

Mindfulness Training Workbook



MINDFULNESS OP MAAT
&
ACLO

Mindfulness Training

Workbook

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Preface

Living in and with presence

In front of you is the workbook that you will be using as part of a mindfulness training. The purpose of the mindfulness training is to teach you to deal with feelings and thoughts in a different way.

We ask you to be open to this training, and just go for it for the next weeks. We also ask you to be patient. Experience has shown that some people do not immediately benefit from the training. You may not notice what the training does for you until later in the program. In time there has been much experience with mindfulness, and evidence from people who followed this training. Based on that, it can be honestly said that we think your patience will be rewarded. Enjoy!

The Excellence Myth. Missing what we really need.

We strive relentlessly in work and life, to be successful, happier, brighter, fitter, stronger, faster, better, ..., that we end up missing what we really need which is right under our nose.

The most important part of our lives can be found in this moment that is here now. But we are not focused on that so we don't see it.

Workplace Mindfulness Training

Introduction

From doing to being

*Mindfulness is:
paying attention
to what is happening, in this moment, right here right now,
without instant judging whether it is good or bad,
without immediately responding or doing anything about it,
in a relational way.*

Have you ever enjoyed the smell of freshly baked bread, or the smell of spring in the air? At such times all your attention is present in that moment. You are present, here and now. You are "mindful". Everyone is mindful at times, but usually we tend to get hijacked by what we feel or think. You probably also know times where you have been completely absorbed by excitement, stress, gloom, uncertainty, worry, anger, or fatigue.

Mindfulness is looking at what you think and feel with genuine interest, kindness, and gentleness, *without* directly doing anything with it, and without being completely absorbed in it. You just let thoughts and feelings be there. Pleasant or unpleasant. You observe them from a distance. This can be especially useful if you are 'in your head' a lot, or plagued by gloomy feelings and negative thoughts: by first perceiving that they are there and distancing yourself from them, feelings and thoughts often lose their strength. Then you can better decide how you want to deal with the situation.

Mindfulness is about being more present in your moment-to-moment experience. It is about paying attention to what is happening **now**. The definition of mindfulness identifies three aspects of this attention that are important when practicing mindfulness: the attention is focused, in the present moment, and non-judgmental.

Focused attention

Throughout the day our attention is drawn by all kinds of stimuli; things we see, things we hear, things we feel, things we think, etc.

One could say that our attention is normally very "unfocused". We let ourselves get carried away by whatever attracts our attention, and we are usually unaware of it.

When we practice mindfulness, we purposefully direct our attention somewhere, or on something. This is because we have a conscious intention to focus our attention.

Attention in the present moment

In mindfulness we focus our attention on what is happening here-and-now, in the present moment. So we do not focus our attention on what happened in the past, or what may happen in the future, but on our experience in **this** moment.

Non-judgmental attention

In practicing mindfulness, we have an open, non-judgmental attitude when we focus our attention on our moment-to-moment experience. If you pay attention, you will find that this is one of the most difficult aspects of mindfulness practice. We are used to instantaneously judging our experiences as 'nice', 'unpleasant', 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'good', 'bad', 'boring', etc. This is an automatic biologically rooted process that happens beyond our will. In general, we are more inclined to open up to pleasant experiences than unpleasant ones. In mindfulness we try to have an open attitude towards our full experience, without distinguishing between pleasant, neutral or unpleasant experiences. This openness is accompanied by a certain kindness and gentleness.

“Self-compassion contributes to the effectiveness of mindfulness.”



“Research has shown self-compassion to be linked to personal initiative, perceived self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation”

“In addition to intrapersonal benefits, self-compassion appears to enhance interpersonal functioning.”

How does mindfulness-based cognitive therapy work? Kuyken et al, Behaviour and Therapy Research 48, 2010

Self-compassion, achievement goals, and coping with academic failure. Self and Identity. Neff, K. D., Hseih, Y., & Dejttthirat, K. (2005).

Self-compassion and its link to adaptive psychological functioning. Journal of Research in Personality Neff, K. D., Kirkpatrick, K. & Rude, S. S. (2007).

From *doing* to *being*

One could say that mindfulness teaches us to switch from being focused on *doing* (the Doing Mode), to being focused on *being* (the Being Mode). As the name suggests: in 'Doing Mode' you are focused on doing. In Doing Mode you are constantly comparing: how or what is something now, and how would I want it to be? You often want the current situation to be different, or better than it is now. The big advantage of this mode is that you will improve or solve things. The disadvantage is that because of this you often live in the future or in the past ("that is how I will do it from now on", or "if only I had done it like this"), and that you hardly pay attention to the world, and things around you as they are in this very moment. Especially when the solution is not readily available, the mind can keep on worrying and ruminating about problems and possible solutions.

The Being Mode is different from the Doing Mode in every possible way. In Being mode you don't have to go anywhere or achieve anything. The way things are is just fine. In Being Mode you perceive and allow the way things are, without immediately reacting to it and without wanting to change or resolve things instantly. This way you can relax your mind and body. By first taking a step back and looking closely at what is going on, you often know better how you want to deal with the situation. You make a conscious choice about what to do next, instead of acting out of habit. In Being Mode you are not all the time working towards a goal; you focus your attention mainly on what is happening *now*. Trusting that, if you do it right *now*, you will eventually reach your goal.

'If you take care of the present, the present will take care of the future.'

How to Recognize

Doing Mode/Being Mode

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic pilot • Analysing • Striving • Seeing thoughts as solid and real • Avoidance • Mental time travel • Depleting activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious choice • Sensing • Accepting • Seeing thoughts as mental events • Approaching • Present moment • Nourishing activities
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Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World, Williams and Penman, 2011

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Mindfulness is a skill

In 1979 an attention training was developed that focuses on training mindfulness. The program was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and was called 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction' (MBSR). Over the course of his life, Kabat-Zinn became increasingly convinced that yoga and meditation play a vital role in the process of adapting to serious physical illness. The training is therefore based on a combination of Western psychology, and Buddhist meditation and yoga techniques.

In 2002, three renowned researchers, Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale, combined attention training with techniques from cognitive psychology. This variant is called 'Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy' (MBCT). MBCT has been specially developed for people who suffer from recurrent depression. MBCT puts more emphasis on becoming aware of your thoughts, beliefs and convictions. In both MBSR and MBCT, practicing at home is central. The mindfulness training you are following now is based on the MBCT program.

Waking up to the present moment gives you the choice about whether to act on your thoughts.

When we feel anxious or stressed at work, it's not the mood that impairs our performance, but the perception of our mood.

How we perceive the situation informs our behaviour and so with mindfulness we can learn to tune into and manage our perception.

Structure of the training

The structure of the meetings can be roughly divided into three steps.

Attention and awareness

Meetings 1 through 3 focus on becoming aware of the autopilot, and the judgmental rapidly wandering mind. Through various movement and meditation exercises you learn to consciously focus your attention on one thing, the body and the movements of the breathing. You also learn to become aware of physical signals and limitations. Besides that, you are asked to consciously notice pleasant or unpleasant events on a daily basis.

Applying the skills

From meeting 4 to 8 more emphasis is placed on how you can apply the skills from the first meetings in recognizing and dealing with (negative) feelings and thoughts differently. This way you will learn to recognize what typical signals of stress are, and that negative thoughts are not facts, but "just" thoughts. Sitting meditations are central in these meetings.

Supplement and deepening

If you follow a training of more than 8 weeks, the extra meetings add some additional and deepening exercises and knowledge to the mindfulness training.

In short....

This training can teach you to:

- get less caught up in thoughts and feelings
- recognize the signals your body gives to you
- recognize automatic reactions and deal with them better
- recognize your emotions and respond to them in a relaxed way
- deal effectively with feelings of stress
- increase your mental strength and resilience, so that you can handle difficult situations (better)

Meeting 1

Autopilot

In this first week we are exploring the power of our autopilot. One of the basic exercises of mindfulness training is also discussed: the body scan. This is a way to anchor yourself in the present moment, and become aware of what you are feeling in your body.

Autopilot

As humans we spend a lot of time on autopilot. How much of your time could you reclaim?

If your mind wanders for 47% of the day, what proportion of that 47% could you reconnect with?

What else are you missing through inattention?

A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind, Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010, Science Vol 330



Have you ever been on your bike or driving a car, to suddenly notice that you are almost home without even realizing? That you are leaving your house, and a little later you suddenly wonder whether you have locked the door? That you are looking forward to a cup of coffee, and later realize that your cup is already empty without having tasted anything?

The advantage of this kind of automatic or habitual behaviour, is that you can do something else or think about something else in the meantime. It can be nice that we don't have to think about everything to make things run smoothly. If we were not able to do this, we would have to be constantly occupied with making everyday actions go well. Some activities even go better if we don't think about them too much and act more on autopilot (e.g. riding your bike).

The downside is that many things pass by you, without being fully aware of it. You miss a lot. We often don't see the little things that make life worth living, because we are somewhere else in our mind. For example, we miss the smile of a child, or the beauty of our environment. We also often do not notice the "signs of dissatisfaction" from our loved ones, with all the consequences that entails.

When it comes to dealing with problems, we regularly end up in the autopilot. For example, we have a constant tendency to worry, to repeat certain scenarios. Not because we want to, but because it is difficult to detach ourselves from our automatic (thinking) pattern. In autopilot there is no room for creativity, nor for finding new solutions. So we often get stuck in the same reaction patterns, even if they are not functional, or beneficial. For instance, it can be an automatic response to seek less contact with others when you are feeling down. Or take offense or become defensive when you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or hurt.

Perhaps the most important drawback of our autopilot is that we often do not have a choice. It's not a coincidence we call it "autopilot". Getting into autopilot implies that we are losing a part of our freedom: to live our experience in fullness, and to do what seems best in that moment.

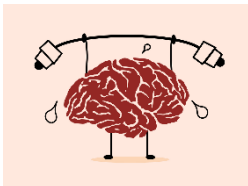
By becoming more aware of what is currently going on, what you think and feel, you create space to deal with those thoughts and feelings differently.

Connecting body and mind: the body scan

In this first week of mindfulness-training we will practice the body scan. The body scan is an important exercise within mindfulness for several reasons.

The body scan takes you out of your head and into your body. We often live mainly from our mind and have less contact with our body. The body scan helps to feel your body again. The goal is to pay attention to your body, and to feel what and where you experience something in your body. This exercise is not about whether you feel a lot or a little, or whether you start to feel comfortable, relaxed or calm. It is not a relaxation exercise: it is mainly about paying attention to your body in a caring way, and recognizing what you are feeling in your body at that moment in time. In the long run you may notice that you become more sensitive, and notice things in your body that you were previously unaware of. It cannot be emphasized enough that you are not supposed to try to suppress your thoughts or feelings. That often only works counterproductive: the more you don't want something, the more it imposes itself on you.

With the body scan you also practice focusing your attention, because you constantly shift your attention through your body. This helps to strengthen your "attention muscle".



Sooner or later, your attention will be distracted and that gives you the opportunity to practice bringing your attention back to the body scan the moment you notice this. This allows you to develop the ability to focus your attention longer. In addition, you also learn to shift by consciously releasing your attention and moving it to the next body part.

Another way to strengthen the "attention muscle" is to play with your attention during the body scan. For example, you can zoom in on a detail, such as your little toe, or a specific sensation, and then focus on a larger part, such as your entire foot. By focusing your attention on something and then moving it again, you develop mindfulness.

The body scan will furthermore show you how your mind wanders, when it does that, and how you react to it. When you notice that your attention is no longer with your body, but you are, for example, thinking or listening, you can first notice this ('ah, I'm thinking about', or 'I hear ...'), and then return your attention to your body. Over and over again. Without judging or thinking that you are doing something wrong. Without wondering why something is happening the way it happens, or is the way it is. The body scan is all about paying attention to your body, learning to notice how easily your attention wanders, not engaging in your distractions, and always bringing the attention back to your body.

By practicing the body scan, you will notice that in your daily activities you also become more aware of how you physically feel, what you need, and what you can do best in that moment.

Mindfulness in everyday activities

Another way to develop mindfulness is to do the activities you do every day with more attention. The goal is not that you concentrate very hard, and make an effort to act consciously. The goal is that you are aware of *what* you are doing *while* you are doing it, with fresh and relaxed attention. As with the body scan, if you find yourself distracted, notice it, notice where your attention is, and then bring it back to the action itself. How it feels, how it sounds, how it tastes, how it smells, how it looks. This way you can always shift from the Doing Mode to the Being Mode.

To practice this, it is easiest to choose a simple routine activity that you do every day. Choose something that you can control yourself, something you will not be disturbed by easily.

Examples of possible activities are:

- Doing the dishes
- Filling the dishwasher
- Taking out the trash
- Toothbrushing
- Showering
- Drying yourself
- Dressing
- Leaving home
- Locking the door

What daily activities can you come up with that you could/would like to do with more attention? For this week, pick one that you will focus on throughout the week. In the course of the training you can always add activities that you want to do consciously. It can help to slow down your pace a bit, to get out of your daily routine, but you don't have to. Mindfulness is not the same as doing something slowly! It can also help to label what you perceive with your senses: warm or cold, smooth or rough, salty or sweet, soft or hard, heavy or light.

Well begun is half done

Sometimes you will find yourself getting frustrated while doing exercises. Maybe you are thinking, "Now my attention has wandered again! I can't do it, I'm not suitable for this. I'm not making any progress at all, I am not at all calm or focused!". Or "Pfff, how long will this take?! I wish it had already ended, this makes me very restless!". At a moment like that you are performing the exercises in the Doing Mode, where you continuously assess yourself and try to improve.

At such a time, remind yourself that:

- judging does not help (on the contrary!)
- comparing (yourself with others or your current experience with a former one or a set goal) is frustrating
- our mind is often and quickly distracted (it is the nature of our attention, the "MonkeyMind")

It helps to do the exercises with a certain relaxed, alert attitude, without being too driven, but also without being too easy and lazy. You can also compare it to a well-stretched string of an instrument: not too tight and not too loose.

As difficult as it may be, it works better to practice without expectations, without immediately wanting to achieve anything. Let it come to you. Mindfulness is looking at what is *now* with a patient and non-judgmental attitude. This way you can look patiently and friendly at feelings of impatience, frustration, restlessness, insecurity, boredom, etc. Difficult exercises, where for example you feel very restless, can teach us a lot. After all, it is about being present here and now with what is there, even if it is unpleasant. The exercises do not have to be pleasurable or lead to relaxation. You just have to do them. The effect of this training sometimes isn't noticeable until after a few weeks, so it makes little sense to critique a single exercise.

Have faith in the learning process and if the going gets tough, you can reread the texts in the workbook for support.

It helps if you are willing to make some effort to live more consciously. Not the effort of working hard to reach something, but the effort of setting the intention to consciously refocus your attention on the present moment, over and over again. It is good to realize that this is a process that does not happen automatically.

It often takes effort to create the space in your life to be able to do the exercises at home. It helps if you plan the time for the exercises in your daily program, and make it a routine. If you let the practice depend on whether there is time left, it often turns into a real fight and you get the feeling that you still "have to" do this. However mindfulness is rather something that you allow yourself to practice!

You can use the practice form to keep track of what you have practiced, how the practice went, and to write down experiences during practice for yourself. You may want to read your notes on the practice form before the next meeting to make it easier to remember your practice experiences during the meeting.

Finally, don't forget that you can start over at any time. In fact, that is what we do: starting over and over, again and again, thousands of times. Any week, any day, any exercise, any meditation and any time you can start over.



Dealing with Stress: "Half past four already? - and I have to meditate for another fifteen minutes - darn, it really stresses me out."

Peace

"Peace can exist only in the present moment.

It is ridiculous to say

"Wait until I finish this, then I will be free to live in peace."

What is "this"?

A diploma, a job, a house, the payment of a debt?

If you think that way, peace will never come.

There is always another "this" that will follow the present one.

If you are not living in peace at this moment,

you will never be able to.

If you truly want to be at peace,

you must be at peace right now.

Otherwise, there is only "the hope of peace someday.""

Thich Nhat Hanh

Home practice suggestions after meeting 1

1. Practice the **Body Scan** once a day.

Each time you do the exercise, briefly write your experiences during the exercise on the exercise form. What did you notice in your body? If your mind wandered, where did it go? How did you get along with bringing attention back to the body?

2. Once a day, eat the **first bite of a meal or snack** mindfully, as you did with the mindful eating exercise during our first meeting. Briefly write down your experiences.
3. Pick a **daily routine activity** and do it mindfully every day for at least one time. Briefly write down your experiences.
4. Read the **information** belonging to meeting 1.

Remember: to rewire your brain: better practice often and short, than sometimes and long.

Optional:

5. To measure the effect of the training, fill in the baseline measurement form '**YOUR PERSONAL ENERGY BALANCE SCALE TEST**'.
6. Fill in the **expectations form**. This form is primarily intended as a resource for yourself. If you would like me to also know what you desire - so that, if you have any questions in between the meetings, I can help you in the best possible way - please return the completed form by email.

EXERCISE FORM WEEK 1

Keep a daily record of your homework. Fill it in as accurately and honestly as possible.

DAY	PRACTISED YES/NO	NOTES
DAY 1 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	
DAY 2 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	
DAY 3 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	
DAY 4 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	
DAY 5 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	
DAY 6 Date	Body Scan: First bite: Routine activity:	

Extra Notes: