

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Session Two: Dealing with Barriers



Summary of Session 2: Dealing with Barriers

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

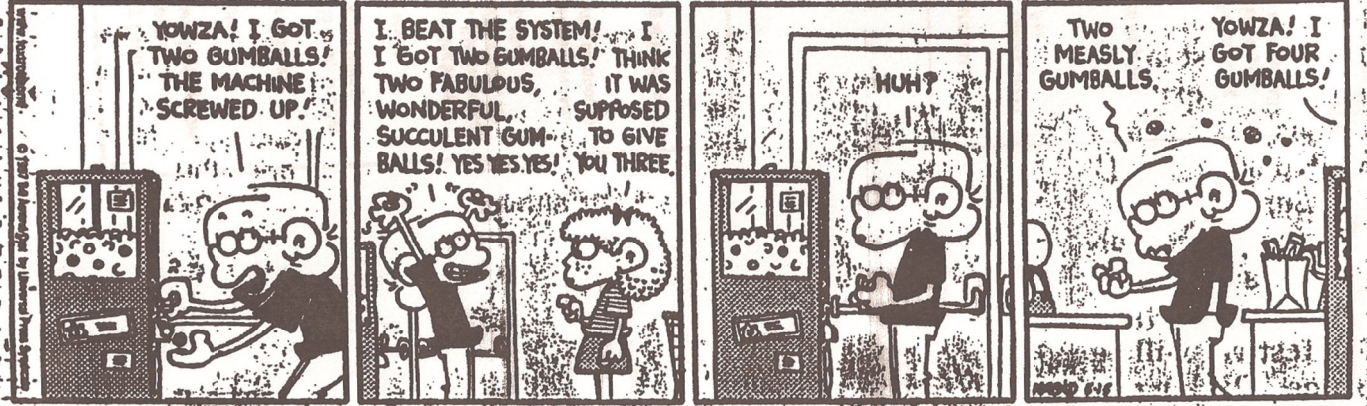
We can regain our freedom if, as a first step, we simply acknowledge the actuality of our situation, without immediately being hooked into automatic tendencies to judge, fix or want things to be other than they are. The body scan exercise provides an opportunity to practice simply bringing an interested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

The range of what we think and do
is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice,
there is little we can do to change;
until we notice how failing to notice
shapes our thoughts and deeds.

-Ronald Laing



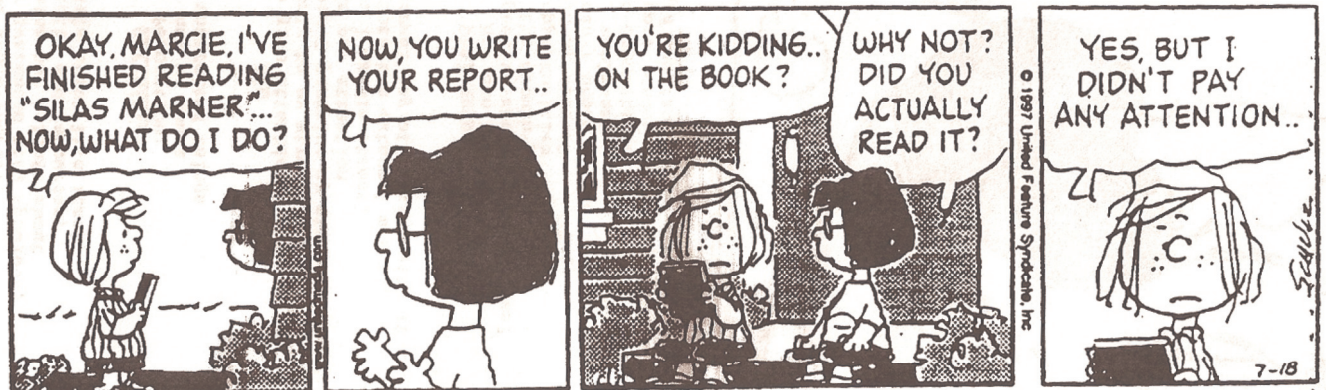
FOXTROT



Your immune system is constantly eavesdropping on your inner dialogue

- Anthony de Mello

PEANUTS



THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS

There are two ways to wash the dishes...

The first is in order to have clean dishes.

The second is to wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes.

If while washing the dishes we think only of the cup of tea which awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not alive at the time we are washing them.

In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink.

If we can't wash the dishes, we won't be able to drink our tea either.

While drinking, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands.

Thus we are sucked away into the future and we are actually incapable of living one minute of life.

- Thich Nhat Hahn



MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) WEEK TWO

THEME

How we perceive situations helps determine whether we react automatically or respond creatively

INVITATION

To expand how we view things, to see through the eyes of wholeness and connectedness, to make our awareness more spacious, to examine our beliefs about our limits and resources, our beliefs about life itself.

DEFINITION

Perception: how we sense or understand things.

AIM

To give attention not only to my stressors but also to how I perceive my stressors, to pay attention to how I handle stress, to notice both the external stress and my own internal way of working with it.

CHALLENGE

How can I broaden my perspective about my challenges? What are growth-producing opportunities in my crises? How can I begin to see wholeness and connectedness as more fundamental than separateness?

-Sue Young

Sketch of the Lady



Basic Meditation Instructions

Find a posture in which you can easily sit erect without being rigid. Let your body be firmly planted on the earth, your hands resting easily, your heart soft, your eyes closed gently. At first feel your body and consciously soften any obvious tension. Let go of any habitual thoughts or plans. Bring your attention to feel the sensations of your breathing. Take a few deep breaths to sense where you can feel the breath most easily, as coolness or tingling in the nostrils or throat, as movement of the chest, or rise and fall of the belly. Then let your breath be natural. Feel the sensations of your natural breathing very carefully, relaxing into each breath as you feel it, noticing how the soft sensations of breathing come and go with the changing of breath.

After a few breaths your mind will probably wander. When you notice this, no matter how long or short a time you have been away, simply come back to the next breath. Before you return you can mindfully acknowledge where you have gone with a soft word in the back of your mind, such as "thinking", "wondering", "hearing", "itching". After softly and silently naming to yourself where your attention has been, gently and directly return to feel the next breath. Later on in your meditation you will be able to work with the places to which your mind wanders, but for initial training, one word of acknowledgement and a simple return to the breath is best.

As you sit let the breath change rhythms naturally, allowing it to be short, long, fast, slow, rough or easy. Calm yourself by relaxing into the breath. When your breath becomes soft, let your attention become gentle and careful, as soft as the breath itself.

As if training a puppy, gently bring yourself back a thousand times. Over weeks and months of this practice, you will gradually learn to calm and center yourself using the breath. There will be many cycles in this process, stormy days alternating with clear days. Just stay with it. As you do, listening deeply, you will find the breath helping to connect and quiet your whole body and mind.

*Adapted from Jack Kornfield, **A Path with Heart***



HOME PRACTICE FOR WEEK TWO

1. Do the Body Scan 6 days this week. Record your reactions on the Home Practice Record from each time.
2. At a different time, practice 10-15 minutes of mindful breathing with or without the CD for 6 days. Being with your breath in this way each day provides an opportunity to become aware of what it feels like to be connected and present in the moment without having to **do** anything.
3. Complete the Pleasant Event Calendar each day (one entry per day.) Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations around one pleasant each day. Notice and record, as soon as you can, *in detail* (that is, use the actual words or images in which the thought came) the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.
4. Choose a different routine activity to be especially mindful of. Make a deliberate effort to focus your attention on that activity each time you do it. Here are some more possibilities: preparing to go to bed, washing dishes, opening mail, getting dressed, watering the plants, and kissing a family member goodbye or hello. *As best you can do the activity consciously, bringing yourself to the moment.*

DAY/DATE	PRACTICE YES/NO	COMMENTS
Wednesday Date:		
Thursday Date:		
Friday Date:		
Saturday Date:		
Sunday Date:		
Monday Date:		
Tuesday Date:		

