

Harnessing Mindfulness: Tailoring the Practice to the Person

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What is Mindfulness?

- *Sati* in Pali
 - Connotes *awareness, attention, & remembering*
- In therapeutic arena, also includes
 - Non-judgment
 - Acceptance
 - Adds kindness & friendliness

Therapeutic Mindfulness

1. Awareness
2. Of present experience
3. With acceptance

Mindfulness is Not:

- Operating on “autopilot”
- Being lost in fantasies of the past and future
- Breaking or spilling things because we’re not paying attention
- Rushing through activities without attending to them

Life Is Difficult, for Everybody

- Everything changes
 - Loss is inevitable
- We’re hard wired to try to enhance our self esteem
 - But we win some and lose some
 - And we get sick and die

Mindfulness Can Help Us

- To see and accept things as they are
- To loosen our preoccupation with “self”
- To experience the richness of the moment
- To become free to act skillfully

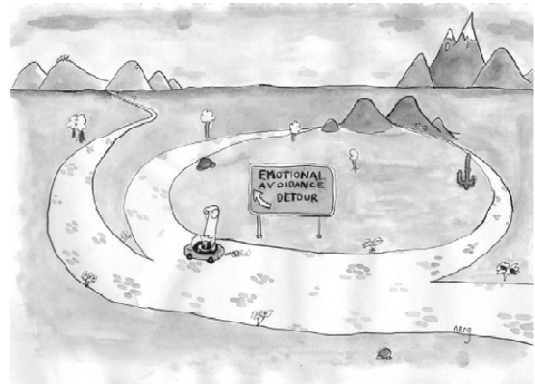
Mindfulness *Practice* is Not:

- Having a “blank” mind
- Becoming emotionless
- Withdrawing from life
- Seeking bliss
- Escaping pain

Breath Awareness



How it Works



Fly

Overwhelmed?



Intensity of
experience

Capacity to
bear experience



The Thinking Disease

- Analyze past pleasure and pain
- Maximize future pleasure and avoid future pain



The Roles of Mindfulness

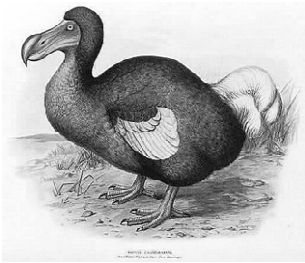
Implicit



Explicit

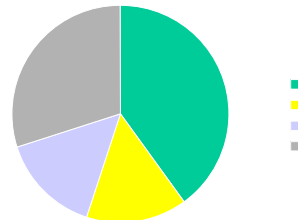
- Practicing Therapist
 - Relates mindfully to patients regardless of therapeutic intervention
- Mindfulness Informed Psychotherapy
 - Insights from mindfulness practice inform treatment
- Mindfulness Based Psychotherapy
 - Teaches mindfulness practice to patients

Dodo Bird Hypothesis



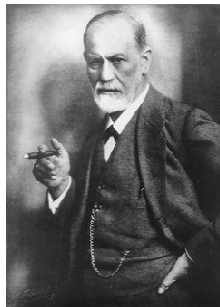
“Everybody has won, and all must have prizes.”

What Matters Most in Psychotherapy?



“Evenly Hovering Attention”

- “Listen and not to trouble to keep in mind anything in particular”
– Freud, 1912



And I, Sir, Can Be Run Through with a Sword



Affect Tolerance

- Not “my,” but “the”
 - Anger
 - Fear
 - Lust
 - Joy

Embracing Affect

- Beyond affect tolerance – embracing emotion
 - Our patients can only be with those emotions that we can embrace
- All emotions experienced as transient
 - A teaspoon of salt in a pond



Not Knowing



Beginner's Mind



Fitting the Practice to the Person

Core Practice Skills

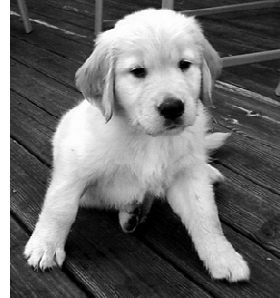
1. Concentration
2. Mindfulness *per se*
3. Acceptance and Compassion

Concentration vs. Mindfulness

- Concentration
 - Choose an object and follow it closely
- Mindfulness
 - Attend to whatever object rises to forefront of consciousness



Acceptance



Continuum of Practice

Informal Mindfulness Practice



Formal Meditation Practice



Intensive Retreat Practice

Informal Practice



Taillight Meditation



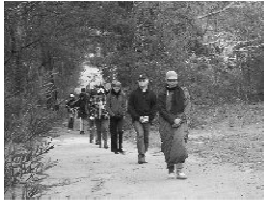
Formal Practice

(Results May Vary)

- Data supports effects of formal meditation
- Structural and functional brain changes.



Intensive Retreat Practice



Resources at: meditationandpsychotherapy.org

Religious or Secular?

- “Spiritual” practices
 - Devotional and theistic
- Secular practices
 - Science grounded
- Seek cultural consonance

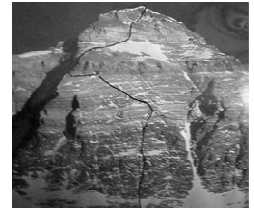
Turning toward Safety I

- Outer or distal focus
 - Walking Meditation
 - Listening Meditation
 - Nature Meditation
 - Eating Meditation
 - Open eye practices



Turning toward Safety II

- Inner focus
 - Mountain Meditation
 - Guided Imagery
 - *Metta* Practice
 - DBT techniques



Turning Toward the Sharp Points

- Moving toward anything unwanted or avoided
- How is it experienced in the body?
 - Pain, fear, sadness, anger
 - Unwanted images or memories
 - Urges toward compulsive behaviors



Objects of Attention

Course



Subtle

- Feet touching ground
- Sights and sounds of nature
- Taste of food
- Sound of bell
- Breath in belly
- Mantra
- Air at tip of nose

Different Strokes

- Need for frequent adjustment of exercises
- Elicit feedback about the experience
 - Both during and after practice
- Titrate between Safety and Sharp Points

Intensive Retreat Practice



Resources at: meditationandpsychotherapy.org

When Mindfulness of Inner Experience Can Be Harmful

- When overwhelmed by traumatic memories
- When terrified of disintegration, loss of sense of self
- When suffering from psychosis



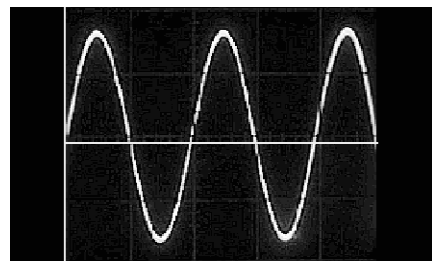
Alternate Techniques when Overwhelmed

- Eyes open, external sensory focus
 - Ground, trees, sky, wind, sounds
- Yoga practices to stretch and relax muscles



Stepping into Life: Treating Depression

All or Nothing



Turning Away from Experience

- Depression involves turning away from pain
- Mindfulness turns *toward* the experience at hand, challenging the depressive stance

Learned Helplessness

- Mindfulness redirects attention to present
- Practice seeing moment to moment experiences as workable



Prisoners of Habit



Murder in the 180th Degree



Aliveness



You become sensitive to the actual experience of living, to how things actually feel. You do not sit around developing sublime thoughts about living. You live. - Bhante Guanarantana

Attention to Present Affect

- Focus on *what*, not *why*
 - What is happening right now?
 - Can you be with or breath into what is happening right now?
- Similar to Eugene Gendlin's focusing and Gestalt Therapy techniques.

Moving Toward Pain

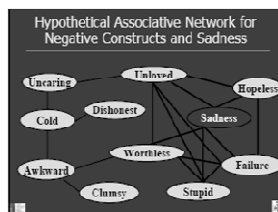
- What do you experience in your body?
- What is your relationship to your pain?
- Do you feel compassionate toward yourself?



Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

- One of “Third Wave” of Behavior Therapies
 - Acceptance is a precondition of change
 - Carl Rogers
- Formulated by Teasdale, Segal, & Williams
- Hypothesized that mindfulness might prevent relapse of Major Depression episodes
- Based on information processing theory

MBCT Model of Depression



Mild dysphoria triggers depressive cognitive patterns from previous major depressive episode

MBCT Components

- Formal Practice
 - Body Scan
 - Mindful Stretching/Yoga
 - Mindfulness of breath/body/sounds/thoughts
- Informal Practice
 - 3 minute breathing space, regular or coping
 - Mindfulness of everyday activities

MBCT Structure

- Activities based on MBSR model
- Done in groups of up to 12 recovered depressed patients
- 8 weekly 2 hour sessions
- 4 follow up meetings
- Daily homework

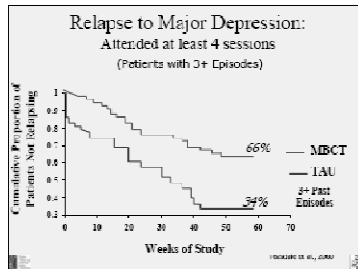
Perspective on Thought

- Refuting thought often falls flat
- Changing relationship to *all* thinking is more powerful

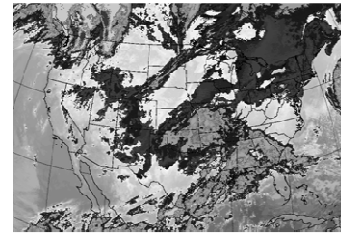
Thoughts are not facts. . .
I am not my thoughts. . .



MBCT Depression Treatment Outcomes



Affective Meteorology



- When in the past did you not feel depressed?
- How were your thought patterns different?

Entering Dark Places

- Following our patient into
 - Despair
 - Loneliness
 - Un-lovability
 - Self hate



DESPAIR

It's ALWAYS DARKEST JUST BEFORE IT GOES PITCH BLACK.

Surviving & Connecting

- Patients need to know that they will not kill us off with their anger or despair
- "You cannot draw a depressed person out of his misery with love. . . you can, sometimes, manage to join someone in the place where he resides"

— Andrew Solomon

Hope

- Premature offers of hope are empathic failures
- Empathic connection itself offers hope



Medication

- Is patient caught in downward spiral?
- Does depressed affect lead to behavior which results in more depression?
- Is therapeutic relationship sufficient to reverse this?

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

~ Rumi ~

Befriending Fear: Treating Anxiety Disorders

Components of Anxiety

- Physiological
 - Psychophysiological arousal
- Cognitive/Affective
 - Future oriented thinking, fear
 - Accurate and inaccurate risk appraisal
- Behavioral
 - Avoidance and rituals

Toppling Forward

- Most of time we're lost in thoughts about the future
- Next, next, next
 - Looking forward to pleasure
 - Dreading pain



Anticipation

- All anxiety is anticipatory
- Even people in terrible present situations worry about the future



Worry

- Keeps me safe
- Helps me cope
- Prepares me for what may come



Trying to Be Happy by Avoiding Pain

- The "Diver Dan" approach to life
 - Phobic avoidance & constriction
- Medicating discomfort
- Hooked on distraction
 - TV, Internet, Shopping
- Stimulation tolerance



Escape-Avoidance Learning

- Enter situation
- Anxiety arises
- Leave situation
- Anxiety abates
- Reduction in anxiety is negatively reinforcing



Exposure and Response Prevention



Compassionate Bait and Switch

- Patients want us to remove anxious feeling
- Instead, we help them to increase their capacity to bear it
- Changing their *relationship* to the experience

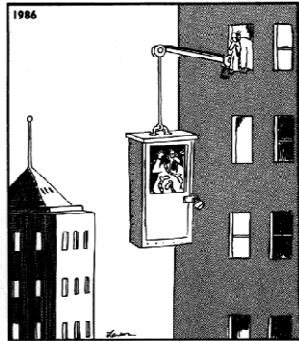
2500 Year Old Treatment

Why do I dwell always expecting fear and dread? What if I subdue that fear and dread keeping the same posture that I am in when it comes upon me? While I walked, the fear and dread came upon me; I neither stood nor sat nor lay down until I had subdued that fear and dread.



Facing Fears

- Necessary component of all anxiety treatment
- Mindfulness provides support



Professor Gallagher and his controversial technique of simultaneously confronting the fear of heights, snakes, and the dark.

Relief from Narcissistic Threats

- Anxiety often involves threats to who we think we are
 - Self image
 - Health
 - Wealth
 - Anticipated loss of pleasure
 - Anticipated pain

Mindfulness in Action



Mindfulness of Unwanted Affect

- Much anxiety is signal anxiety
- Fear of
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Sexual urges
 - Repressed/suppressed memories
 - Unacceptable thoughts

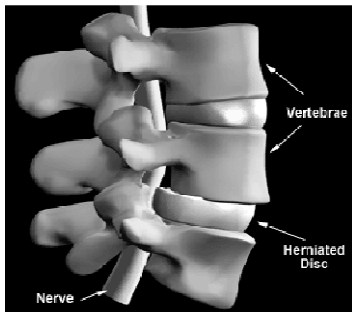


Beyond Symptom Management:

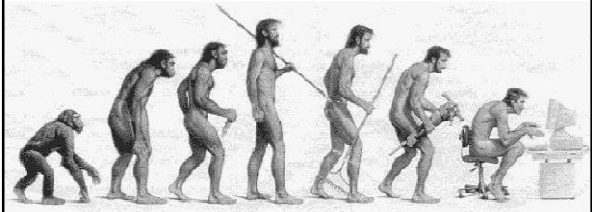
Treating Psychophysiological Disorders

The Strange Case of Chronic Back Pain

Bad Back?



The Orthopedic Story



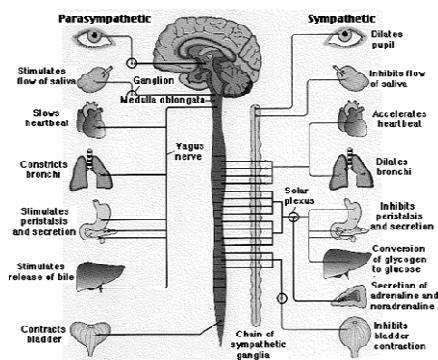
What's the Evidence?

- 2/3 of people who have never suffered from serious back pain have the same sorts of "abnormal" back structures that are often blamed for the pain
- Millions of people who suffer from chronic back pain show no "abnormalities" in their backs
- Many people continue to have pain after "successful" surgical repair

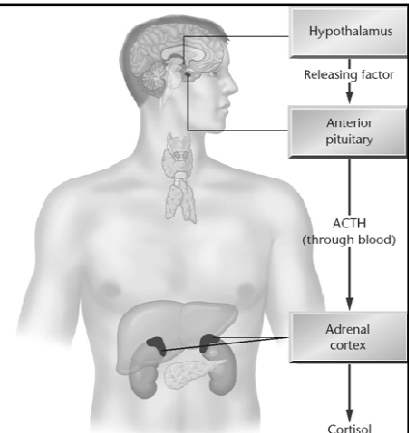
"Smoking Gun" Studies

- What countries have chronic back pain epidemics?
- Who gets chronic back pain?
- What is the quickest way out of acute back pain?

Autonomic Nervous System



HPA Axis

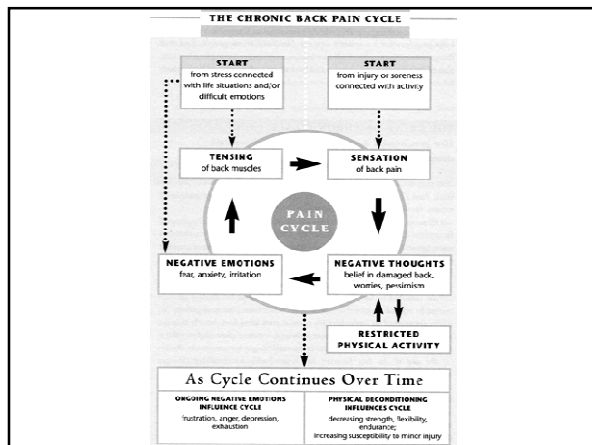


A Well-Adjusted Brain



Disorders of Chronic Overarousal or Disregulation

- Back, Neck, or other chronic muscle pain
- Gastrointestinal Distress
- Headaches, TMJ, Tinnitus, Bruxism
- Insomnia
- Eczema and other skin disorders
- Sexual Dysfunctions
- Panic and other anxiety disorders



Not Imaginary Pain

- While psychological stressors of all types can contribute to chronic back pain, **the pain is *not* imagined or “All in the head”**
- It is caused by real muscle tension.
- Patients often need for this to be explained *repeatedly*

Four Steps of the Back Sense Program

1. Medical Evaluation
2. Cognitive Restructuring
3. Exposure Treatment
4. Working with Negative Emotions

In the Physical Therapy Office

- The weird science experiment gone awry
 - Implosion treatment
 - Ignores Back School instructions
- Fastest method
- Greatest chance of drop out

In the Psychotherapy Office

- Begin with activities that are:
 - Easy
 - Pleasurable or rewarding
 - Can be done 3 or more times/week
- Continue until no longer feared
 - Convinced it doesn't make pain worse
- Use *Resuming Activities Chart*

Systemic Issues

- Much stress is interpersonal
 - Need for enhanced communication strategies
- Need to address systemic secondary gain
 - Interpersonal
 - Economic



Mindfulness



The Story of the Two Arrows

When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows (*Sallatha Sutta* [The Arrow]).

(Pain) x (Resistance) = Suffering

- Pain can be observed to be separate from “suffering”
- Impermanence as gift as well as curse
- Apparently solid pain states are observed to be like frames in a movie, ever-changing

Pain is Inevitable, Suffering is Optional

- Suffering Includes:
 - Grimacing, wincing, bracing.
 - Aversive thoughts.
 - Wishes for relief.
 - Self-punitive thoughts.
 - Anger, fear, depression regarding condition.

Mindfulness & Cognitive Restructuring

Thoughts Are Just Thoughts

- Mindfulness increases cognitive flexibility
- Need to believe that beliefs are part of the problem
- Not events themselves, but our reactions to events that are the problem

Observing Pain-related Thoughts

- Tally-mark assignment to monitor thoughts
- Notice prevalence of anxious thought and feeling
- Notice future-oriented catastrophizing
- Notice “budgeting” activity

Mindfulness & Resuming Normal Life

Creative Hopelessness

- Central paradox in treatment of psychophysiological disorders:
 - Attachment to symptom reduction perpetuates disorder



Mindfulness: Beyond Relaxation Training

- Not trying to gain control over physiological arousal
- Mindfulness
 - Fosters cognitive change
 - Increases symptom tolerance
 - Uncovers emotions
 - Increases capacity to choose whether to act on urges



Working with Intentions

- Pain is distinct from urge to eliminate it
- Attention can be brought to urge to move
- Urge arises, reaches crescendo, and passes

Mindfulness and Working with Negative Emotions

Mindfulness and Psychodynamic Exploration

- Lack of affect awareness often central to psychophysiological disorders
- Mindfulness practice
 - Aids psychodynamic exploration
 - Helps to develop both affect awareness and tolerance



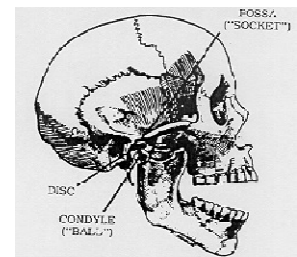
Mindfulness and Other Psychophysiological Disorders

Other Muscle Tension Disorders

- Dynamics very similar to chronic back pain
 - Headaches; TMJ, neck, knee, foot, wrist, shoulder pain,
- Need to rule out structural causes
 - Then follow same 4 step program

Placebo TMJ Treatment

- Sham tooth grinding cures TMJ (Goodman, Greene, & Laskin, 1976)
 - Told patients tooth grinding would resolve problem
 - Actually only vibrated teeth
 - 64% of patients reported total or significant relief



Placebo Knee Surgery

- Sham knee surgery resolves knee pain from osteoarthritis (Moseley, O'Malley, & Peterson, et al., 2002)
 - 1/3 subjects received arthroscopic debridement
 - 1/3 subjects received arthroscopic lavage
 - 1/3 subjects received incisions only (placebo surgery)
 - All improved. Real surgery had no advantage over placebo at any point during 2 years following surgery.



Sexual Dysfunctions



"Perhaps your performance anxiety wouldn't be so bad if you performed better."

Trying to Fix the Plumbing

- Rule out physical disease or physiological condition
- Effective non-pharmacological interventions target acceptance
 - Masters and Johnson
- Attention to relationship issues
 - Unresolved anger, guilt, etc.

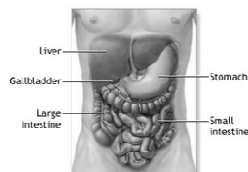
Insomnia

- Conventional Treatment:
 - Stimulus control
 - Sleep hygiene
 - Relaxation
- Mindfulness Treatment:
 - Reduced sleep need
 - Give up goal orientation



Gastrointestinal Distress

- System remarkably sensitive to emotional stress
 - No need to digest your lunch when you're about to become somebody else's



Facing Mortality: The Challenge of Illness Anxiety

Facing Mortality

- Everything falls apart in the end
 - Illness challenges delusion of immortality
- Opportunity to live more fully here and now
 - Meditation at burial grounds
 - Spiritual Autopsies



Silver Linings

- For many patients, recovery is first exposure to mindfulness insights.
 - Learning to let go
 - Learning to face fear
 - Noticing transient nature of experience
 - Increased awareness of emotion
- Lessons apply to the rest of life.



For worksheets, charts, and
more information on
psychophysiological disorders
visit:

www.backsense.org

For mindfulness & psychotherapy
resources, visit:
www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org

For recorded meditations, visit:
www.mindfulness-solution.com

email:
rsiegel@hms.harvard.edu

Mindfulness & Psychotherapy: Clinician Resources

(Adapted and updated from *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*, Edited by Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegel, and Paul R. Fulton. Guilford Press, 2005).

Please visit www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org for updated listings.

Mindfulness-Oriented Psychotherapy

Books

Baer, R. (Ed.) (2006). *Mindfulness-based treatment approaches: Clinician's guide to evidence base and applications*. Burlington, MA: Academic Press.

Begley, S. (2007). *Train you mind, change your brain*. New York: Ballantine.

Bennett-Goleman, T. (2001). *Emotional alchemy*. New York: Harmony Books.

Brantley, J. (2003). *Calming your anxious mind*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

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Epstein, M. (1995). *Thoughts without a thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective*. New York: Basic Books.

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Goleman, D. & Dalai Lama. (2003) *Destructive emotions: How can we overcome them?* New York: Bantam Dell.

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- Magid, B. (2002). *Ordinary mind: Exploring the common ground of Zen and psychotherapy*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Marra, T. (2005). *Dialectical behavior therapy in private practice: A practical and comprehensive guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
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- Wallin, D. (2007). *Attachment in psychotherapy*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Websites

- Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy: www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: www.umassmed.edu/cfm
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy: www.behavioraltech.com
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: www.acceptanceandcommitmenttherapy.com
- Mindfulness and Acceptance Special Interest Group of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy: listserv.kent.edu/archives/mindfulness/html
- Self-Compassion Resources: www.self-compassion.org
- The *Back Sense* program for treating chronic back pain: www.backsense.org

Mindfulness Practice Resources

(Adapted and updated from *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*, by Ronald D. Siegel, Guilford Press, 2010).

Please visit www.mindfulness-solution.com for updated listings.

Mindfulness Practice

Books

- Aronson, H. (2004). *Buddhist practice on Western ground: Reconciling Eastern ideals and Western psychology*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Beck, C. (1989). *Everyday Zen: Love and work*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Brach, T. (2003). *Radical acceptance: Embracing your life with the heart of a Buddha*. New York: Bantam Dell.
- Chodron, P. (2001). *The wisdom of no escape and the path of loving-kindness*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Dalai Lama & Cutler, H. (1998). *The art of happiness: A handbook for living*. New York: Riverhead.
- Goldstein, J. (1993). *Insight meditation: The practice of freedom*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
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- Lama Surya Das (1997). *Awakening the Buddha within: Tibetan wisdom for the Western world*. New York: Broadway.
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- Trungpa, C. (2005). *Training the mind and cultivating loving-kindness*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Weiss, A. (2004). *Beginning mindfulness: Learning the way of awareness*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Recordings

Meditations from *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*:
www.mindfulness-solution.com

Meditation Training Centers

Secular

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare, and Society, University of Massachusetts Medical School, 55 Lake Avenue North, Worcester, MA 01655. <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mbsr/>

Vipassana

Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 149 Lockwood Road, Barre, MA 01005
<http://www.dharma.org>

Insight Meditation Society, 1230 Pleasant St., Barre, MA 01005
<http://www.dharma.org>

Insight LA, 2633 Lincoln Blvd, #206, Santa Monica, CA 90405
<http://www.insightla.org>

New York Insight, P.O. Box 1790, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156.
<http://www.nyimc.org>

Spirit Rock Meditation Center, P.O. Box 909, Woodacre, CA 94973
<http://www.spiritrock.org>

Tibetan

Naropa University, 2130 Arapahoe Ave Boulder, CO 80302
<http://www.naropa.edu>

Shambhala Mountain Center, 4921 County Road 68-C, Red Feather Lakes, CO 80545
<http://www.shambhalamountain.org>

Zen

San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

<http://www.sfzc.com>

Zen Center of Los Angeles

<http://www.zcla.org>

Zen Mountain Monastery, P.O.Box 197, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457

<http://www.mro.org/zmm/zmmhome/>

Buddhist Psychology

Books

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Fleischman, P. (1999). *Karma and chaos: New and collected essays on vipassana meditation*. Seattle: Vipassana Publications.

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Websites

Buddhist information and education: www.buddhanet.net

Buddhism and science: www.mindandlife.org

Audiovisual materials of all kinds: www.soundstrue.com

Mindfulness teacher talks: www.dharmaseed.org

Buddhist journal (USA): www.tricycle.com

Journal for mindfulness practitioners: www.inquiringmind.com

About the Presenter

Dr. Ronald D. Siegel is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School, where he has taught for over 30 years. He is a long time student of mindfulness meditation and serves on the Board of Directors and faculty of the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy. He teaches internationally about mindfulness and psychotherapy and mind/body treatment, has worked for many years in community mental health with inner city children and families, and maintains a private clinical practice in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Dr. Siegel is coauthor of the self-treatment guide *Back Sense: A Revolutionary Approach to Halting the Cycle of Chronic Back Pain*, which integrates Western and Eastern approaches for treating chronic back pain; coeditor of the critically acclaimed text, *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*, author of a recent book for general audiences, *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*, and coeditor of the recently released *Wisdom and Compassion in Psychotherapy: Deepening Mindfulness in Clinical Practice*. He is also a regular contributor to other professional publications, and is co-director of the annual Harvard Medical School Conference on Meditation and Psychotherapy.

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For recordings of mindfulness practice instructions, including meditations for working with anxiety, depression, relationship issues, addictions, and other difficulties, please visit www.mindfulness-solution.com

For information about mindfulness and psychotherapy programs, please visit www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org

For information about the *Back Sense* program for treating chronic back pain, please visit www.backsense.org