brain.
- b. Frontal cortex upper most front of cortex (responsible for conceptualization, allows for self understanding of one's inner world, important in moral judgment and understanding time)
- c. Posterior cortex, most posterior or back of cortex (responsible for perceptual understanding of outer world with respect to spatial orientation, physical interactions through the five senses)
- d. Limbic region consisting of various distinct parts (responsible for emotional response, and important in connecting with others).
- e. Amygdala part of limbic system (responsible for fear response or fight and flight response).
- f. Hippocampus part of limbic region (responsible for converting moment to moment experience to memory).
- g. Cerebellum
- h. Corpus Callosum connects to halves of the brain (responsible for transfer of information between right and left hemisphere).
- i. Brainstem, known as reptilian brain (controls basic drives: arousal, hunger, and wakefulness)

### **3.3b) Integration is Flow of Energy in Brain**

The brain a very complicated system is made up of millions of neurons, specialized cells capable of rapid exchange of information that regulate functions and communication with our internal world (the body and other parts of the brain) and the world outside (everything around us). The uninterrupted exchange of information with the inside and outside world is the flow of life energy that determines our physical and psychological health. That demand proper of connectivity among neurons, this interconnectivity is called integration.

### **3.3c) Integration = Healthy Mind and Body**

Any disconnections on the energy flow in our system result in disruptions on our physical and mental health. When we get sick, a stress factor, maybe a virus or bacteria creates disruptions in neural pathway needed for our normal functioning. As result, disintegration causes us not feel well or like our healthy self, it slows the body and brain to focus on fighting off the disease.

In response to stress, virus in the case of flu or more emotionally charged experience, disconnections caused by the illness or incident activate our immune system and the surge of life energy will be minimized to essential needs. Once the stress, illness, passes by, the brain and body resume their normal functioning; all integrated, body begins repair work in areas of possible damage done by illness.

We can understand that this is a normal process when dealing with illness or other life stressors. We can make sense of the story of the illness, getting sick with the flu or pneumonia, etc...and how the body slowly works to heal itself after the course of the illness is over.

So, we can say that these disconnections are useful, intended to promote survival or overall wellbeing; and reconnection or repair is made once the danger is eliminated and the story is gone saved in our memory storage in the brain.

### **3.3d) Disconnections in Undeveloped Brain:**

Similar instances of an illness however, if occurring in childhood can have greater negative consequences affecting developing mind and growing body. For one thing, a child depends on the care of adults around like parents to make sense of what is going on when things go wrong and how to deal with the circumstances. Without a supportive care, uncertainties of difficult experiences such as in illness, a child can internalize negative perceptions that the world is not a safe place and others can't be trusted for support in times of need.

Reoccurring uncertainties in early life experiences can leave us with excessive anxiety and worries because of past experiences. This can explain why even years after why an adult maybe struggling with unresolved childhood issues, not knowing why with these

kind of outlook, even positive life experiences may not be experienced to fully.

### **3.3e) Awareness + Repair = Integration**

We live in a complex world and our everyday living circumstances demands many interactions with various environments and people in manners that are not always clear or certain. Going through life day after day worried in anticipation and fearful of uncertainties in life can quickly deplete our life energy.

How do we integrate and resolve earlier experiences to transform unhappiness to fulfillments? First is awareness then comes repair.

Revisiting and repairing past experiences is often done in work of individual therapy; but repairing all incidences may be too time consuming and every difficult and taunting experience at times. By Learning to become more aware of our present moment experiences, we become more skilled in identifying and adaptively deal with incidences when over active, unresolved, past experience is triggered by a present moment experience. Sharpening our mindfulness skills, in here and now, we use present moment experiences to repair past disconnections and reach integration for better health and greater happiness.

Mindfulness practices like mindfulness body scan, you were introduced to last week, is one useful way for integrating our mind and body. Bringing awareness to what our body feels like in the moment is a wonderful way to work with anxieties and stresses of thoughts, memories, and sensations of past experiences as they evade the present moment. To reinforce this learning, we now will have a short practice together; be watchful of distraction, recognize them for what they are, as a thought, a memory, or a body sensation knowing that they come and go, instead of getting swept out by them, just notice them and then bring your attention back to the your body in each movement.

### **3.4 Experiential II:**

**Duration: 10 minutes**

#### **3.4a) Mindfulness Body Scan Meditation**

**See handout in Appendix C: Mindfulness Body Scan, 10 minutes**

### **3.5 Psychoeducation**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

#### **3.5 b) Our Brain is Plastic!?**

We said that the science now believes that brain can change and heal itself; this phenomenon is known as plasticity. The brain with its over one hundred billion neural connections and with each neuron capable of making over ten thousand connections with



other neurons is a very complicated system with fascinating potentials.

Human brain was thought to only develop and change during early years of life reaching its full potential by age eighteen; however, the new studies in brain reveal that it has the potential to change itself throughout life span.

Last week we shared that brain imaging technology and research support that our brain is capable of repairing its old disconnections, these studies showed that repair is possible, training the mind to utilize intentional attentions to present experiences, such as those we are learning in mindfulness meditation and yoga practices, promote neuro-plasticity.

### **3.5c) The Role of Relationship and Empathy in Healing.**

Interpersonal neurobiology is a new field of science that studies the effects of human relationships in altering our psychological and physical health. Positively healthy relationships consist of interactions that are empathic and predictable for individuals involved. So, empathic communication sets the foundation for positive relationship with others and promotes health and healing. When others empathize with us or reverse, we feel a sense of positive connection and closeness internally. Science of interpersonal neurobiology suggests that empathy can create new neural connections in brain of individuals in relationships. An empathic connection with others means that we are in tune with one another, feeling understood, seen, heard, and recognized by another without being judged or scrutinized. Empathy is what makes us feel better or relieved after talking with a trusted friend, with therapists, or maybe a doctor.

### **3.5d) Self Awareness Basic Foundation for Empathic Connection:**

In order to connect with others, we must first understand our internal world, know our needs and be able to communicate our likes and dislikes. For connecting and entering another person's world or share ours with them, we got to make empathic connection with ourselves first.

Difficult early life experiences, especially those with our parents can result in distorted self understanding, making us feel unlovable and disconnected within negatively shaping our personality, temperament, perceptions, and behaviors.

The good news is awareness and self understanding of our thought, perception, and behavioral patterns; we can reshape them in more positive manners. Learning how we perceive the world, we can begin to empathize with ourselves, understanding how the old patterns were created by our mind to protect us from the uncertainties of old times, recognizing and distinguishing past from present, we can change the way we relate to self.

Creating new ways of relating with old ways, empathizing with own self; we begin befriending the hurt child within us, nurturing it with compassion, making it feel safe, trusted, seen, and heard. Internally tuned in, we can restructure old distortions, transforming parts of us that were not integrated and repairing childhood neural disconnections.

Such trusting relationship can be created in a therapeutic work, but we can also learn to create similar atmosphere internally forming a healthy relationship within that supports open, honest, and assertive communication with activities of our mind and body.

### **3.5e) Mindfulness in Creating Internal Attunement:**

The safety and trust is the foundation of empathic relationship that can promote happiness and heal old wounds. These are part of foundational characteristics in mindfulness practices. You can see how the theories in healing play part in practice, mindfulness meditation and yoga practices are ways in which we establish internal self reliance to reach equanimity within and connect with others in more assertive manners. We will discuss role and characteristics of assertive communication in later weeks.

Before extending our trust toward others, developing proper insight is crucial for trusting self, connecting our mind and body to optimize the brain's potentials to repair its own disconnections.

Various mindfulness meditations like breath awareness, body scan, sitting with difficult emotions, loving kindness meditation, walking, and yoga practices, all of which you will know about by the end of this workshop, these are various opportunities, leading us toward full internal integration for a more happier and healthier self.

### **3.5f) Recognizing Mindfulness Attitude in Practice and Life:**

Mindfulness practices are built on specific foundations to experience here and now, we shall approach each practice with an openness in mind that is non striving and non-judging, observing distraction with patience and then letting go, suspending all assumptions and accept each experience as a novice learner, welcoming each moment for what it offers us with all its difficult or happy emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations, suspending all old habitual patterns.

The difficulty is accepting and trusting the process as whole, embracing it, recognizing distractions as the normal chatters of the minds state, developing an internal empathic relationship with ourselves, in time, we find the necessary emotional stability for more assertive and empathic connection with others.

We will end this segment of our work with another mindfulness practice: mindfulness yoga in which we integrate by engaging our mind with body posture and movement embracing the experience as whole with all thoughts, emotions and sensations anchoring the mind by focusing on the movement in this here and now practice.

**3.6 Experiential III**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**3.6a) Mindfulness Yoga Practice**

See the handout on instructions and demonstration of this segment.

**3.7) Discussion**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**3.7a) Summary & Wrap up**

1. Importance of making sense of our story
2. Repair is possible

**3.7b) Q & A**

**3.7b) Homework:**

1. Daily mindfulness yoga
2. Continue with Journaling
3. Continue with informal mindfulness practice of your

**Session IV: Attachment and Repair**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>4.1 Checking in:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Settling in</li> <li>f. Q &amp; A on issues related to earlier sessions.</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>4.2 Experiential, I Formal Practice:</b>	c. Tuning in with Mindfulness Breath awareness.	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>4.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Understanding attachment, recognizing our story</li> <li>b) What's the use? a word of caution and encouragement</li> <li>c) Attachment Styles</li> <li>d) Impact on whole self</li> <li>e) Leaving the past behind, in here again, a mindful moment</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>4.4 Experiential II, Formal practice:</b>	a. Mindfulness walking	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>4.5 Psychoeducation II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Resilience is earned security</li> <li>b) Acknowledging our mindfulness stance</li> <li>c) Integration toward transformation</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>4.6 Experiential III, Formal Practice</b>	b. Mindfulness yoga Meditation.	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>4.7 Discussions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14 Wrap up &amp; summary</li> <li>15 Q &amp; A</li> <li>16 Homework</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>

<b>4.1 Checking in:</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
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#### 4.1a) Q & A

Briefly address individual's concerns about earlier sessions.

#### 4.2 Experiential

**Duration 5 minutes**

**4.2a) Tuning in W. Mindful Breathing**  
**Appendix C: Mindfulness Breathing Meditation, 5 minutes**

#### 4.3 Psychoeducation I:

**Duration 20 minutes**

#### 4.3a) Understanding Attachment: Finding Our Story

Earlier weeks, we mentioned that we naturally strive to seek closeness and connect with others. This innate human quality serves many purposes important for our survival and development especially in early years of our life that remains significant for future connections. Recognized by science as attachment theory, it describes the nature of the long-term relationship with at least one primary care giver. With birth, a new born is naturally dependent on the care of others to survive, but attachment refers on interdependence that serves to meet the emotional and social developmental needs of an infant, especially from six months of age till 2 years of age. As infants, we attach with the caregiver that consistently interacts in a responsive and sensitive manner attending to our needs and demands. When a child begins to crawl and explore its environment, the care giver becomes the secure base, a safe haven to return to when in need of support and safety.

The quality of this relationship is determined by the parent's verbal and nonverbal communications used in interaction. Early on that is bodily gestures, tone of voice, warmth or affection in touch, facial expressions made during the contact, and the tenderness or attention given while nursing or attending to the child, as well as verbal language used.

The pattern of parental interactions or responses, attachment, sets a child's internal working models. This is for foundation which a child begins to understand self by, shaping its future perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and expectations in later relationships.

#### 4.3b) What's the use, a word of caution and encouragement?

Understanding our attachment pattern, we can make sense of our own story, which can be

both liberating and possibly distressful for some of us. So why are we doing this? Because, understanding our early parental relationship, we begin to recognize our internal world, the language by which we make interpretations of how we do or don't relate with others, and the structure that shaped our perceptions.

Let's remind ourselves, "knowledge is power", the better we get to know ourselves, the more clearly we recognize unwanted automatic mind shifts and distinguish unwanted from desired states and stay in control of our present moment experiences.

Therefore, the rest of the information we share with you, do take them in for the intention they can provide you with, that is to empower you. Knowing how things had been planted in our childhood, and then with learning about ourselves in the here and now, we can be aware of past influences in present time. And from there we then can begin to make better choices that serve us better in life. Besides, identifying past unresolved issues can liberate us from unnecessary guilt and shame, for things we had no control of in childhood, so we can focus our attention on resolving core challenges at the present time. Lastly, with awareness of past stories, we can set more effective efforts to prevent history from repeating itself, saving ourselves and our loved ones from unnecessary pain and challenges.

#### 4.3c) Attachment Styles?

Parental interactions are described as four categories:

1. **Secure attachment** suggests a parental interaction that is supportive, affectionate, sensitive, reflective, responsive, and consistent (the key feature). This relationship provides a sense of safety and security that is consistent and predictive for a child, and when in distress, the child has the trust that a safe haven is available. The empathic connection in this relationship set the foundation for the child to trust, know, and connect with self and with the others in the future.
2. **Insecure attachment** is parenting an interaction that is devoid of emotional connection. The parent is emotionally unavailable to the child's emotional needs, but the parent is there tending to physical needs of the child. Uncertain for being able to trust due to absence of empathic connection, sense of security is a hit and miss, the unsettledness in the interactions results in a emotional disconnection of a child from the parent, this child will become independent from early on and feels others are not to be trusted for emotional support and security, but only connected with others as mean to ends.
3. **Anxious/ambivalent attachment** is another form of insecure attachment that is also inconsistent in providing emotional connection; however, this parent is often preoccupied, so only occasionally emotionally present. The child's emotional needs are only occasionally met, love and affection are conditional and often intrusive or bound by unrealistic expectations from child; therefore, this child can grow to be preoccupied and highly anxious. This child can experience

difficulty in forming trust in future relationships.

4. **Disorganized Attachment** results when the care givers interactions are not only inconsistent but abusive whether psychological (emotional and verbal abuse) and/or physical both are disruptive of development, and general functioning of the child. Unable to trust and connect with the parents, this child resolves to stay isolated and detached from the world and even self, so such child can grow up experiencing a lot of difficulties in making empathic connection with anyone until issue are resolved in some ways.

#### **4.3e) Impact on Whole Self?**

So far from earlier weeks, we have learned that disruptions in development mean disconnections on neural pathways, which means interruptions in communication between our body and mind functions and processes, leaving us fragmented, relying on our own interpretations of what we can and cannot make sense of. When we are distressed, both our mind and body is affected and in absence of empathic support the disruptions are left unrepaired. We learned last week that in childhood the care we receive from our parent is the way we make sense of uncertain circumstances, helping us re-channel our energy, repairing neural disconnections. In absence of proper parental care in early years of life like in insecure and disorganized parental interactions; our brain, mind, and body when shift to survival mode without repair and reconnection can become fixated on survival, depleting our psychological and physical energy that could otherwise used for growth and connection in various aspects of our lives.

#### **4.3d. Leaving the Past Behind,**

Remember that we can begin with repair any time in our lives; making new connections with trusting ourselves first and then learning to reach toward others. We said last week, integrating, creating a flow between our brain, mind, and body; we can re-parent ourselves, once we know our disconnections, if we recognize for one reason or another we were denied the opportunity to reach and develop an internal sense of self and security; we can earn ourselves the security we now deserve, and begin to develop new sense of self.

Changing the way we relate with ourselves in the here and now, identifying prior unhealthful patterns, we can begin to relate with ourselves in new ways, in mindful manners. Breaking away from influences of our past; utilizing the healing powers of the focused attention in present moment interactions we heal those old childhood wound, rep-parenting ourselves toward emotional resilience we deserve.

At this time for another opportunity for new empathic connection with ourselves let's have a short mindfulness yoga session here, where we use body movements to hold the

attention of mind in here and now.

#### **4.4 Experiential II:**

**Duration 10 minutes**

#### **4.4a) Mindfulness Walking Meditation**

### **Appendix C: Mindfulness Walking Meditation Practice**

#### **4.5 Psychoeducation II**

**Duration 20 minutes**

#### **4.5a) Resilience is Earned Security**

Whether you had the blessing of good parents or not, the good news is that repair can be done. Whatever our attachment style, you need not to be bound to follow negative patterns. With determination, insight, and consistent efforts, you can earn yourself the security and resilience you need to have to begin a new positive journey from here and on.

Once, we identify our old story, we begin to recognize patterns and connect the dots, we then can with effort and sufficient knowledge develop strategies to replace maladaptive thinking and correct negative perceptions. With regular mindfulness practice, we learn to relate with ourselves in new ways. Empowered with our new learned knowledge and useful tools, present moment experiences, we can begin to write new story for our lives.

#### **4.5b) Acknowledging Mindfulness Stance**

Accepting our challenges and vulnerabilities, we openly with kindness and nonjudgementally begin a new chapter in our lives, knowing that we may slip and fall back on old useless habits, we patiently allow our humanness to take responsibility for our imperfection. Empowered with the power to redirect ourselves back on the track we desire, each and every time for as long and as many time as it may needed. Taking a mindfulness stance, with use of the power of focused attention, we awaken our hidden healing powers to heal the old wound.

Besides, knowing that our early life experiences has played important part in shaping our personality, we can develop the compassion to embrace ourselves as whole again, for all we are, the good and the bad, allowing the release of the possible pent up energy, watching them pouring out of us, recognizing what they present releasing and letting go



of all feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and sensations. Accepting all the difficult emotions frustration, anger, guilt, shame, rage, we create space for new emotions, both positive and negative ones, observing our experiences in here and now empowering us to reconstruct our whole self from the inside out.

#### **4.5b) Integration for Transformation**

Transforming past disruption as we mentioned before, starts with connecting the mind and body, creating a unity and harmony between what we feel, think, and sense. Now that we understand that awareness of our past is useful, but the knowledge/insight all in its own term cannot bring about change unless it is used in collaboration with other means to reach the ultimate goal of integration, reclaiming our whole self.

With trust in our new ways and new self, along with proper support from trusting resources (friends, mentors, partner, and therapist) and with science on our side as research supports, new positive interactions, we begin each day with new opportunities it provide us with for new learning, new connecting, and new ways of being.

Integration is the fuel that activates our hidden potentials, the brain's capacity for neuroplasticity; therefore, knowing our affect, identifying our thought patterns, recognizing our bodily sensation, using a nonjudgmental language, we begin to create new perceptions and make new interpretations of our experiences and the ways in which we relate with and respond to others and our world.

To this point of our workshops, each week along with our mindfulness practices we have developed deeper insights about past in an attempt to identify our old story, we will wrap up excavating our history this week, and from next week on, along with mindfulness practices we shift to information that can help construct new stories for our lives from here and on.

As the last mindfulness practice of the day, we will have one last practice of the day that promotes integration of our mind and body.

#### **4.6)Experiential III:**

**Duration 15 minutes**

#### **4.6a) Mindfulness Yoga**

**Appendix C: Mindfulness Yoga, 15 minutes**

**4.7) Discussion**

**Duration 10 minutes**

**4.7a) Summary & Wrap up**

- 1. Recognizing our old story**
- 2. Writing new stories**

**4.7b) Homework:**

- 4. Daily mindfulness sitting practice**
- 5. Continue with Journaling**
- 6. Continue with your informal mindfulness practice of your choice**

**4.7c) Q &A**

- 1. Addressing the present Concerns & Challenges**
- 2. Reinforce self care measures as needed**

**Session V: Recognizing Stress & Anxiety**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>5.1 Checking in</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Settling in</li> <li>b. Q &amp; A</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>5.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tuning in with Mindfulness Breath Meditation</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>5.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The insights so far</li> <li>d. Stress and anxiety</li> <li>e. Chronic stress and our health</li> <li>f. Reaction to excessive stress</li> <li>g. A glance at nervous system</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>5.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness Walking Meditation</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>5.5 Psychoeducation II:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Nervous system under chronic stress</li> <li>b. Stock in hyper-arousal state</li> <li>h. Real threat or imagined threat, a brain handicap</li> <li>c. Mental defense mechanism: a rescue or a threat</li> <li>d. Labeling undesired habitual inner perceptions</li> <li>e. Managing stress for a better emotional health and greater resilience</li> <li>f. Mindfulness role in stress reduction</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>5.5 Experiential III, Formal Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness sitting meditation</li> </ul>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>5.6 Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wrap up &amp; Summary</li> <li>b. Q &amp; A</li> <li>c. Homework</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>

<b>5.1 Checking in</b>	<b>Duration 10 minutes</b>
<b>5.1a) a. Settling in</b> <b>5.1b. Q &amp; A on issues related to earlier sessions</b>	

<b>5.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<b>5.2a) Tuning in W. Mindfulness Breath Meditation</b>	
<b>Follow instruction on the handout: Mindfulness Breath Meditation, 5 minutes</b>	

<b>5.3 Psychoeducation I</b>	<b>Duration 20 minutes</b>
<b>5.3 a). The Insights, So Far</b>	
<p>So far we learned emotional resilience is attained through integration of our mind and body, and that our emotional health can be restored by repairing past unresolved issues, from our mindfulness practices we have learned that remaining open rather than denying experiencing ourselves fully in here and now, we can unmask hidden potentials of our brain to repair its past disconnections, we said happiness is attained through connecting with ourselves and others around us; however, we said the challenge is to be consistent with adapting and strategizing proper stress management skills that can help us deal with everyday life challenges that we will inevitably encounter each day. So, today we will be discussing issue of stress and how we handle anxiety.</p>	
<b>5.3 b) Stress and Anxiety</b>	
<b>What is stress, and how do we deal with stressful situations?</b>	
<p>Stress is a form of response to any pressure or demands in our life, so it is a normal fact of life. Everyone feels stressed when pressured to perform in a specific manner and particular time. Example, a common stress we all experience is each time you are stuck on traffic when you are late for an appointment.</p> <p>How we deal with stress defines the anxiety we experience. For instance, when stuck in traffic and you are so late for an important meeting, you are stressed and are experiencing anxieties as you are sitting there trying to figure out what to do. At</p>	

moderate levels, stress and anxiety are not always that bad, because they can motivate us to try to do things better or differently, so you may want to plan to leave earlier or take a different route next time. This is acute stress that is short lived and has passing anxiety and effects.

**On the other hand, chronic stress** results from situations that continue or persist to affect us for a long period of time, like childhood negative experiences when left unresolved.

The key to reducing our anxiety and stress is to manage how we response to them in our daily life. Recognizing our response style is an essential insight for understanding how stress and anxiety may be hampering our happiness, we can then put in more effective strategies to reduce or eliminate suffering the cause.

### 5.3 c)Chronic Stress and Our Health:

Prolonged or chronic stress has detrimental effects on our overall health. Chronic stress can weaken our immune system; damage our cardiovascular system, disrupt the functioning of nervous system, and interrupt digestive systems.

Symptoms of chronic stress can be any or all of the followings: moodiness, inability to relax, feeling overwhelmed, memory problems, poor judgment, only focusing on negative things, excessive anxiety, isolation, anxious and racing thoughts, psychosomatic pains, diarrhea, chest pain, loss of interest in sex, neglecting responsibility, procrastinating, sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or not enough.

Do you recognize any of these symptoms?

### 5.3 d) Reaction to Excessive Stress or Possible Threat of Survival:

#### The Body's Stress Response

Your nervous system responds to stress by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones signal the body to turn on its emergency response mode for a speedy reaction to stress factor.

Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and your senses become sharper. These changes increase oxygen flow to areas that are in need of speed for immediate reaction time, narrowing the field of our attention, preparing us for fight or flight. During this period other bodily functions like digestion slow down to conserve energy and focus on the stress. This is why, when you are dealing with chronic stress or just working under high stressful conditions, you may not feel hungry or not be able to digest or sleep well. However, as the threat passes by, the system is designed to restore its normal functioning, reducing level of stress hormones, signaling the body and brain that the situation has resolved. However, when exposed to persistent stress the body's



emergency mode remains activated.

### **5.3e) A Closer Look Inside at Nervous System:**

Our automatic nervous system is responsible for involuntary internal bodily functions, for instance regulating blood pressure, breathing, digestion and heartbeat. In response to perceived stress factor, the autonomic nervous system will turn up the sympathetic nervous system to speed up the desired functions; this is like pushing further on the gas pedal of the car to keep rising the speed.

On the other hand, our parasympathetic system functions as a break system to slow things down. The two sympathetic and parasympathetic systems when in harmony, they complement the overall psychological and physiological functioning of our body, and we experience equanimity. Under chronic stress, however, the system is out of synchrony, because the break system has been rendered defective. Unable to slow down the system, without a timely intervention like a car that has lost its break; the speed keep rising up and soon the outcome can be detrimental.

The mindfulness practices we encourage you to do throughout your days are these little interventions to break the pattern of rising speed. This highlights an important fact, that while we may not be able to make big changes immediately in a day; however, with little efforts, such as in short mindfulness practices we can in fact prevent disaster from occurring in near future, losing the grips of old patterns just a little bit at a time, till the break system is kicks in, and the system's normal function is restored.

To show you how we can introduce these breaks, let's stop our talk now, and have a short mindfulness walking exercise together and you can do this anytime of the day where ever you may be, just to give your nervous system a tiny break from grips of stress and anxiety.

## **5.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice**

**Duration 10 minutes**

### **5.4a) Mindfulness Walking Meditation**

**Refer to appendix C: Mindfulness Walking Meditation**

## **5.5 Psychoeducation II:**

**Duration 20 minutes**

**5.5a) Nervous System Under Chronic Stress:**

We all know that constant stress real or imagined both can have deteriorating effects on our overall wellbeing and health of our system. When we are unable to shut off or slow down throughout our day, our system has no choice but to continue with working under such high energy demanding mode. And in time, the outcome can be very damaging to our psychological and physical health, like a car with no break system; it will either crash or run out of fuel. When we function under a constant stress we are stuck in hyper-arousal mode and sooner or later our system will begin to fall apart.

**5.5b) Stock in Hyper-Arousal Mode**

In a general fight and flight state, we often experience extreme emotions this is to accommodate for narrowing the field of attention and for increasing reaction time and survival chances, indeed a useful strategy for dealing with immediate acute stress. Unfortunately, under chronic stress, our system is stuck in hyper-arousal mode, the fight and flight system is unable to shut off, and our parasympathetic nervous system or the internal alarmed neutralizer is impaired, unable to slow us down. In these circumstances, it is no wonder that our vital life energy can quickly deteriorate as we go on through each day leaving us exhausted, frustrated, feeling always keyed up, and unable to relax. Beside, with no resolution in sight, life can become quickly very unpleasant and uninteresting.

Under chronic stress our whole integrity is at risk, unable to think clearly, concentrate well, and communicate effectively, our daily functioning can deteriorate whether at work, school, or just out in the world. Eliminating probable threats can be a very wise strategy.

**5.5c) Real threat Vs. Imagine Threat, a Brain Handicap**

Our brain lacks the ability to distinguish reality from imagined events, “what the mind perceives brain believes”, so the brain reacts to imagined experience similar to an actual experience.

Let’s do a little experiment here:

Imagine this scenario, you are holding a fresh ripped juicy lemon in your hand, now you begin to cut the lemon, as the knife pierces through the yellow skin, a sour juice begin to sip out, the citric sour aroma of the lemon fills the air, just smelling this fresh scent your mouth salivates. Wait, you are just imagining this!!

Reviewing the process how we imagined the scenario. We first thought about the lemon, the thought formed a mental image of a lemon in your mind’s eye, did you see the

lemon? Then you began cutting, did you smell the lemon? And as the lemon scent filled the air, did your mouth water?

You see, without an actual experience, the imagined scenario became so very real; we had the thoughts, feeling, and even sensed the whole experience as if it was actually happening in that moment in time.

Previously, we discussed that having prior association with an experiences create expectations for later experiences, as it appears this also applies imagined events. This is our brain's handicap, as it cannot distinguish between real and imagined events. Does this give you an idea? Then why not just imagine ourselves accomplishing all that our heart desires, if the imagined experience is the same as the real one, well, why not!! Oh, wait, this is a different workshop, you may all have heard or read "the Secret" by Rhonda Byrne. Use your own discretion when you do.

It seems like our mind has mind of its own!! Both fascinating and a little spooky, but in reality it does, at least it has the power to control our internal responses

Back to our topic in here, yes, imagination can be a useful tool for creating internal motivation in real life, when we imagine ourselves succeeding in a task we are more likely to actually do so. So, imagine yourself succeeding in everything your heart desires, and now add to that the power of positive affirmation and focused attention, and you got yourself a very powerful elixir to reach your dreams and goals in life.

But seriously, we can conclude that learning to identify mind's tricks we can develop an inner self awareness and transform the power of undesired patterns to a positive and vital energy that can promotes our happiness and success both in our personal and in our relationships.

#### **5.5d) Mental Defense Mechanism: a Rescue or A Threat.**

Defense mechanisms are common mind tricks that are scientifically been studied and recognized. When faced with difficult situation such as death of loved ones and such, to cope with the circumstances our mind comes to our rescue with natural defenses to reduce our suffering. These are useful mental processes or adaptive strategies that can help us deal with life's unexpected challenges until we can find the strength to resume our normal functioning. However, when dealing with chronic stressful life conditions the same useful defenses can in fact become maladaptive habitual modes of functioning hindering and distorting our reality with imagined perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sensations.

Therefore, understanding defense mechanism and their functions, we can learn to identify them in our present moment experiences and therefore minimize their negative effects.

Some common defense mechanisms to know are: Denial, suppression, regression, repression, compensation, projection, and idealization.



Function:

1. Denial is the unconscious lack of acknowledgment of something that is obvious to others.
2. Repression is involuntary pushing difficult feelings away from the conscious thought.
3. Suppression is conscious intentional pushing of unpleasantness of one's mind.
4. Compensation is making up excuses by gift giving or praising.
5. Projection is attributing your own feelings or faults to another person or group.
6. Rationalization is explaining situation rather than taking responsibility for it.
7. Idealization is seeing someone else as perfect or ideal and worthy than everybody else.

### **5.5e) Labeling Internal Experiences:**

Habitual patterns and inner perceptions are ways in which we make sense of ourselves and the world. Feeling unhappy and burdened with life due to chronic stressful life circumstances, we are more likely to have an overall negative outlook than hopeful point of view, we are more likely to experience negative self-talk, may tend to mind read, feel more pessimistic, and make inadequate interpretations and evaluation of ourselves and others.

Negative thinking are inflexible black and white, these are thoughts that are mostly catastrophic and idealistic (nothing less than perfect is accepted), as a result we are often pessimistic either with ourselves or others, and for that we make harsh and inadequate evaluations of our own and others abilities to manage through life challenges. Overall, we are more likely to engage in negative self talks, and as the result, we are more likely to experience unnecessary stress and anxiety in life.

### **5.5f) Managing Chronic Stress by Shifting Our Perception**

Listening to ourselves we can begin to identify maladaptive habitual patterns, often judgmental and negative in nature, they commonly function at subconscious levels creating imagined conditions that intrude on our present moment experiences. For instance, internal negative messages, like: "I am so stupid", "I am failure", can evoke thoughts, emotions, and sensations of negative past experiences; not only reinforcing the influences of these negative messages, but also shadowing over our present and future experiences, creating a destructive self fulfilling prophecy. Changing how we perceive and relate to stresses in our lives can in large measures reduce our anxiety and increase our chances for finding fulfillments in life.

### **5.5g) Mindfulness and Stress Reduction**

Stress managements techniques such as mindfulness practices are effective stress reduction strategy. In mindfulness, we are active participant taking charge of our wellbeing. Mindfulness stance help reduce our reactivity to stress by remaining open and suspending judgment with acceptance, patience, and trust enter each experience in life as if it is the very first time we encounter any event in life, observing and then letting go of all distractions, with the power of focused attention we increase our self awareness of our subconscious doings, we learn to break away from mindless being, and loosen up the traps of habitual doing. In mindfulness by joining our mind and body with each present moment experience we create an internal space, leading us toward equanimity and sense of peacefulness that is necessary for a happy and healthy living.

So, remember that you can whenever and just anywhere use mindfulness to break away from stress and anxiety, even if it is just for one moment in time, you are claiming that moment for yourself.

As always, we end the day's lecture with another mindfulness practice.

### **5.6 Experiential III, Formal Practice**

**Duration 15 minutes**

#### **5.6a) Mindfulness Sitting Meditation**

**Appendix C: Mindfulness Sitting Meditation, 15 minutes**

### **5.7 Discussion**

**Duration 10 minutes**

#### **5.7a) Summary and Warp up**

- 1. Understanding our needs and emotions**
- 2. Mindfulness practice, managing difficult emotions**

#### **5.7b) Homework:**

- 1. Daily mindfulness practice of your choice for 20 to 30 Minutes.**
- 2. Continue w. Journaling**
- 3. Continue w. your informal practice of your choice**

#### **5.7c) Q & A:**

- 1. Addressing present concerns & possible challenges**
- 2. Reinforce self care measures as needed**

## Session VI: Emotional Self Regulation

Categories	Activities	Duration
6.1 Checking in	a. settling in b. Q & A on issues related to earlier sessions	5 minutes
6.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice	a. Tuning in with Mindfulness Breathing Meditation	5 minutes
6.3 Psychoeducation I:	a. Emotionally balance self b. Identifying emotional needs d. recognizing emotions,	20 minutes
6.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice	a. Mindfulness sitting meditation	15 minutes
6.3 Psychoeducation II:	a. Making Space for all emotions b. Recognize transitory nature of emotions c. Mindfulness compassion for dealing with difficult emotions	20 minutes
6.5 Experiential III, Formal Practice	a. Mindfulness Loving Kindness Meditation	15 minutes
6.6 Discussion	a. Wrap up & Summary b. Q & A c. Homework	10 minutes

6.1 Checking in	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
6.1a) Settling in 6.2b) Q & A on issues related to earlier sessions	

6.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
6.2a) Tuning in W. Mindfulness Breathing Meditation	

## Appendix C: Mindfulness Breathing Meditation, 5 minutes

### 6.3 Psycho-education I:

**Duration: 20 minutes**

#### 6.3 a) Emotionally Balance Self

Emotional balance requires stable, flexible, and adaptive self, that is when we strive to: accept ourselves for all of our strengths and vulnerabilities; approach life challenges; be flexible to better accommodate our needs; remain open to criticism; accept our failures, but do not give up; reach out and connect with others specially in time of needs; identify and access resources helpful to us; recognize triggers and traps of negative habitual patterns; acknowledge our mistakes and try to learn from them; develop trust and compassion to ourselves and others; remain curious; learn to love and forgive even when we think we can't t forget.

Yes, these are the conditions for becoming an emotionally balance self and the foundations for reaching happiness and emotional freedom

#### 6.3 b) Identifying Emotional Needs:

To sum up, in order to achieve emotional balance, we should have the ability to recognize our fundamental needs and meet; to climb up the ladder of success toward happiness and self satisfaction, we should be able to recognize and prioritize these needs.

Food, water, air, shelter, and safety are the most basic essential needs for our survival; but having a sense of belonging, purpose, hopefulness, and freedom of choice are the fundamental needs that are essential for our emotional wellbeing and reaching our potentials in life. As social beings, we are dependent to others and our environment, and our ability to recognize and clearly communicate our needs and goals in life can determine our success.

#### 6.3 c) Recognizing Emotions

Being able to understand our internal experiences, about what we feel internally we can begin to set clear intentions for effective communication.

But, what are emotions, and why they are so important?

In general, emotions are words we use to describe our physiological and psychological sensations we experience from interacting with others and environment, it is fair to say that what we feel defines the atmosphere of our internal world. When our inner

atmosphere is stable, we are open to explore, flexible, and adaptive to new encounters, but when our inner world is unstable, we close down and rigid toward exploring new experiences. Therefore, the ability to correctly identify emotions is important for understanding our internal world and communicating with outer world.

Also, knowing how to describe our emotions with proper intensity can especially helpful for dealing with strong and challenging emotions. Particularly if we are culturally programmed to deny, ignore, and push aside our strong feelings, then we need to make effortful attempts to unlearn and replace these messages with self assertive messages.

Mindfulness teaches us to approach our challenges rather than denying them, in doing that, we develop a self awareness as how to best manage and work passed challenging experiences in our lives with compassion. Additionally, Increasing our knowledge, developing a language of emotions and assertiveness skills, we can better prioritizing our efforts to reach our goals for meeting our needs.

### **6.3d) Labeling Emotions, Recognizing Feeling Words**

So today, to test ourselves, you are given a list of feeling words that are categorized according to their nature and intensity. This is good way to familiarize yourself with feeling words and learn to clearly or comfortably identify different modes of feelings.

You may have done similar practice in your personal therapy, if so you can now assess your progress to see how far you have come along. To sharpen your skills for identifying feelings, you can use the list when journaling your daily experiences, for instance, you can try describing your emotional experiences, using different words and find those that best describe the intensity of your emotions in various circumstances and in doing so be mindful of ways you react to them.

**A word of caution:** This seem rather simple practice, however, for many who may not be used to expressing their emotions and particularly when we have childhood trauma, this may be a new experience, so as always we recommend that you approach any new experience with caution and an open mind. By now you have developed many useful skills and insight to monitor your internal experiences, so let's enter this experience as an opportunity to investigate your progress, trust yourself, and all the while you are to remain mindful of your internal experiences: be watchful of thoughts, sensations, and emotions that may surface. During this process, if you feel great difficulty or beginning to feel flooded, it is advisable to start by preparing yourself with short mindfulness breathing meditation like the one we do on start of each session, and then do not hesitate to stop as often needed to ground yourself; approaching difficult strong emotions in short intervals is highly recommended particularly useful for expanding your emotional tolerance, increasing your competence, and self reliance. Each time you stop to ground yourself, using any of the techniques you are most comfortable with, you are actively taking charge by calming your inner self. When doing this each time you recognize

approaching challenging sensation, congratulate yourself for being a step closer to an emotionally balance self.

Once you feel more comfortable with this practice, you may want to try a more advance approach by practicing being mindful of a strong emotion throughout a day. You may begin the day or choose a particular part of your day to practice being mindful of that emotions, set your attention on the attempt to remain open, experiencing all that come up for you, this may include any or all other sensations, thoughts, and such, be watchful of how you may react to this experience.

For instance, you may identify a word like “disgust”, explore the intensity of the word, how it relates to your experiences, identify their occurrence being in past, present, or both. Implement grounding technique as often as needed, approach in intervals, if you feel strong apprehension, you may need to give this a few days or investigate this first in your personal therapy. Do journal your experiences if possible, recognize associated experiences, identify thoughts and sensations, label them, notice how your react to them, what triggers them, how often they occur, does its intensity change, what makes it better or worst. All the while, try to be watchful of your limits for your safety, do these explorations at the time and location that you can give yourself sufficient time and attention to ground yourself as often as needed, approach gently.

This is applying mindfulness theory to practice in everyday living. Know that it is not an easy practice and for most people it may take sometimes before feeling comfortable doing it. The idea is to deepen your sense of self understanding and to enhance your ability to transform and neutral difficult emotions.

At this time, we will stop here to have few moments of mindfulness in a sitting meditation, a wonderful practice for increasing tolerance for approaching internal experiences and reducing anxiety.

<b>6.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice:</b>
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<b>Duration: 15 minutes</b>
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<b>6.4a) Mindfulness Sitting Meditation</b>
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<b>Appendix C: Mindfulness Sitting Meditation, 15 minutes</b>
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<b>6.5 Psychoeducation II:</b>
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<b>Duration: 20 minutes</b>
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<b>6.3 d) Making Space for all emotions</b>
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Recognizing difficult emotions, labeling them, and staying with them, expands our tolerance of them, creating greater internal space and reducing our anxiety as they begin to lose intensity.



Let's explore this with an experiment, preferably do carry this experiment, but it can be imagined as well, consider this: we have two glasses: one is narrow and the second is a wide glass, and we pour the same amount/volume of water in both glasses, the height of the water sits higher in the narrow glass than it does in the wide glass, creating an illusion that there is more water in one than the other, but, the only difference is the space that holds the water.

Now, let's apply this analogy to containing our emotions, approaching challenges in present moment experiences help increase our tolerance, expanding our internal space for holding difficult emotions, creating the illusion lessening their intensity. Going back to our last week discussion, our mind can trick us in believing what it imagines, "what the mind perceives, and the brain believes". So, why use our imagination to increase our tolerance.

Another useful analogy to help us imagine the positive affect of approaching difficult emotions can be like this scenario: imagine hearing a very funny joke, the first time you hear it, you have a belly laughter, it feels so funny; then the next time you hear the joke, depending on how well it is said, it can still feel funny so you have another belly laughter, well maybe not as intense as the first one. Now imagine you hear the same joke again, and again, and again, and eventually, regardless how well it is said, it begins to lose its humor, after hearing it for so many time, the funny joke is no longer all that intensely funny, no longer affecting you the first time you heard it.

The same principle applies in approaching emotionally charged experiences, for instance, the first time you tell a friend about a difficult experience, the retelling experience can be very intense, almost as if you are reliving it, then with each consecutive retelling, in time, little by little, the experience begin to lose its intensity. Repeated revisiting of the same emotions and experiences allow them to, reducing the intensity, metaphorically boring the mind from re-experiencing the same old story, thus the mind begins to replace it with a new more energetically stimulating emotional experience.

Remember the phrase "what the mind perceives, the brain believes"; reminding us about the importance of keeping up with regular mindfulness practices. In mindfulness stance, we learn to develop a sense of self reliance each time we approach present moment experiences without preconceived judgment, with an open heart, acceptance, trust, and compassion, we become better skilled in observing rather than reacting, we begin to reconcile with ourselves moving closer toward healing, peacefulness, and emotionally balance self.

### **6.5 b) Recognize Transitory Nature of Emotions**

So far we have discussed emotions in isolation, however, emotions are often experienced in clusters; therefore, what we experience on the surface may not always be the underlying emotion.

We said earlier that if we are culturally accustomed to denying our emotions, then we may be particularly feeling challenged when encountering negative emotions. This is why we may feel anger much too often; when in fact we may be experiencing fear. When we are either unaware of the underlying emotions or unable to communicate that with others, we resolve in acting on the emotion that we recognize that is acting on the feeling of anger. Approaching the emotions of anger, staying with it, we can begin to investigate underlying emotions that we may not feel comfortable approaching openly or communicating with others, recognizing transitory nature of emotions can help ease our anxiety for approaching difficult emotions.

In our earlier example when we first heard the funny joke, we learned that the intensity of feelings can change, the exhilarating sensations we experienced the first time we heard the joke soon wore off with repeated exposure and it eventually became neutral or even boring, so both the nature and the intensity of emotions related to the experience can change overtime.

Emotions are often compared with clouds in the sky; they pass through from one point in the sky to another point, filling up an immediate space in and then eventually passing, making room for other clouds to come and go. Imagine, looking at a cluster of a cloud, close up, it appears huge, possibly stormy and dark is affects the environment around it; now imagine, looking at the same point in the sky from the distant horizon. The magnitude and darkness of the cloud appears rather insignificant compared to vastness of the sky. Both the cloud and its effects will pass by, leaving the sky open and clear for other clouds to come and go.

Our state of emotions like clouds have passing effects, what we are feeling at a point in time will eventually pass, leaving room for other emotions to come and go, acknowledging the passing nature of emotions can reduce our discomfort and vulnerability toward difficult emotions such fear, allowing us the space needed for incorporating qualities like compassion, trust, equanimity to transform negative emotions to loving and kindness.

### **6.5c) Mindfulness Compassion for Dealing With Difficult emotions**

Identifying emotions as fleeting and impermanence make them more approachable, but not necessarily easier to face or more communicative with others. A clear and coherent self-understanding of our internal world involves the ability to make connection between what we feel, think, and sense, making sense of our experiences is essential for clarifying our intent and communicating our needs with others more effectively.



In mindfulness practice, we open our heart to approach difficult experiences in the here and now, relying the power of focused attention to ground ourselves in present moment, we stay with all experiences, noticing them, observing them, allowing them to surface and be, just as if they were clouds in the sky; the storm they bring will be transitory, affecting not the integrity of the sky but only the surrounding area around the cloud for the duration that it is there.

In mindfulness practices like sitting meditation and particularly in loving kindness meditation, we practice developing compassion and love for ourselves. We have learned to observe the storms of emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety, creating a space they need to be, and allowing them to do what they are here to do, feeling them for what they bring to our experiences, all the while suspending all judgments about why and how they got there, only observing all that the experience is presented with emotions, sensations, and thoughts.

The Mind and body exercises, like meditations and yoga, are practices by which we learn a little more about ourselves each time, familiarizing ourselves with our inner world. Cultivating mindfulness stance, we gain insight about new ways for making connections with ourselves and others, sensing our inner experiences as we are interacting with the outer world.

Seeing our emotions for what they are and accepting their fleeting nature, we cultivate deeper compassion for ourselves, connecting within, reaching a sense of peacefulness and equanimity that is needed for healing and emotional freedom.

To wrap up our meditation practice today we will have a mindfulness loving kindness meditation that is an excellent healing practice. In this meditation using positive messages, we utilize the power of intentional attention to deepen our self acceptance; giving loving kindness to ourselves we cultivate compassion for inner healing. Can apply this meditation individually or add on to any part of our daily meditation routine.

### **6.5 Experiential III, Formal Practice**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

#### **6.5a) Mindfulness loving kindness Meditation**

**Refer to Appendix C:: Mindfulness loving kindness Meditation, 15 minutes**

### **6.6 Discussion**

**Duration: 10 minutes**

<b>6.6a) Summary and Wrap up</b> <b>1. Understanding the language of emotions</b> <b>2. Embracing all emotions</b>
<b>6.6b) Homework:</b> <b>1. Daily mindfulness practice of your choice</b> <b>2. Continue w. Journaling</b> <b>3. Continue w. informal practice of your choice</b>
<b>6.6c) Q &amp; A:</b> <b>1. Addressing present concerns &amp; possible challenges</b> <b>2. Reinforce self care measures as needed</b>

**Session VII: Assertive connectivity**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>7.1 Checking in</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Settling in</li> <li>b. Q &amp; A</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>7.2 Experiential I Formal Practice:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tuning in With Mindfulness Breathing Mediation</li> </ul>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>7.3 Psychoeducation I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Recognizing Significance of Communication for Reaching Emotional Freedom</li> <li>b. Why Be Assertive</li> <li>c. Educating Self on Communicative Patterns</li> <li>d. Identifying Basic Relational Needs</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>7.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness Loving Kindness Meditation</li> </ul>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>7.5 Psychoeducation II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Challenges in becoming assertive</li> <li>b. Characteristics of assertive communication</li> <li>c. From theory to practice</li> <li>d. Mindfulness Compatibility With Assertiveness</li> </ul>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>7.6 Experiential III, Formal Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mindfulness yoga Meditation</li> </ul>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>7.7 Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Summary</li> <li>b. Q &amp; A</li> <li>c. Homework</li> </ul>	<b>10 minutes</b>

<b>7.1 Checking in</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<b>7.1a) Settling in</b> <b>7.2b) Q &amp; A on issues related to earlier sessions</b>	

<b>7.2 Experiential Formal Practice</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<b>7.2a) Tuning in W. Mindfulness Breathing Meditation</b>  <b>See Appendix C: Mindfulness Breathing Meditation, 5 minutes</b>	

<b>7.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<b>Duration 20 minutes</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.3a) Recognizing significance of communication for reaching emotional freedom</b></p> <p>So far to this point of our workshop, we have learned much information that can help us better understand what goes on within us. Looking at ourselves from the inside out, we acknowledge the messages of our brain, body, and mind that set the foundation of our physical and mental health.</p> <p>Using the power of intentional attention through mindfulness practices, we can be mindful of each experience as it occurs in each moment. Harnessing the energy of our mind being aware of our internal world, we take an active role in creating the change by activating our brain potential repair and heal itself through neuro-plasticity, and creating new neural pathways.</p> <p>All these new learning directed to endorse expansion of our tolerance and increase our ability to better manage difficult emotions, promoting an inner sense of connectivity and closeness with others. Now, learning effective communication skills, we are more likely to succeed in improving our relationships with others, reaching our goals in life and emotional freedom from our past.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.3b) Why Be Assertive</b></p> <p>Assertiveness is effectiveness in communication, so that we can create a desired change and maintain our relationships. To achieve our goals, we must know effective behavioral patterns that are adequate for different situations in social interactions. Assertiveness skills are learned skill, whether we learned to express our will early on in life or we were denied our rights; we can now begin to learn skills that enhance sense of confidence.</p>	

Along with self awareness, reaching security and self reliance requires adequate people skills.

How assertively, we communicate greatly affect our success in getting our needs met, minimizing chances for conflict while increasing opportunities for resolution of our relational issues.

In the endeavor to become assertive, we must understand communication patterns, recognizing our habitual pattern by becoming mindful of our interactions, we can reach an emotional stability required to stay present and motivated while we continue to learn and work toward mastering assertiveness.

Applying mindfulness living to everyday living, we improve our emotional tolerance of distressful events, reducing our reactivity and increasing our responsiveness, while we learn to filter out undesired interferences our past stories in present moment interactions communications. And now learning useful communication skills, we learn to effectively stand by for our beliefs and values, reducing our anxiety about being victimized by others or violating other's right. Being able to communicate clear boundaries, we learn to trust ourselves and are more likely to expand that trust toward others, creating an internal peacefulness that is essential for making and keeping relationships.

### **7.3c) Educating self on communicative patterns:**

Understanding various modes of communication, we can recognize our reactions in own interaction and identify the areas that need attention to improve effectiveness.

There are four commonly recognized communication behavioral patterns known as: a. assertiveness b. submission c. direct aggression d. indirect aggression.

**Assertiveness** is when we openly and honestly express ourselves while being aware, responsible, and respectful of our own and other's rights (we will discuss this in more details in a little while).

**Submissiveness** is a behavioral pattern when an individual takes on a victim role; this person expresses self in manner that is always apologetic, passive, and indecisive, this stems from underlying feelings of vulnerability, poor self image, and deep sense of insecurity and inner fearfulness.

**Directly aggressive** individual is arrogant, inflexible, intolerant, narrow minded, and overbearing; this person is disrespectful of other's rights and unaware of own rights; aggression is used to mask off inner feelings of negative self image, poor self esteem, great internal anxiety and sense of vulnerability, and fearfulness for abandonment.

**Indirectly aggressive** individual is critical, crafty, manipulative, guilt inducing, and sarcastic; similar to directly aggressive people, indirect aggression stems from inner low confidence, excessive vulnerability, and an overall negative sense of self, but they are more cunning in their communication patterns.

### **7.3d) Recognizing Basic Relational Needs:**

Identifying the basic needs of our relationship we can ensure of its health. The quality of our relationships depends on how we attend to them; unattended relationships are often distressful and anxiety provoking. Attuned respectful communication is a must for the health and keeping the vitality in the relationship. Understanding and prioritizing the demands and needs of our own and those of our relationships are essential steps for increasing our ability to repair, reduce tensions, and prevent risks for future conflicts.

When we are assertive, we openly express our emotions and thoughts in manners that are direct, honest, and non-harming. An assertive individual understands how to respect the rights of others while getting her/his own needs met. An assertive person will not give up finding a way to resolve conflicts in important relationships.

In contrast unattended relationship is conducive of submissive or aggressive interactions, resulted from absence of emotional connectivity, respect, and healthy sense of self.

We all feel anxious, vulnerable, and fearful at times when we are unsure of our abilities to effectively deal with life challenges, and submission and aggression are two forms of manipulation that are used to mask off and deny the approach of negative inner emotions. Nonetheless, in a long run, both aggression and submission are counter effective, threatening to integrity of the relationship.

Applying mindfulness in our daily living, practicing regularly, we can better maintain emotional stability that promotes self control and expands tolerance. In here, once again we invite you to join one another for a loving kindness meditation.

### **7.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

#### **7.4a) Mindfulness Loving Kindness Meditation**

**See Appendix C:**

### **7.5 Psychoeducation II:**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

#### **7.5a) Challenges for Becoming Assertive:**

We should mention that becoming assertive is not always easy, preferred, or accepted style of communication. When people around us are not used to seeing or hearing us advocate and stand up for our rights or express our opinions, they may feel uncomfortable and reject us.

To ensure our safety, it is important to be aware of possible complications, so that we can better strategize our approach on developing assertiveness skills. Surrounding ourselves with supportive and trusted resources, having safety plan, we can continue to deepen our insight, increase our confidence, and develop useful skills as how, when, and where to assert ourselves.

### **7.5b) Characteristics of Assertive Communication:**

Knowing assertive behavioral patterns is essential for improving our effectiveness. An assertive individual behaves in a manner that is clear; makes direct eye contact suggesting interest and sincerity; keeps an open posture implying openness, dignity, and confidence; talks with a soft but direct and respectful tone showing certainty and determination; makes good spontaneous judgment representing autonomy.

An important of assertiveness strategy is to use “I” statements in expressing ideas, feelings, making interpretations, sharing our understanding of facts, and asking for clarification. “I” statements suggest responsibility and courage, using “I” statements we take ownership of our actions and minimize risks of inducing guilt, shaming, and blaming others. “I” statements are useful ways for making empathic connection particularly useful in dealing with difficult issues and emotions.

An example of “I” statement for expressing negative emotions without inducing guilt and shame can be “I feel (ex: frustrated/angry/guilty/ shameful/.....), when you tell me (ex: that you will be here in time for dinner, and then without calling, you show up two hours late)”. In this statement, the message delivers intention demanding for change in future interaction, acknowledging the emotional impact it was created,

Practicing making “I” statement for commonly difficult interactions, we can develop inner confidence to handle emotionally charged experiences in a manner that is open and direct, setting clear boundaries for change in future interactions without inducing shame and guilt.

### **7.5c) From Theory to Practice:**

Implying what we learn in theory to practice is not always all that easy, and like learning any new skill, mastery requires much practice and patience. There are different methods for practicing assertiveness. Yes, practice makes perfect, but we should also know that it is important to set reasonable expectations. If you are not used to being assertive, then recognize that it may take you some time to master these skills. Learning to identify situations that are useful and those that can be potentially dangerous to assert ourselves takes patience, persistence, curiosity, and skill; know that these are efforts well worth the challenge. Recognizing the varieties of ways to improve our effectiveness to assert ourselves is especially useful in

An effective way of practicing assertiveness is through **role playing with others**, creating a scenario and playing it out with trusted friends can be very helpful and especially if done with constructive feedback to correct and clarify the approach. **Rehearsing** is practicing desired behaviors and response. You can do this either with someone else or by yourself maybe standing in front of a mirror, practice your voice, gestures, and body language, practice being persistent while avoiding argumentative point, especially useful is practicing stating your point calmly.

Practicing **stress management techniques** to reduce anxiety can be especially helpful for approaching difficult interactions. Knowing how to ease ourselves back to a comfortable stance can reduce anticipation of probable tensions, reducing the chances for falling back on old habitual patterns of reactivity. An effective stress management skill is gradual relaxation and grounding techniques which you have learned much about throughout this workshop. This gives another reason for you to remain committed to your daily mindfulness practices.

**Be open to accept criticism**, if there is truth to the claim the complaint you can empathize to eliminate future conflicts, but be the judge of your own action, for example an empathic response may be said like: “I can understand that maybe not responding to your calls have been insensitive”. Notice the use of “I” statement, the message acknowledges the complaint.

**Ask for clarification** to reduce misinterpretations and prevent future conflicts when messages in interactions is not clear one can restate what was said to clarify intentions for better understanding , for instance, one may say “so you think that I was not interested to see you anymore.”

**Empathize but not assume fault**, this helps with receiving criticism, without becoming defensive and anxious while empathizing and not assuming fault. For instance, you may say, “Yes, I understand that you felt hurt, because I did not respond to your calls.”

**Settle for a compromise**, when your self-respect and self worth is not jeopardized, try to come to a settlement that is fair to both sides. For instance, “I understand that you need my attention right now, but I am busy at the moment, maybe we can arrange to talk about this at a later time, like after dinner tonight, so you can tell me what is bothering you.” These are a few examples of ways in which you can improve your assertive skills.

You may practice making “I” statement for different situation, write them down or ask a friend to check how they sound and evaluate their effectiveness.

#### **7.5d) Mindfulness Compatibility With Assertiveness**

Assertiveness is a skill for more effective communication; however, if others do not understand it or can't accept it, then it may be considered as aggressive and insensitive; therefore, it is up to you as when and with whom you assert yourself with. The more we



learn about ourselves and practice effective communications skills, the better apt we become in understanding and connecting with ourselves and others around us. Developing mindfulness skills are compatible with assertive communication; a clear understanding of our inner experiences, we can be more assured in ways in which we approach new experiences in a manner that is most useful to us.

Now let's end our discussion with a mindfulness yoga practice, reminding us of another useful technique in which we use bodily movements to create connection between our mind and body and increase flexibility and tolerance, to reduce stress and promote connection with self and others.

<b>7.5 Experiential Formal Practice</b>	<b>Duration: 15 minutes</b>
<b>7.5a) Mindfulness yoga</b>	
<b>Appendix C: Mindfulness Yoga, 15 minutes</b>	

<b>7.6 Discussion</b>	<b>Duration: 10 minutes</b>
<b>7.6a) Summary and Wrap up</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Understanding assertive communication</b></li> <li><b>2. Mindfulness is a compatible practice, promoting effectiveness in communication for greater attunement</b></li> </ol>	
<b>7.6b) Homework:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Daily mindfulness practice of your choice</b></li> <li><b>2. Continue w. Journaling: Practice writing "I" statements for various situations that feel challenging to assert yourself</b></li> </ol>	
<b>7.6c) Q &amp; A:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Addressing present concerns &amp; possible challenges</b></li> <li><b>2. Reinforce self care measures as needed</b></li> </ol>	

**Week VIII: Here and After, Endless Possibilities**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>8.1 Checking in</b>	<b>a. Settling in b. Q &amp; A</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>8.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice:</b>	<b>a. Tuning in With Mindfulness Breathing Meditation</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>8.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<b>a. Transforming Fear to Power for Connectivity b. Here and After</b>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>8.4 Experiential II, Formal Practice:</b>	<b>b. Mindfulness Loving kindness meditation</b>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>8.5 Fair well</b>	<b>a. Celebrating the ourselves and beginning of endless opportunities</b>	<b>45 minutes</b>

<b>8.1 Checking in</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<b>8.1a) Settling in</b> <b>8.2b) Q &amp; A on issues related to earlier sessions</b>	

<b>8.2 Experiential I, Formal Practice</b>	<b>Duration 5 minutes</b>
<b>8.2a) Tuning in W. Mindfulness Breathing Meditation</b>  <b>See Appendix C: Mindfulness Breathing Meditation, 5 minutes</b>	

<b>8.3 Psychoeducation I:</b>	<b>Duration 20minutes</b>
<b>8.3a) Transforming fear to Power for Connectivity</b>  Today is the last day of our workshop and the first day of taking charge of the rest of your journey. We will begin today's lecture with brief review of our past discussions and	

acknowledge our efforts and skills built throughout these past seven weeks. We will conclude our day here with a small celebration to highlight and congratulate one another for having had taken the time to care for ourselves and to accompany one another through this journey to this point in time.

In short at its heart, this workshop is intended to highlight the significance of facing our challenges in order to reach resolution and create reaching a sense of attunement and connectivity. It is to create an internal awareness of interactions of our mind and body, so we can bring to our conscious focus the underlying intentions in present moment interactions. In here,

In here we learned, having a conscious awareness, we are less likely to become constrained by our habitual patterns. Cultivating mindfulness skills, we become more stable, flexible, and capable of adjusting our responses in a manner that is helpful, increasing our chances for positive experiences and eliminating the risks for being exposed to uncomfortable situations.

Yes, we cannot rewrite past and we can't always control all avenues of our lives, but changing how we relate to our past we can alter their impacts on our lives. Developing mindfulness capacity, we become conscious of ways in which we tend to react to uncomfortable external situations. Cultivating the capacity to observe our mind, we learn to reflect on our internal experiences with openness. Becoming mindful, we develop an objective quality, becoming capable to distinguish modes of entrapments from alternative choices we can have.

Recognizing that we have options in our lives is motivating, making future more hopeful and encourages us to put forth efforts and make repeated attempts to change and break away from negative old patterns of reactivity to new ways of responsiveness; hence, increasing our chances for healing and transforming past negatively charged emotions to inner sense of peacefulness and wholeness.

Learning about our attachment, we understood that parents do matter. Knowing that we had no control of how we were parented, releases us from unnecessary guilt and shame for taking responsibility for things we had no control of. The negative experiences in our childhood need not to hunt us for life, as you learned here; we can free ourselves from grips of our past with conscious awareness, practicing intentional attention in the here and now, each moment offer us a new opportunity. Practicing mindfulness stance, we can integrate, transforming early life emotional disruptions by connecting our mind and body, thus reclaiming our wholeness.

Furthermore, staying connected with ourselves and with others demands time, attention, and affection. Recognizing attending to need of our relationship is essential for maintaining them, just as if caring for a plant or a pet, it requires continual care and attention, we can remind ourselves about the importance of attending to our own needs and the needs of our important relationships in order to stay connected or integrated.

And, what relationship is more important than one with self, and then to heal our emotional needs we are to stay committed and motivated to take time to be with and continually care for ourselves?

Each of mindfulness practices we learned these past few weeks thought us how to become more connected within. Breathe awareness meditation, body scan, mindfulness walking or sitting meditations, mindfulness yoga, and various informal mindfulness exercises with everyday tasks, each help reinforce self awareness of our mind and body interactions. Staying in tune with our feelings, we practice approaching the underlying emotions; therefore we become better acquainted with how we react to influences from our environment. Sitting meditations and body scan help us experience our emotions for what they bring to us; therefore, we recognize and accept our emotions for their passing nature. This awareness helps us understand that we have choices. Lastly, in loving kindness meditation, we practice expanding our compassion beyond ourselves toward all others.

Becoming mindful, with deeper insight, we learn to approach emotional issues of our past relational ruptures, we begin to define influences of them and separate our present from past experiences. Unmasking uncomfortable feelings of the unmet needs, we develop a consciousness of the underlying emotions and internal perceptions that can keep us constrained and vulnerable. Cultivating mindfulness stance with daily practice, we develop a sense of inner peacefulness and ease to approach new experiences opening up to new opportunities they can provide us with and transform fear to power of connectivity.

### **8.3a)Here and After:**

In here and after today, applying mindfulness stance to daily routine can be as simple and as effective as one can make it to be. Setting reasonable expectation and goals with proper plan we can maintain a routine. Recognizing our individuality, we can design a practice routine that best fit our lives and meets our needs. By this time, you have been introduced to a number of mindfulness practices and hopefully you have established some form of routine for practices of our choice. Developing a routine that works best for you may take a few trial and errors till you find the best time of the day and routine that works for you.

For instance, you may want to model after the design of our workshop. We incorporated three experiential meditation practices in each of our sessions in the beginning, middle, and end. In the start of each session, to maximize our learning potential, we had a short mindfulness breathing meditation to start each day's work with a clear intention, then in the middle of our discussions, we introduced another short practice session to recharge ourselves and be able to maintain depth of focus on the objective of our learning, creating a little escape from the routine, and at last, each

session concluded with the one last practice highlighting the closer of our day's work, by shifting our attention back to ourselves and directing our energy toward attending to here and now as moment in our day unfolds.

One can apply the similar approach developing a daily practice, for instance, you can start the day with a short formal practice to set the intention for the day, later in midday, to create little escapes to recharge and resume focus, you may find it useful to have a short formal or informal meditation; and in the end, can wrap up the day's work with a closing practice that feels most comforting. Repeating such a routine emphasizes on importance of reaching a closure in day, promoting hope for new beginnings and new opportunities.

It is highly recommended that you do at least one formal practice each day; however, do not get discouraged if you missed a day or lost touch with your routine practice, due to a holiday, illness, or any other reasons.

Do what you can to stay committed; the best way is joining support groups if possible. Overall the goal is for you stay committed but flexible enough to resume your practice from where ever it was left of.

Like anything in life, we all inevitably encounter some sort of challenge down the road in any routine task. If we are too rigid with ways to conduct our practice it, we can quickly get discouraged, so the key is to stay open, flexible, and consistent. Being honest with yourself, reflect on the reasons as why you are not sticking with your practice, and if possible alter your approach to resume practicing as soon as you can. If you need to stop for a period of time, do so without judgment, being mindful and honest about your reasons, accept to suspend your practice for the time being, but set the intention to resume in a timely manner. Doing so, after all, is applying mindfulness in practice.

Periodically evaluating our progress, developing reflective quality, we can stay mindful of our goals in life. There is no denying that with practice, patience, and persistence, we can succeed in mastering and applying mindfulness skills to heal our unresolved issues, expanding our tolerance of difficult emotions to reach better emotional balance and reclaim ourselves.

Ending our workshop now with one last practice of loving kindness meditation, in this practice we begin with setting our intention to congratulate ourselves for taking time and attending to our selves.

#### **8.4 )Experiential II, Formal Practice**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

##### **8.4a) Mindfulness Loving Kindness Meditation**

**See Appendix C: Mindfulness Loving Kindness Meditation practice for 15 minutes**

## **8.5 Psychoeducation II**

**Duration: 45 minutes**

### **8.5a) Celebrating the beginning of endless opportunities**

Before we start our celebration, look around and congratulate each other for having to complete this journey, sending each other good wishes for many more successful journeys to come.

## APPENDIX B

### Confidentiality and regulation contract

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please read carefully and initial all:

- I agree to respect confidentiality about any and all personal information shared in the workshop.
- I agree to a respectful and friendly interaction with all participants at all times to ensure safety and trust within the group.
- I agree to attend every session and understand the rules of participation,
- I recognize that following instructions and assignments are essential to get the most out of my work in each session.
- I understand that in case of an emergency for a missed session, make ups may not be available.
- I agree that upon missing two sessions, I will withdraw from the current workshop but may start or pick up in the future series, based on availabilities.
- I agree to stay full duration of each session.
- I agree to notify the leader when I am aware of possible problems to attend a session or continue on.
- I agree to complete home assignments to the best of my abilities, I understand that they are essential for achieve adequate result and are instrumental for my learning.
- I agree to refrain from cross talking and advice giving..
- I agree that this workshop is not intended as a form of group psycho-therapy, but rather it is an educational and experiential workshop.

Print your full name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Behavioral and Safety Contract

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I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to comply with the following terms and conditions:

1. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I understand and recognize that the group counselor has a legal, ethical, and professional obligation to take reasonable measures as necessary to ensure my safety and the safety of others.
2. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I recognize and agree to hold confidentiality and respect individual's opinions.
3. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I recognize and agree to be on time and attend all sessions prepared.
4. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I recognize and agree to comply with the terms of safety and conduct during each session.
5. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I recognize and agree that I am responsible for my behavior and conduct during and throughout each session of workshop.
6. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I recognize this is an educational group workshop and does not intend to replace the need for professional counseling, psychological and medical care.
7. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I agree to contact my personal/crisis counselor for my individual counseling needs.
8. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I consent that I will seek medical/psychological advice of professional if I am harmed.
9. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I agree to take the following behavioral measures if and when I feel in crisis:\_\_\_\_
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I agree to take necessary measures as noted below if I feel in danger of harming myself or another.
  - a. Contact Crisis hotline \_\_\_\_\_



b. Contact my therapist, name and phone number

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Contact Emergency hotline \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Participant's Emergency Contacts and Information:**

Initial \_\_\_\_\_, I agree that the following individual's may be contacted in case of need.

1<sup>st</sup>. Emergency contact name and phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
and the relationship with the participants \_\_\_\_\_.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Emergency Contact name and phone# \_\_\_\_\_  
and the relationship with the participants \_\_\_\_\_.

Personal therapist's name and phone# \_\_\_\_\_

Physician's name and phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance name and phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Safety Plan

**Step 1: Recognizing symptoms, warning: feeling overwhelmed, cannot stop: thoughts, emotions, sensations, or behaviors.**

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**Step 2: Taking control:**

- a. What I can do to break away, immediately (mentally and physically)  
An: physical activity and movement or relaxation technique that feels safe to you.

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b. Call people I trust/feel comfortable sharing my experience with:  
Name & Contact number:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3: Professional to contact:**

Name and Contact Number:

1. Personal Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Local Crisis Hotline \_\_\_\_\_
3. Local Urgent Care Services \_\_\_\_\_

## Feeling words

Many people feel challenged when asked to identify their negative emotions. When we cannot find the right word to describe our feelings, it is helpful to use a list to find what feeling words best define our emotions. Here are examples of some commonly used emotions categorized by definition and intensity. Familiarizing yourself with these words, you can better identify when a difficult emotion enters a present experience.

To master the skill, it is helpful to use this list when journaling to help you better clarify your understanding of your internal experiences. Try to define your emotional experiences according to their intensity, in your journals explore your reactions when experiencing the emotions; you can track your progress by rereading your earlier entries to assess how you have changed if any.

Nature \ Intensity	Mild	Moderate	Strong
Fearful	Uncomfortable, self conscious, doubtful, on edge, bashful, uneasy, anxious, nervous, unsure, worried, shy, timid, embarrassed, doubtful, jittery	Risky, distrustful, alarmed, jumpy, apprehensive fearful, scared, afraid, awkward, butterflies, defensive, scared	Terrified, panicky, stage fright, dread vulnerable, paralyzed, horrified desperate, frightened, intimidated, panicky
Inadequate	Unsure of self, Uncertain, weak, inefficient, lacking confidence	Defeated, incompetent, inept, overwhelmed, ineffective, deficient, unable, incapable, small, insignificant, unfit, unimportant, incomplete, no good,	Worthless, washed up powerless, helpless, impotent, crippled, inferior, useless, finished, like a failure
Confused	Undecided, confused, unsure, uncertain, bothered, uncomfortable	Disorganized, troubled, adrift, lost, at loose ends, disconcerted, frustrated, ambivalent, disturbed, helpless, flustered,	Puzzled, baffled, confounded, in a dilemma, confused, questioning, bewildered, perplexed, trapped

		going in circles, foggy, mixed up	
Nature / Intensity	Mild	Moderate	Strong
Depressed	Low, bad, blah, disappointed, sad, gloomy, unhappy, down,	Rotten, awful, horrible, terrible, blue, lost, miserable, pessimistic, tearful, sorrowful, demoralized, weepy, awful, horrible, terrible, melancholy, upset, discouraged	Dejected, hopeless, alienated, gloomy, dismal, bleak, in despair, empty, grieved, grief, despair, grim
Lonely	Excluded, lonesome, distant, aloof, lonesome	Lonely, alienated, estranged, remote, alone, insulated, apart from others	Abandoned, cut off, all alone, forsaken, isolated
Guilty	Regretful, blew it, goofed, lament, wrong, embarrassed, at fault, in error, responsible for	Ashamed, remorseful, crummy, to blame, lost face, demeaned, guilty	Unforgivable, humiliated, disgraced, degraded, horrible, mortified, exposed,
Hurt	Put down, neglected, overlooked, minimized, let down, unappreciated,	Abused, depreciated, criticized, defamed, censured, discredited, disparaged, hurt, belittled, shot down, over looked, maligned, mistreated, ridiculed, mocked, exploited, debased, impugned, cheapened,	Destroyed, crushed, disgraced, humiliated, anguished, cast off, forsaken, rejected, discarded, pained, wounded, devastated, tortured,
Angry	Uptight, turned	Mean, vexed,	Burned up, pissed

	<p>off, put out, temper miffed, perturbed, ticked off, annoyance, chagrined, dismayed, bugged, disgusted, irked,</p>	<p>upset with, agitated, mad, aggravated, offended, antagonistic, exasperated, belligerent, spiteful, vindictive, hostile, irritated, madden,</p>	<p>off, fighting mad, nauseated, violent, indignant, hatred, bitter, galled, vengeful, bitter, hateful, vicious, rage, outrage, , fury, resentment, wrath, ire, incense, gall, exasperated, outraged, enraged, indignant, infuriated,</p>
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## Resources

The essential part of growth and healing is to stay motivated and continue with your learning and practice; find useful resources that are accessible to you. There are many wonderful and useful books out there, but do take caution not to lose sight of the importance of keeping with your practice. Joining support groups can be a good way of keeping you motivated to stay with your practice routine, even if it is occasionally joining with others who meditate can be very inspiring and a great opportunity to learn new ways, sharpen your skills, meet new people.

For your convenience, here are a few information that you may find helpful:

### **Books:**

Full Catastrophe living, By: Jon Kabat Zinn

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

Real Happiness, The Power of Meditation, By: Sharon Salzberg

Mindfulness in Plain English, By: Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

Mindful Eating, By: Jan Chozen Bays

Mindfulness Yoga, By: Frank Jude Boccio

The Essential Rumi, trans. By: Rumi

Mindful way through Anxiety, By: Susan M. Orsillo, PhD. & Lizabeth Roemer, PhD.

Arriving at your own Door, By: Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Whole Brain Child, By: Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. & Tina Payne Bryson, PhD.

Everyday Blessings, A Guide to Mindful Parenting. By: Jon Kabat Zinn & Myla Kabat Zinn

Loving-Kindness: The revolutionary Art of Happiness. By: Sharon Salzberg

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion, By: Christopher Germer

The Developing Mind, By: Daniel J. Siegel

In an Unspoken Voice, By: Peter A. Levine

8 Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery, By: Babette Rothschild

Trauma and Recovery, By: Judith Herman, M.D.

Out Growing the Pain, a book for and about adults abused as children. By: Eliana Gil, PhD.

### **For Meditation groups and training:**

[www.insightla.org](http://www.insightla.org)

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC). [www.marc.ucla.edu](http://www.marc.ucla.edu)

[www.umassmed.edu](http://www.umassmed.edu)

## APPENDIX C

### Instruction on Mindfulness Body Scan Meditation

**Duration: 20 minutes**

In this meditation, we will direct the focus attention to various body parts; this is an introduction to making a new relationship with our body in the present moment without judgment, increasing our awareness of our body with use of breath through intentional, direct attention to our bodily sensations.

- 1) Begin by making yourself comfortable sitting or preferably lying down on your back, in place where you will not be distracted for the next 20 minutes. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable or just keep them open if that feels safer to you.
- 2) Starting with your breath, follow the path of each breath, as you inhale and exhale. Notice, where your body is in contact with the floor, or the seat, keep following the breath, as it enters, and as it leaves your body.
- 3) You may find this process relaxing and feeling as if you are about to fall asleep; to clarify our intention in this practice is to rather become more awake rather than falling sleep; but if you are too tired, then you are most likely to fall asleep; just continue your practice when you become awake again.
- 4) So, remind yourself that we are intending to become more aware of sensations of our body through systematic attention connecting our breath with each body part.
- 5) Now, back to breathing with each inhale and exhale notice your chest, as your lungs getting filled up with each in breath and then emptied with each out breath; focus on the sensations in your chest.
- 6) when you are ready, let's go of the sensation in your chest and follow the breath down to your belly, sense your belly rising and falling with each breath; stay with whatever sensation that you may be noticing in your belly; connecting with your belly.
- 7) Now directing your breath down to your right leg, down to your right foot, always to your right toes. Sensing each toe, notice if there is any sensation, it may be tingling, itching, moist, warm, or cold, or may be numbing, or just nothing; whatever you may be feeling, is okay. Just noticing it.
- 8) Noticing any tension or intense sensations; observe it, and direct your breath to that location, breathing to the sensation, whatever it may be. Use the gentle touch of your breath to recognize what is going in this region, and after a few breaths, then just releasing it, letting go of intentional attention to the sensation and returning to the breath rhythm.
- 9) Now letting go of the right toes, notice the sole of your foot; taking the breath to the bottom of your feet; staying with it for a breath or two;
- 10) Now letting go of that moving up the leg, noticing any sensations; then noticing your shin, your knee, your calf.
- 11) If you like many fell asleep during this meditation; or felt being swept off by various distractions; that is okay; just recognize that; know that this meditation

particularly when done lying down; is very relaxing so if you are tired most likely you will fall asleep; so you may want to choose to do it with your eyes open or find a more upright position, like elevating your head or just seat up instead of lying down.

- 12) when ready move the focus of your breath attention to the left leg, down to left foot, to the left toes; notice any sensations or maybe no sensation, staying with them for a breath or two; then moving up the foot, noticing the sole of the left foot, the shin, the knee, the left calf, lingering in each spot for a breath or two noticing any sensation, just observing them.
- 13) Each time your mind wanders away just notice it, moving away from the body, and gently without any judgment just bring your attention back to the task at hand. Your mind wondering away is a very normal process, recognize this as what the mind does, then let go of the distraction whatever it may be and return to the focus of your attention.
- 14) At this moment bring your breath attention to the trunk of your body. Sensing your seat; then your back; then your shoulders; then down your arms, moving your breath to the palms of your hands, and back up to your arms; to your shoulder.
- 15) When you are ready bring the attention of your breath, to your whole body; sensing the overall sensation of your body; noticing your breath entering and leaving; noticing where your body is in contact with the floor or the seat; congratulate yourself for having completed this meditation; and now if your eyes are closed, open them, and if they are open, gently blink a few times, gently turn your head around and notice where you are in the room.

Namaste.



## **Instruction on Mindfulness Yoga (10 Minutes)**

Mindfulness yoga is designed to increase awareness of body through refining our attention with the body movements. For the purpose of this workshop, we will only use standing yoga that consists of series of gentle body stretches, based on principles of Hatha yoga as it is used in mindfulness based cognitive therapy program.

1. Standing behind your chairs, with your feet flat on the ground, preferably bare feet if possible, but keeping your feet about the shoulder length apart,
2. Stretch your arms and hands to the side; twisting your wrist around gently, this is to check that you will have adequate space to move around without touching your neighbor.
3. The intention of this practice is to become aware of our body's sensations and feelings as we move around; be mindful of the range of your movement; and only move to the extent that feel comfortable to you; not forcing to reach pass your limits; not comparing or competing with others.
4. Standing with your arms on your sides, your feet firmly on the ground, and legs shoulder width apart, slowly bring your arms up over your head, bringing the palms together over your head. Feel your muscles extending, pushing up ward, hold them there.
5. Feel your feet solid and stable grounded on the floor, keeping your arms up ward, palms together, continuing with your gentle breaths, breathing without any force, inhaling and exhaling, inhaling and exhaling.
6. Feel your body extending up ward and down ward, you may feel the tension in your muscles as they begin to tire, just experience them with your breath.
7. Gently and slowly bring your arms to the side of your body; let them hang there for a moment, very slowly and softly rotate your wrist around.
8. Extend your fingers open and closed for couple of times, all the while continue with your normal unrestrained breathing, inhaling and exhaling.
9. If comfortable you may now close your eyes, or just keep a soft steady down ward gaze a few feet in front of you, continue with focusing on your breath; notice any physical sensations.
10. Now once again we will extend our hands up and little forward, extended our hand and whole side of the body as if we are reaching high up on a branch of a fruit tree trying to pick the fruits, first with right hand then with the left, or maybe imagine reaching up climbing a ladder without moving your feet; we will do this for five up ward reaches.
11. Notice the sensations you feel each time you reach up with each hand, extending the side of your rib cage and your abdomen with that hand, and then switching to focus on the muscles of the opposite sides along the arm down the side of the body.
12. Bring your arms down, Standing with shoulders dropped down, notice if there are any tensions in your shoulders, neck, back, chest, or anywhere, breathing gently to that area, remember to only do the movements to the extent that feels comfortable for you. While a little discomfort is okay, be a judge of when you reach your limit, and stop there.

13. These are simple stretches, but if you are not used to bodily movements and stretches it may take a few tries before you get comfortable with them.
14. Gently, slowly, and softly, begin raising your shoulders to your ears then moving them forward, down, back, and up to the ears again, making a circular motion, for couple of times. Notice any bodily sensations and feelings as you do this.
15. bending your head side to side and then down to your throat, now bending it toward each shoulder, for a few counts.
16. Begin your attention of your breath down to the body to your waist line; now rotating the upper body side to side at waist, allowing the arms gently swings on your side. Only twist as far as it feels comfortable, feeling a little tension in okay, but stop if it is too uncomfortable. Do this for a count of 10 breaths.
17. Back to your standing posture, hold on the back of your chairs and extending your arms as you move your feet and you body back, creating a space so you can bend forward as your hip, keeping your head between your arms making a upside down L shape with your body as you hold on the back of the chair.
18. Back to our standing position, returning to our normal breath, inhaling, exhaling, continue holding on to the back of the chair, and one by one move pull your heels up ward, doing this for a couple of times.
19. We end this series of body movements, by standing still, connected with our body's sensations, now returning our attention to our normal breath.
20. Congratulate yourself for taking this time to listen to your body. Namaste

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Yoga (10 Minutes)**

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2. Stretch your arms and hands to the side; twisting your wrist around gently, this is to check that you will have adequate space to move around without touching your neighbor.
3. The intention of this practice is to become aware of our body's sensations and feelings as we move around; be mindful of the range of your movement; and only move to the extent that feel comfortable to you; not forcing to reach pass your limits; not comparing or competing with others.
4. Standing with your arms on your sides, your feet firmly on the ground, and legs shoulder width apart, slowly bring your arms up over your head, bringing the palms together over your head. Feel your muscles extending, pushing up ward, hold them there.
5. Feel your feet solid and stable grounded on the floor, keeping your arms up ward, palms together, continuing with your gentle breaths, breathing without any force, inhaling and exhaling, inhaling and exhaling.
6. Feel your body extending up ward and down ward, you may feel the tension in your muscles as they begin to tire, just experience them with your breath.
7. Gently and slowly bring your arms to the side of your body; let them hang there for a moment, very slowly and softly rotate your wrist around.
8. Extend your fingers open and closed for couple of times, all the while continue with your normal unrestrained breathing, inhaling and exhaling.
9. If comfortable you may now close your eyes, or just keep a soft steady down ward gaze a few feet in front of you, continue with focusing on your breath; notice any physical sensations.
10. Now once again we will extend our hands up and little forward, extended our hand and whole side of the body as if we are reaching high up on a branch of a fruit tree trying to pick the fruits, first with right hand then with the left, or maybe imagine reaching up climbing a ladder without moving your feet; we will do this for five up ward reaches.
11. Notice the sensations you feel each time you reach up with each hand, extending the side of your rib cage and your abdomen with that hand, and then switching to focus on the muscles of the opposite sides along the arm down the side of the body.
12. Bring your arms down, Standing with shoulders dropped down, notice if there are any tensions in your shoulders, neck, back, chest, or anywhere, breathing gently to that area, remember to only do the movements to the extent that feels comfortable for you. While a little discomfort is okay, be a judge of when you reach your limit, and stop there.

13. These are simple stretches, but if you are not used to bodily movements and stretches it may take a few tries before you get comfortable with them.
14. Gently, slowly, and softly, begin raising your shoulders to your ears then moving them forward, down, back, and up to the ears again, making a circular motion, for couple of times. Notice any bodily sensations and feelings as you do this.
15. Bending your head side to side and then down to your throat, now bending it toward each shoulder, for a few counts.
16. Begin your attention of your breath down to the body to your waist line; now rotating the upper body side to side at waist, allowing the arms gently swings on your side. Only twist as far as it feels comfortable, feeling a little tension in okay, but stop if it is too uncomfortable. Do this for a count of 10 breaths.
17. Back to your standing posture, hold on the back of your chairs and extending your arms as you move your feet and you body back, creating a space so you can bend forward as your hip, keeping your head between your arms making a upside down L shape with your body as you hold on the back of the chair.
18. Back to our standing position, returning to our normal breath, inhaling, exhaling, continue holding on to the back of the chair, and one by one move pull your heels up ward, doing this for a couple of times.
19. We end this series of body movements, by standing still, connected with our body's sensations, now returning our attention to our normal breath.
20. Congratulate yourself for taking this time to listen to your body. Namaste

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Walking Meditation**

This is wonderful tool for grounding self from excessive restlessness and agitations and shifting the state of mind from doing mode to being model; indeed an easy practice for stabilizing the mind with deliberate attention to the present moment interactions. This practice is especially useful at times when staying still whether sitting down or lying down is either not possible or not preferred. Mindfulness walking meditation utilizes walking, a routine daily experience, as means to increase present moment experiences. Similar to other practices such as Tai Chi or yoga, attending to here and now experiences of our bodily movements are wonderful tool for breaking away from habitual undesired mental activities. Any physical activity can potentially be done mindfully. Whether it is walking the dog or walking to the mail box to get the mail or just walking up and down a hall way, you can cultivate mindfulness by attending to the sensations of your feet in process of moving in ways it interacts with the ground. Chose a duration that is desired; preferably choose a timer to announce the conclusion of practice.

1. First is choosing a path, where you can move a few feet forward and back, where it will be safe and clear from any objects of furniture, preferably where you won't be distracted or preoccupied by spectators.
2. Take a comfortable neutral standing position, with your arms gently hanging on your sides, allowing the weight of your body to create the momentum for each foot step.
3. Take small, slow steps, no need to look at the feet but keep your eyes gently open with down ward gaze to prevent running to objects.
4. Pay attention to one heal as it rises to leave the ground, notice the movements along the foot down toward the toes, moving in a slow and gentle motions.
5. Feel the sensations of muscle's movement in the leg, allowing the foot to slowly make contact with the ground again.
6. Then shifting the attention to the process and sensations of the other foot, the heal leaving the ground, the sole rising, then toes, recognize any muscle tensions or discomforts.
7. Continue observing and investigating each foot's movements along the path going from one end to another.
8. Recognize each time your mind wonders off, to a thought, a feeling, or a sensations; when you notice it, congratulate yourself for this awareness, and gently guide your mind back attending to your feet as they transition from touching, being lifted off the ground and coming in contact with the ground again.
9. Keep walking up and down your path for the duration that you intended, this can be done for as little as a minutes to as long as is desired.
10. While this is best done walking slow, for some walking too slow may be agitating so if you like begin with faster walk and periodically slow down and then pick up your pace. When changing your pace, remember for being mindful of the feeling associated with each of these experiences.

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Sitting Meditation (15 minutes)**

To steady and calm the mind, we use gentle, kind, nonjudgmental mindfulness stance. Staying with restless mind can actually counter effectively calm the anxious mind, research also supports the idea that what we resist tend to persist. Remember, if you force yourself not to think about a pink elephant you begin to see the image of an elephant in your mind, and the more you persist on not thinking about it, the bigger and more vivid the image becomes; similarly the more we try to push away negative thoughts and feeling the more prominent they become in our mind state, denying or suppressing difficult emotions is not effective. In contrast when we make space for these difficult mind states, they slowly will settle and lose intensity, soon the state will pass its momentum and will be replaced by another mind state. Imagine a glass of a muddy water, the more we stir the water the more muddiness persist, but when we let the water be, slowly the murky water begin to clear through, the sediments will settle down on the bottom, leaving the water clear and transparent. Similarly in mindfulness sitting meditation, we make space for the restless mind, creating an environment of peacefulness, allowing the sediment of undesired mind states to settle down. Thus the intention is to observe our internal experiences without any judgment or aversion, accepting them all for what they are, allowing them be.

1. Begin with sitting in a comfortable up right position, on a cushion or sitting straight with your back supported by the wall or if on a chair preferably not being supported the back of the chair.
2. If on the floor your feet may be crossed or you may feel better kneeling down holding the cushion between your knees.
3. Close your eyes if that is comfortable for you, or just hold a gentle unfocused downward gaze a few inches in front of your feet.
4. Begin with noticing your body, the sensation of touch where your body is in contact with the floor or the cushion; recognize the pressures in contact areas.
5. Now if ready, bring your attention to breath movements in your body. Recognizing the sensations of each breath as they enter and then leave the body. Noticing the movements of each in breath and out breath. Chose a place where your breath sensation is more felt, like in your chest rising up and down, or your belly moving with each in breath and out breath.
6. Allowing the natural rhythm of breath come and go as it does, we are just observing it, investigating any sensations that it may bring with itself. We are not changing, forcing, fixing, or altering the breath, just experiencing it in each moment, as it comes and goes.
7. You may have noticed your mind getting distracted, wondering off away from the breath to various thoughts and feelings. You may notice your mind may have started to plan for things to do later on, thinking about random events of the day, or it may be just wondering aimlessly.
8. Notice when you mind is off the breath; congratulate yourself for recognizing these little trips of your mind when they happen for as often as they happen.

9. Recognized what is on the mind each time it wanders off, call it for what they are like: thinking, planning, worrying, and solving. Then without force with kindness, patience, and acceptance redirect the mind toward each in breath and out breath.
10. Continue with this practice, recognize each time your mind wanders off; it may be a bodily sensation, such as a tingling sensation, itching, aching, numbing, stay with the sensation for a few breath; observe them for what they are, then gently let go of the focus on the sensation and escorting your attention back to the breath.
11. Continue with this pattern for the duration of your practice, be aware of what each moment's experience presents you with. Each time the mind wanders recognize where it has gone, and then softly connect it back with the breath.
12. Repeating this practice will allow you to make new connection with unfamiliar and uncomfortable mind states; upon completion of your practice, bring your attention to the pressures in the contact areas between your body and floor and cushion. Move your head slowly to side to side and stretch legs and arms. Recognize your body as a whole and look around the room, notice where you are.
13. Congratulate yourself for taking this time to be with yourself. Namaste

### **Instruction on Mindfulness Eating Practice (5 minutes)**

1. Begin with seating yourself comfortably on the chair or floor, wherever you may be most comfortable seating without distraction for the next 10 minutes.
2. First let's take a few breaths, 4 breaths, follow the path of breath as the air passes through your nose, down your throat, raising your chest and filling your lungs all the way down the bottom of your lungs just over your belly bottom. We do this with four breaths. Now return back to your normal breathing, we now will practice mindfulness eating a raisin/prune as a first introduction to mindfulness practice where we will use all of our sense to experience eating a raisin/prune.
3. Hold one raisin/prune between your two finger tips.
4. Look at it closely, turn it around and upside down, notice its surface, its shape, its groves and curves, and notice how the color of its surface is darker in the depth of its groves and curves.
5. Now smell it, squeeze it a bit, and take the aroma of the raisin/prune in with each inhale.
6. Touch the surface with your finger tips; explore its texture, if comfortable you may close your eyes to enhance your experience.
7. At this time, you may be getting distracted by a thought, passing through your mind, or a sensation like an itch on the tip of your nose, or something of that sort, just notice them, don't try to reach and scratch the itch, gently bring your attention back to the raisin/prune in your hand.
8. We will put it in our mouth but do not eat it yet.
9. Put it between your lips, then hold it between teeth, feel it with your tongue, use your mind's eye to imagine seeing the raisin/prune in your mouth, now, gently begin to chew it, do not swallow it yet, feel it being crushed between your teeth, mixing with the saliva in your mouth, slowly consciously move it around as you continue chewing, feel its sweetness.
10. Finally, but very slowly swallow it down, imagine following the pieces, as they glide down your esophagus, eating tube, entering the hollow of your stomach getting ready to be digested.
11. Notice what your body's responses to this experience; observe any thoughts, emotions, or sensations that are calling for your attention, just observe them, gently and with kindness without judging or blaming, just notice them be.



12. Grounding, coming back to our breath, notice your breath, following each inhale and exhale, stay in your position; feel your back being supported by the chair; feel your hips resting on the seat or floor; feel your feet supported on the ground, notice your toes, wiggle them; now move your legs, shake them a little, turn your body around or side to side, open and close your fingers, rotate your shoulders and look around the rooms as you blink couple of times. Namaste

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Walking Meditation**

This is wonderful tool for grounding self from excessive restlessness and agitations and shifting the state of mind from doing mode to being model; indeed an easy practice for stabilizing the mind with deliberate attention to the present moment interactions. This practice is especially useful at times when staying still whether sitting down or lying down is either not possible or not preferred. Mindfulness walking meditation utilizes walking, a routine daily experience, as means to increase present moment experiences. Similar to other practices such as Tai Chi or yoga, attending to here and now experiences of our bodily movements are wonderful tool for breaking away from habitual undesired mental activities. Any physical activity can potentially be done mindfully. Whether it is walking the dog or walking to the mail box to get the mail or just walking up and down a hall way, you can cultivate mindfulness by attending to the sensations of your feet in process of moving in ways it interacts with the ground. Chose a duration that is desired; preferably choose a timer to announce the conclusion of practice.

1. First is choosing a path, where you can move a few feet forward and back, where it will be safe and clear from any objects of furniture, preferably where you won't be distracted or preoccupied by spectators.
2. Take a comfortable neutral standing position, with your arms gently hanging on your sides, allowing the weight of your body to create the momentum for each foot step.
3. Take small, slow steps, no need to look at the feet but keep your eyes gently open with down ward gaze to prevent running to objects.
4. Pay attention to one heal as it rises to leave the ground, notice the movements along the foot down toward the toes, moving in a slow and gentle motions.
5. Feel the sensations of muscle's movement in the leg, allowing the foot to slowly make contact with the ground again.
6. Then shifting the attention to the process and sensations of the other foot, the heal leaving the ground, the sole rising, then toes, recognize any muscle tensions or discomforts.
7. Continue observing and investigating each foot's movements along the path going from one end to another.
8. Recognize each time your mind wanders off, to a thought, a feeling, or a sensations; when you notice it, congratulate yourself for this awareness, and gently guide your mind back attending to your feet as they transition from touching, being lifted off the ground and coming in contact with the ground again.
9. Keep walking up and down your path for the duration that you intended, this can be done for as little as a minutes to as long as is desired.
- 10.** While this is best done walking slow, for some walking too slow may be agitating so if you like begin with faster walk and periodically slow down and then pick up your pace. When changing your pace, remember for being mindful of the feeling associated with each of these experiences.

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Eating (5 minutes)**

Begin with seating yourself comfortably on the chair or floor, wherever you may be most comfortable seating without distraction for the next 10 minutes.

First let's take a few breaths, 4 breaths, follow the path of breath as the air passes through your nose, down your throat, raising your chest and filling your lungs all the way down the bottom of your lungs just over your belly bottom. We do this with four breaths. Now return back to your normal breathing, we now will practice mindfulness eating a raisin/prune as a first introduction to mindfulness practice where we will use all of our sense to experience eating a raisin/prune.

Let's begin:

1. Hold one raisin/prune between your two finger tips.
2. Look at it closely, turn it around and upside down, notice its surface, its shape, its groves and curves, and notice how the color of its surface is darker in the depth of its groves and curves.
3. Now smell it, squeeze it a bite and take the aroma of the raisin/prune in with each inhale.
4. Touch the surface with your finger tips; explore its texture, if comfortable you may close your eyes to enhance your experience.
5. At this time, you may be getting distracted by a thought, passing through your mind, or a sensation like an itch on the tip of your nose, or something of that sort, just notice them, don't try to reach and scratch the itch, gently bring your attention back to the raisin/prune in your hand.
6. We will put it in our mouth but do not eat it yet.
7. Put it between your lips, then hold it between teeth, feel it with your tongue, use your mind's eye to imagine seeing the raisin/prune in your mouth, now, gently begin to chew it, do not swallow it yet, feel it being crushed between your teeth, mixing with the saliva in your mouth, slowly consciously move it around as you continue chewing, feel its sweetness.
8. Finally, but very slowly swallow it down, imagine following the pieces, as they glide down your esophagus, eating tube, entering the hollow of your stomach getting ready to be digested.
9. Notice what your body as whole responses to this experience; observe any thoughts, emotions, or sensations that are calling for your attention, just observe them, gently and with kindness without judging or blaming just notice them.

10. Grounding, coming back to our breath, notice your breath, following each inhale and exhale, stay in your position; feel your back being supported by the chair; feel your hips resting on the seat or floor; feel your feet supported on the ground, notice your toes, wiggle them; now move your legs, turn your body around or side to side, open and close your fingers, rotate your shoulders and look around the rooms as you blink couple of times..

## **Introduction to Informal Mindfulness Meditation**

Paying attention to the moment to moment interactions help develop an awareness of ways in which unwelcome distractions can intrude on daily living, reducing chances for living a fulfilling life. Mindfulness practice with everyday living tasks is an informal ways in which deliberate attention given to one's experiences in here and now is used to bring new perspective in experiencing being mode in moment, reducing tension and unnecessary discomforts. These rather simple practices attending to our internal experiences with seemingly trivial every day things can have profound influences on individual's perspectives and how they relate with various aspects of their lives.

One may have an informal practice with any and all routine daily activities, a few examples will be brushing teeth, washing dishes, cleaning, folding laundry, eating, driving, etc.

The intention of the practice is to recognize the internal experiences during the routine task, focusing on interactions in here and now. Bringing the attention to the process of the activity, for instance if folding the laundry, paying attention to sensation of the fabric of clothing, focusing the richness and intensity of color, the texture, the way the folds are made, the ways the layers of fabric sit on top of another, and an overall observing the activity with a curious and nonjudgmental mind, as if we had just dropped off from planet Mars and never before have we ever had such experience. All the while throughout the activity should stay mindful of our mind's distractions, noticing any thoughts, feelings, or sensations that sweep us off of away from attending to the task with an investigative and curious eye.

Such informal practices should be as long as is desired, but attempt to stick with routine tasks in a earlier weeks for daily practice, teeth brushing is a all time popular one.

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Sitting Meditation ( 30 minutes )**

Find a place where you won't be distracted for the duration of your practice. Find a comfortable sitting position on a floor, chair, or on your bed.

And begin your practice by focusing on your breath as we have done in our breathing practices, sensing your breath where it feels most prominent and stay with it, following your breath with each inhale and exhale, notice the moment to moment sensations each inhale and exhale presents you with in a here and now.

Become aware of your body and your mind, and notice any thoughts, feelings, or sensations that may still be lingering with you from today's earlier experiences or maybe you notice nothing. Simply stay with your mind and body, observing their activities, without judging why they are there or how they got there, just observe them be.

Now, gently bring your attention back to your breath, breathing in and breathing out, staying with your normal breath, noticing the air passing through the nose, down the throat, passing pass your chest, into the abdomen. Feel the belly expanding and contracting. Just observing and acknowledging the breath in each moment in time, in the here and now.

Observing and acknowledging your sensations as they are, when they appear and where they appear, without any judgment; you remain open to whatever may arise. Continue to observe any emotions, thoughts, or sensations that may come to your attentions notice them, and then watch them passing by; as if they are clouds passing through points in the sky from one moment to the next. Watch them if they disappear from your field of attention as you bring your attention back to your breath.

If you notice any difficult experience such as tension or pressure, stay with it. As if you are standing by it, taking a kind gentle accepting open stance. Taking your breath slowly toward it, allow the sensation to open up and soften, continue to breath into this area while remaining nonjudgmental, open, and compassionate, notice any resistance to opening up, give the sensation a chance to remain as it wants, tell it that it is okay to be. Observe different sensations to rise up to your attention at the moment, accepting them for what they are, what they present, and letting them be. Allow them all just be, just the way they are.

Now letting go of sensations, bring your attention back to where you most feel your breath in your body, again tracking each in breath and out breath, staying with your breath passing through from your nose down to your abdomen following each exhale and inhale.

Now letting go of our breath, notice the sounds around you, notice the sounds that are in the room and the sounds that are coming from outside of the room, notice them rising or falling as your attention shifts from one to another. Hearing, the multitude of sounds each

entering our field of attention, at each moment in time. Acknowledge them changing, appearing, and dissipating. Just like the waves of the ocean, appearing and disappearing.

Next, shift your attention away from external sounds to focus on internal sounds, hearing your mind, our internal dialogues, observe thoughts and emotions, we are merely noticing them, and letting them be. Acknowledge how your mind shifts from a thought to another thought or emotions; notice them passing through your mind, just like clouds passing by.

Recognizing the mind for what it is, noticing its tendencies for taking control, by changing forms from positive to negative thoughts or emotions, anticipating, making interpretations, comparing and judging, blaming, dreaming, intensifying emotions, liking and disliking, accepting and rejecting, analyzing, and scrutinizing, planning, remembering, dramatizing, catastrophizing, and just anything to stay in control.

Notice how each of these mind states come and go, form and disappear. Just acknowledge them for what they present, and remain neutral to them, watchful of these habits of your mind, and just let them be, observing and acknowledging their presence in this moment in time.

If you feel caught up in any states of mind, understand that is normal and remain nonjudgmental, notice your breath and staying with it, recognize the moment in time when you notice being caught up in mind states, use the here and now experience to let go of them and return to the present moment. Recognize the changing nature of these mind states, thoughts and emotions do not remain stable, can always use intentional attention to breath as anchoring your mind back to the present moment.

Notice how the experience in the present moment develops the awareness of our internal states, this practices creates the necessary space for them all, allowing them to relieve their energy as they rise and disappear, just like watching waves rising up and crashing into pieces once they hit shore, allowing them to be rather than resisting creates the awareness for their changing nature that bring us to develop greater flexibility and tolerance for difficult emotions. Acknowledging and accepting emotions, sensations, and thoughts brought on by all experiences to come and pass.

Now bringing your attention back to the breath, notice where it may be now in the body. Once again we follow it in and out the breath path. Feel your body as a whole, recognizing where your bottom is in contact with floor or cushion of your seat. Notice where your hands are resting, feel your body connected and complete as a single entity.

Congratulate yourself for taking time to take care of yourself, recognize this act of love for yourself engaging in a practice that can improve your health and overall wellbeing.

## **Instruction on Mindfulness Breath Awareness Meditation ( 5 minutes)**

We understand that the mind is naturally playful; harnessing the undesired activities of the mind is a key factor for mindfulness living. Like playful children the mind constantly jumps around from one thing to another; whatever one may be feeling or may be doing the mind tends to wonder off over and over again. The biggest task of any mindfulness practice in all formal and informal meditations is to notice this wondering mind and purposefully bring it back to focus. Repeating various mindfulness practices will help sharpen this skill making the person more acquainted with all the ways a wondering mind operates. A simple approach to begin any task from mindfulness is attending our attention to breath's rhythm and movement. The breath is with us anywhere we go, so what better tool than our breath to anchor the mind to here and now. We may use this practice anytime and anywhere, before starting a task as we do in our workshop each week or ending them.

1. We begin with taking a proper sitting position, in posture that is up right and dignified, keeping your eyes closed if that feels comfortable to you, or just focusing them a few feet in front of your toes, keeping them in a soft gent downward gaze.
2. Bring your attention to where you are seating, then to your breath, notice what thoughts are in your mind at this moment, recognize any bodily sensations you may be experiencing now, notice any feelings you may be having at this moment.
3. Now, bring your attention back to your breath, pay attention to how the breath moves in your body from entering your nose, down your throat, rising your chest and filling your lungs all the way down to your belly.
4. Follow each inhale down into the body and each exhale as it works its way out of the body.
5. Using the breath to anchor ourselves
6. Continue with following each breath inward and outward,
7. Using your imagination riding the breath, be mindful each time a sensations, a thought, or a feeling pulls you away from attending to your breath, notice them, then gently return to your breath.
8. Observing your breath entering your body and leaving your body.
9. Say it is okay, whatever it is, is already here. Just notice it, and gently without judgment return your attention to the breath's movement.
10. Notice where you are sitting, notice your feet on the ground, and the objects in front and around you. Namaste



## **Instruction on Loving Kindness Meditation (15 minutes)**

Loving kindness meditation is a wonderful practice for opening our heart and transform fear and resentment to love and compassion. Breaking away from habitual negative patterns is difficult, but this meditation practice is a useful exercise for breaking the barrier of jealousy, hatred, greed, and resentment. Cultivating qualities of compassion and equanimity within for loving ourselves are essential characteristics and the requirement for healing. The challenge is that if we were not given loving kind messages in childhood or are accustomed to live with pain, illness, anxiety, and stress, then we may find this practice rather difficult. Much too often somewhere along the way in our lives, we learned that it is not okay to be with ourselves. Whether this was caused by our culture or upbringing, lack of compassion and self love create a void disrupting our wholeness, making us unsure of ourselves and less confident. Integration, self reconciliation, we begin to recognize ourselves as whole again. With regular mindfulness practices, particularly through meditating with loving kindness, in time, we cultivate a deeper self acceptance that is essential for finding inner peacefulness and neutralizing toxic effects of negative perceptions and emotions.

### **Instruction for the formal Practice:**

1. Begin your practice by sitting in a position that is comfortable and upright, praise yourself for taking time for being with yourself for the next 15 minutes.
2. Begin with focusing on your body and mind, being present; acknowledge any and all sensations, thoughts, and feelings that you may notice at this moment.
3. Recognizing and allowing ourselves to just be in the moment, suspending all judgments and all tendencies to examine them.
4. Now, bring your attention to your breath, observing the normal rhythm of your breath, inhaling, and exhaling.
5. Now, feel your chest rising and falling, follow the breath down to your just over the abdomen, sensing each breath.
6. Watching your breath moving in and out of your body, inhaling, and exhaling.
7. Now, notice your heart beats, feeling the sensations there, allowing to whatever arise to just be and go wherever it need to go.
8. Focusing your attention to your heart, sensing its capacity for being the source of infinite love and compassion for yourself.
9. Realizing how precious and fragile life is at it all depends on the beats of our heart, on the breath coming and going, with each inhale, and each exhale.
10. Recognizing the reality of the perfection of this imperfect process, embracing it for all that it bring to our experience in this moment, here and now.
11. Observing this life being filled with affection, kindness, and compassion toward ourselves and then toward others.
12. Recognize any challenge for extending love and compassion to yourself, or others.
13. Acknowledge the challenge and then observe your heart opening up to these loving kindness phrases:

May I feel safe,  
May I feel happy,  
May I feel at peace,  
May I feel whole,  
May I feel in harmony in my mind, heart, and body  
May I feel healthy,

14. Repeated these phrases extending loving kindness toward people you know and care for.

May ..... Feel safe.  
May..... feel happy,  
May.....feel at peace,  
May .....feel whole,  
May .....feel in harmony in mind, heart, and body  
May .....feel healthy,

15. Now, sending loving kindness to other people we do not know and feel neutral toward.

May others feel safe, .....happy, .....at peace,.....whole,..... in harmony, .....healthy.

16. Now consider sending loving kindness to people who seem challenging or difficult

May my difficult person feel safe.  
May..... feel happy,  
May.....feel at peace,  
May .....feel whole,  
May .....feel in harmony in mind, heart, and body  
May .....feel healthy.

17. Expanding the circle of love and kindness to all being on the planet earth.

May all people feel safe.  
May..... feel happy,  
May.....feel at peace,  
May .....feel whole,  
May .....feel in harmony in mind, heart, and body  
May .....feel healthy.

18. Now, take in this boundless love and compassion in ward to yourself, and then bring your attention to your breath again, feeling the breath through your whole body.

19. Feel your body as whole, complete.

20. Now congratulate yourself for having taken the time to this act of loving and kindness that improves your health and wellbeing.

