

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Session Seven: Challenging States, Choices and Loving Kindness



Summary of Session 7: Challenging Mind States and Loving-Kindness

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”

Frederick Buechner

As we move toward the end of our eight-week series we have an opportunity to begin to embrace states of mind that while natural, can be a challenge to work with. These states that will arise at times may be fear, anger, sadness and the like. It takes skill and practice to see clearly and stay in our seats with open hearts and quiet minds. These like all the practices we do take patience and perseverance. But we can trust that when these heavy states arise we are at an edge where great change can take place simply by witnessing and staying present.

STOP

**Stop
Take a Breath
Observe
Proceed**

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked room and like books that are written in a foreign tongue. Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given you, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will find them gradually, without noticing it, and live along some distant day into the answer”

Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet



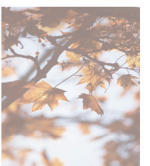
EXPLORATION OF ANGER

Anger arises in response to an event. The anger we feel is activated by an event outside of ourselves (such as another person's words or actions), but the anger itself, lives within us. We own our anger. It does not belong to someone else. As Gavin Harrison says "In the Lap of the Buddha": "As we observe anger, we see that it arises in association with causes. It does not randomly flare up on its own. Neither does it burst forth from some internal reservoir. If we don't get what we want, anger arises. If we get what we don't want anger comes up. **Whenever anger arises, we can be sure that we are at an edge, a place where the opportunity for freedom and understanding is enormous.** Anger arises when there is attachment. Where there is attachment, there is also the opportunity to let go."

As long as we are alive we will feel anger. We can get to know our anger well by recognizing it in the body and the mind. Then we have a choice: Do we want to continue to *water the seeds of suffering*, or are we ready to take care of ourselves instead? Turn your attention inward, be curious... Is there a lesson here for us? Something we can learn? Stay with yourself, much the way you would stay with your sweet child who is in distress. Breathe and remember this moment holds opportunity and energy. How can you use this experience to serve yourself and others?

Thich Nhat Hanh has suggested the following analog "... When we are angry, we are inclined to give our full attention to whatever is making us angry. In fact, the root of our problem is the anger inside of us, and we have to come back to it and take care of it first of all. Like a fireman, we must put water on the blaze immediately and not waste time looking for the person who set the house on fire. Breathing in, I know that I am angry. Breathing out, I know that I must take care of my anger."

*If you think about your anger... you get migraines
If you swallow your anger... you get ulcers
If you carry your anger... you get backaches
If you sit on your anger... you get hemorrhoids :)*



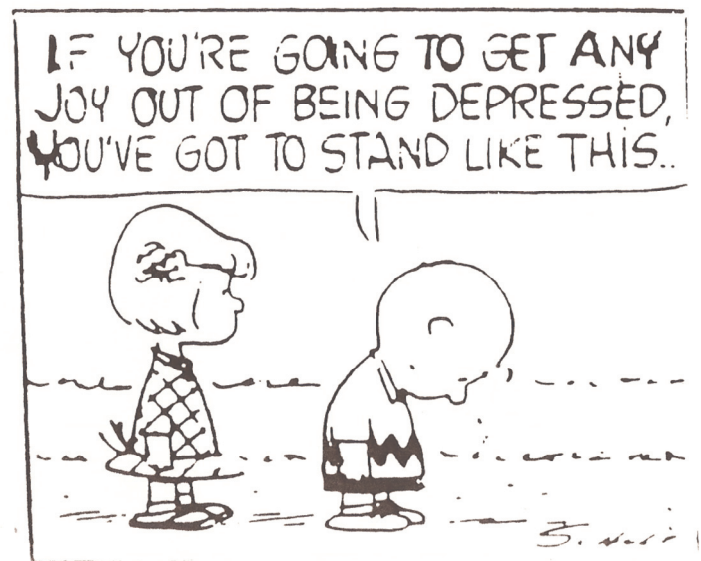
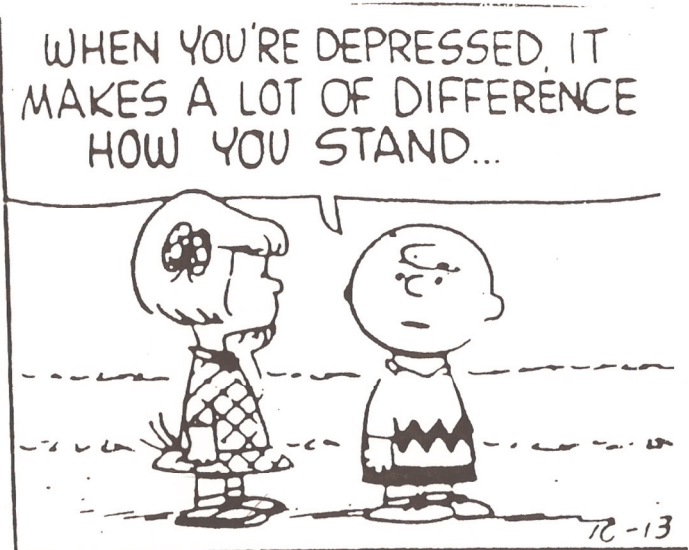
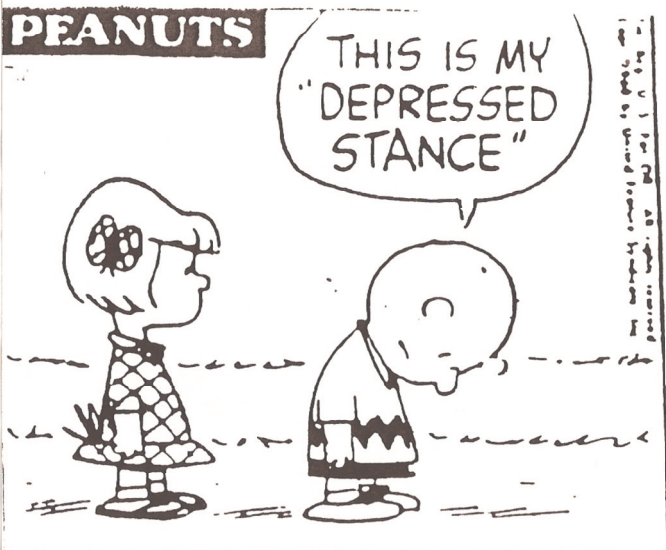
SUGGESTIONS FOR BRINGING MINDFULNESS TO ANGER

by Beth Roth

1. Start with the smaller, less powerful emotions on the continuum. Working with impatience, learning to transform it to patience, is a practice in itself. This practice goes a long way toward learning more about anger, and it also greatly reduces stress. Likewise with irritation and annoyance.
2. You may need to stop looking at, thinking about, interacting with the person who has triggered the anger, in order that you can bring the focus of attention back to you, ... back to what is happening in your mind and your body.
3. If anger seems too overwhelming to investigate in the mind, bring awareness into the body. Clearly observe what's happening in different areas of the body when angry; specifically scan the hand, feet, forehead, rib cage, knees, breathing, body temperature, etc. Mini body scan. The mind can tell us stories, but the body doesn't lie.
4. Actually ask yourself questions and look for answers. "What is happening? What is this feeling? Where do I feel it? In the body? In the mind? Is it anger? Is it sadness?" Etc.
5. Try just five minutes of walking meditation, perhaps saying to yourself: "Breathing in, I know that I am angry. Breathing out, mindfulness is in me also. Breathing in, I know that I can take care of these feelings. Breathing out, I calm this feeling."
6. Relate to anger after the fact, not at the time it is actually happening. Try examining it in retrospect. Not with the idea of analyzing it, but truly seeking greater understanding, trying to see more clearly what happened inside yourself.
7. Observe other people, without judgement, but to learn.



PEANUTS



***Out beyond our ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing there is a field
I will meet you there***

***When the soul lies down in that grass
The world is too full to talk about
Ideas, language, even the words each other
Doesn't make any sense.***

-Rumi

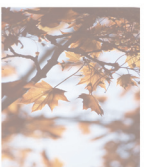


Fear of Death

Our fear of death is our fear of the uncontrollable unknown. It is the same old fear. It lies in wait behind our eyelids as we awake each morning. It is the fear of fears. It needs space to breathe. Zen master Suzuki Roshi said that if you put a wild horse in a small stall it can go mad and kick out all the slats, but if you lead this same stallion to an open meadow and let him go, he will run about for a while but then settle down, roll in the grass, and go to sleep. Just so with the wild rumors that echo back and forth in the tiny cortex and turn the body to shattered stone. Allowing the fear to float in an awareness that relates to it instead of from it, we examine the warp and woof of its textures in the body and examine its process in the mind as if it were occurring to our only child. As awareness embraces fear, control becomes less of an issue, and the mind sinks into the heart. There is a space into which we can let go of even the confusion that is reflected from our concepts about death. There is a nonjudgmental softness in which it can float. It is not that the fear goes away completely but that it is less panicked in its own presence. When attempts at control become a prison only letting go of control will result in freedom. When we turn toward our fear of no control, and do not attempt to alter it, our edges become less concrete and we have less to protect.

Don't pull back from fear. - Soften the belly and gently enter it. - Relate to the fear, not just from it. - Explore the physical and mental patterns that accompany this state of mind. - How do you know this state of mind is fear? - What are its attributes? - Define fear's body pattern. [...] Let fear float, and begin to dissolve, in the spaciousness of soft-belly. - Let it come and let it go. - There is nothing to fear in fear. - The sincere exploration of fear results in a fearlessness which does not even wish fear to go away but to become open and free.

from Stephen Levine, *A Year to Live*



QUALITIES OF MINDFULNESS

Non-striving
Patience

Non-judging
Trust

Acceptance
Openness

Letting go

Gratitude

Gentleness

Generosity

Empathy

Loving-kindness

Kabat-Zinn and Shapiro, Shwartz and Bonner

When we **STOP** to practice a loving-kindness meditation, we invite a new perception within that very moment. The concept of our separateness will often dissolve into a transformation and awareness that we, as human beings, are all interconnected not only with one another, but the entire universe.

When practicing the metta meditation, always begin “at home” within yourself: Begin by sitting alert in silence. When you feel ready, slowly and mindfully say the following to yourself with friendship, caring, and kindness:

May I be safe and free from inner and outer harm

May I be peaceful...full of peace

May I be as healthy as I can be at this moment

May I be kind to myself and others

After allowing the loving-kindness meditation above to settle deeply within you, consider extending the same meditation to others. Some ideas include sending loving-kindness to:

- Someone or those in your life who you love
- Someone you feel neutral about
- Someone you are having difficulty with
- Your community
- Your state, country
- The world
- The Universe

As you explore extending love and kindness to others you may experience an awareness of the boundlessness of life. Do you notice any particular sensations as you send metta to the universe ripple by ripple?

Remember...if you don't have an hour to practice, meditate for a half-hour. If you don't have a half hour for practice, do fifteen minutes. If you don't have fifteen minutes, do ten. If you don't have ten, do an hour because your life is out of balance.



HOME PRACTICE FOR WEEK SEVEN

1. Practice daily 30 minutes alternating body scan, yoga, walking, sitting without CD.
2. Continue to practice the 3 minute breathing space.
3. Notice what you consume, food, media, conversations.
4. Practice Loving-kindness meditation with the CD daily.

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

