

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

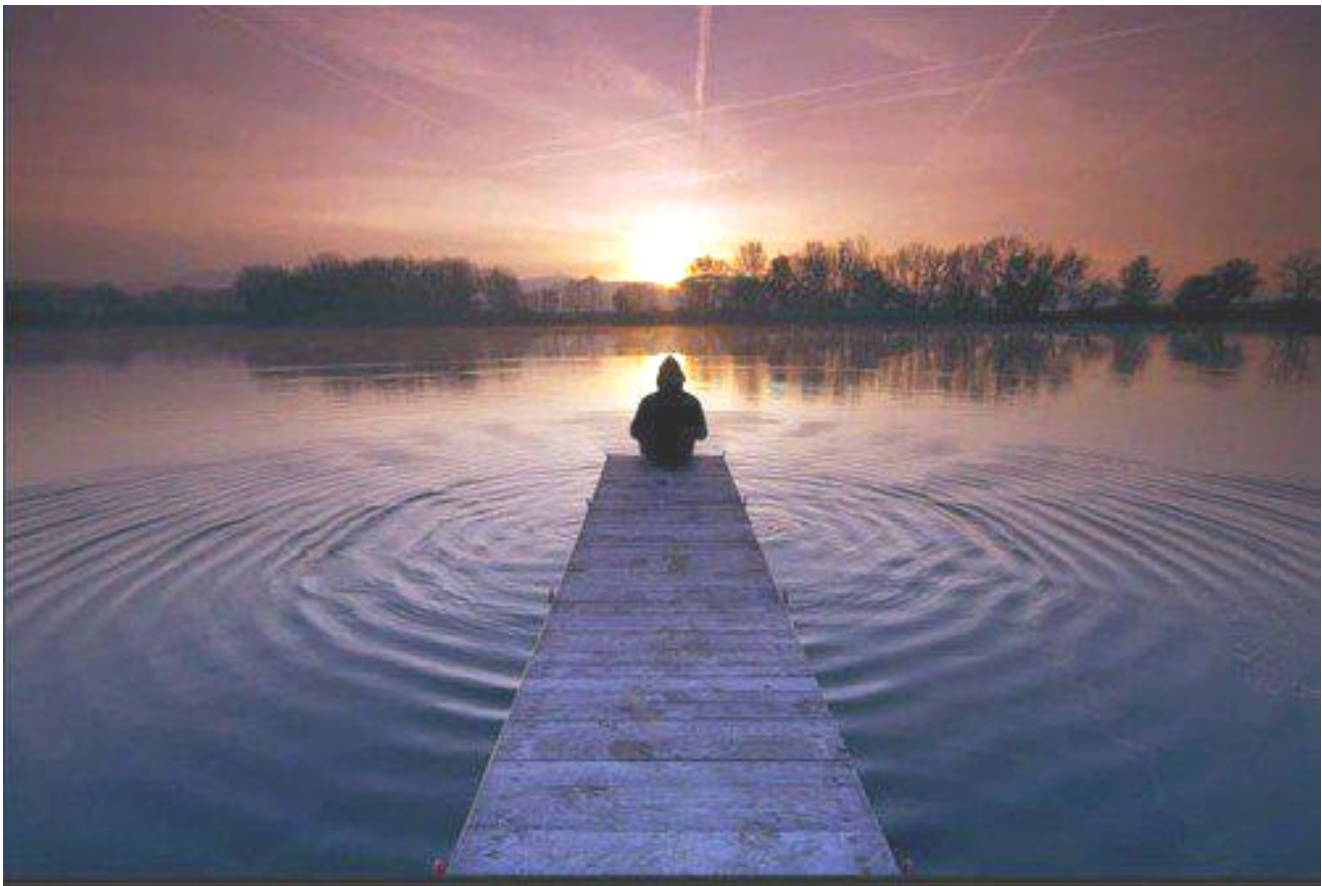


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INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS PRACTICE



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Course Description:

Welcome to "Introduction to Mindfulness Practice." This introductory community-based course has been designed for adult learners who have limited or no previous background in the area of Mindfulness and meditation. The overall aim of this course is to provide an opportunity for Adult learners to reduce daily life stress levels, increase wellness and cultivate compassion in their daily lives. In this 6-week course, participants will be introduced

to the concept of Mindfulness, be able to participate in audio/video meditation techniques and practices, engage in face-to-face and online discussions with other members and keep a reflection journal. Supplementary and additional resources will also be provided for each participant to keep.

Participation in this course is voluntary however, participants will find that experiencing the benefits of the meditation and class activities will depend on their level of dedication and involvement in the course. In addition, participants who successfully complete all the entire course requirements (described in detail below) will be awarded a Certificate of Completion by the community centre hosting this course. Please note that this course is not meant to replace any formal medical treatment or formal counselling but is meant to introduce participants to this approach to well-being and self-care.

What is Mindfulness?

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1999), a prominent mindfulness teacher and trainer defines this concept as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally." Mindfulness involves maintaining attention on the "now" in a non-judgemental way and with an openness and acceptance of things the way they are.

Mindfulness helps us become aware of our thoughts and feelings in the moment so that we can monitor our feelings, emotions and bodily reactions. Experts believe that doing so can help us reduce daily stress levels and increase well-being.

Historically, the concept of Mindfulness originated from Buddhist meditation practices however this approach can be related to other faiths as well including Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.

Course Objectives:

After completing this course, participants will:

- Have basic knowledge about the principles of Mindfulness Practice.
- Be in practice of incorporating weekly meditation exercises in their daily schedule.

- Possess the knowledge to adopt a focused and attentive approach to present moments in their daily lives.
- Have learnt how to document their mindfulness journey through reflective journaling.
- Become familiarized with the use of technology for Mindfulness practices.

Course Format:

This course will follow a blended format meaning that learners will meet face-to-face once for 2 hours every week to share their experiences, progress and ideas regarding Mindfulness practice. In addition, there will be a website for the course (www.rubymindfulnesspractice.webs.com). This website will be used by the participants for accessing the weekly exercises, engaging in course-related online discussions, and sharing ideas, experiences and progress. Participants will be added to the course website through their email addresses.

Technical and other requirements for the course:

- Basic computing skills (e.g. opening and reading text/PDF documents and playing audio and video clips).
- Basic typing skills and intermediate writing capabilities for journal writing and communicating in online discussion forums.
- Access to a computer with headphones or speakers, and a reliable Internet connection (The host organization/community centre also has a computer lab if you do not have computer or Internet access at home).
- An active email address for logging on to the course website.

Description of Course Activities:

The course will be designed to promote Self, Online and Face-to-Face (F2F) learning.

Self-directed learning:

The following is the list of activities participants can complete on their own in a comfortable location of their choice:

1. Write **three overall learning goals** for the course in Week 1.
2. Complete the **weekly audio/visual Mindfulness-related exercises**: The exercises below will guide participants to connect with their thoughts, feelings and body in a non-judgemental way.

Description of weekly audio/visual mindfulness exercises:

The following exercises are based on the work of prominent Mindfulness experts such as Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990), Hayes et al. (2003) and Tich Naht Hanh (1999).



Image source: Personal

Mindful Eating Exercise:

The purpose of this exercise is to help raise awareness of how we eat our food that nourishes us. This simple exercise can help develop deep insights into our relationship with our food and different tastes. The step-by-step instructions for the exercise will be in the video found on the course website. This exercise can be done with a raisin, a small piece of fruit or a soft jellybean. After completing this exercise, adopt the same mindful eating technique with another food item on a separate day.

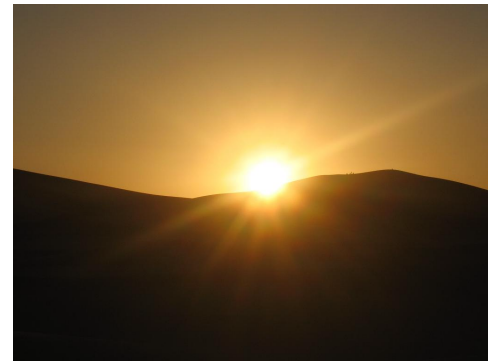


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The Body Scan exercise:

This exercise is aimed to bring a sense of focus towards the body and to notice any points of stress, tension or pain in any area. Doing this exercise regularly will help participants become aware of the state of their body at different points of time or days. The main point of the exercise is to keep the attention focused on the body from head to toe. The step-by-step instructions for the exercise will be in the video on the course website.

While doing this exercise, participants may feel distracted by thoughts, sounds, noises throughout the exercise however they are encouraged to try and frame their focus back to the body's sensations throughout the exercise.

Mindful Breathing exercise:

The purpose of this exercise is to become mindful of the breath and the air coming in and out of the body as a source of life. This exercise can help reduce shallow breathing which can be an indicator of stress in the body. Deep breathing is also an effective way to relax the body and increase mindfulness. The step-by-step instructions for the exercise will be in the video on the course website.

Please note for participants who might have breathing problems, asthma or discomfort during this exercise, they can focus on another part of the body (such as hands, heartbeat or the soles of their feet resting on the floor) that represents a safe and comfortable space for them.

Self-esteem/Positive Affirmation and Relaxation exercise:

Listen to the video found on the course website and repeat the phrases heard. The purpose of repeating the phrases is to internalize the positive affirmations and send compassion to the inner soul.

3. Write weekly **reflective journal entries**: Participants will be required to keep a weekly journal that documents their experiences of completing the audio/visual exercises described above. A suggested guideline for each journal entry is provided below. Participants may answer the questions in the guidelines below to reflect on the positive and perhaps challenges aspects of completing the exercises. Participants will be required to submit the journal at the end of the course. The journal will not be

graded. It is meant to demonstrate that the participant has completed the requirements of the course.

Suggested guideline for the journal:

What was the learning that emerged for you after completing the exercises?
What made this learning significant for you?
How might this learning relate to your self-assessment goals from Week 1?
What were your own affect, cognition, and behaviour during the exercises?
What are some concerns or questions that you have at this point in the course?
What actions might you take to address these concerns or questions?

4. Complete a **Self-evaluation** at the end of the course by answering the questions provided below. This will be submitted at the end of the course along with the reflection journal.

- Did I meet my original learning goals?
- What helped accomplish that?
- What factors hindered me?
- How have my learning goals changed or expanded?
- What difference (if any) has this course made in my life?
- What have I learned about myself as a beginner-level learner of Mindfulness Practice?

Online learning:

1. **Contribute to the weekly online discussion forum** found on the course website: Share 2-3 insights (e.g. an external resource on mindfulness, an example of how you used that week's mindful technique in your week, questions, concerns) with participants.
2. **Engage in online conversation weekly:** Respond to at least 2 postings written by two different participants in the course every week.

Face-to-face learning (F2F):

1. **Regular attendance:** Attend the weekly face-to-face group meeting and be an active participant in the group discussions.

Evaluation:

There is no formal evaluation, grade or academic credit for this course. As such, participants will not be graded on how well they are able to master or memorize the information presented in this course. Rather, this course is meant to be an experiential journey for the participants. Thus, participants will assess themselves through a self-evaluation. Satisfaction and success in this course will depend on the level of participation participants give to the weekly exercises, journaling and collaborating with others (through online and F2F communication).

In addition, participants who successfully complete all the Self, Online and F2F course activities (described above) including the completion of the reflective journal and self-assessment will be awarded a Certificate of Completion by the community centre hosting this course. Since participation is voluntary in the course, participants have the option of withdrawing from the course by request if they feel intolerable discomfort at any point or a sense of being overwhelmed as a result of certain components of the course.



Image source: Personal

Weekly Schedule:

Week	Activities
<p>Week 1: Introductions</p>	<p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductions (Meeting face-to-face to introduce one another and share expectations for course). ▪ Going through the course outline. ▪ Orientation to the course website. <p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Write three overall learning goals for the course. ▪ Start journaling <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Log on to course website and submit a "check-in" posting on the Week 1 discussion forum.
<p>Week 2: Mindful Eating and Drinking</p>	<p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the Mindful Eating exercise. First, complete the Raisin exercise video clip found on course website. Then, repeat the technique with any other snack or meal of your choice on another day. ▪ Journal writing.

	<p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a posting online and respond to two postings. <p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend F2F meeting at the end of the week and share insights/questions.
Week 3: Embodiment	<p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Body Scan exercise. Guided video of exercise found on course website. ▪ Journal writing. <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a posting online and respond to two postings. <p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend F2F meeting at the end of the week and share insights.
Week 4: Mindful Breathing	<p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Breathe exercise. Guided video of exercise found on course website. ▪ Journal writing. <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a posting online and respond to two postings. <p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend F2F meeting at the end of the week and share insights.
Week 5: Self- compassion	<p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the Self-Esteem/Positive Affirmations and Relaxation exercise. Guided video of exercise found on course website. ▪ Journal writing. <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a posting online and respond to two postings. <p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend F2F meeting at the end of the week and share insights.

<p>Week 6:</p> <p>Final F2F session of course</p>	<p>Self:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Complete journal.▪ Complete self-evaluation form. <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Submit a posting online and respond to two postings. <p>F2F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Attend F2F meeting at the end of the week to submit journal and self-evaluation form.
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References

Hanh, T.N. (1999). *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hayes, S. C., & Wilson, K.G. (2003). Mindfulness: Method and Process. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10, 161-165.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: The program of the stress reduction clinic at the university of Massachusetts Medical Center*. New York: Dell.