

Mindfulness & Meditation



LESSON 2: MINDFUL SUFFERING

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Homework Review/Questions from Last Week



- **Practice mindfulness meditation daily**
 - Set your duration (how long you wish to meditate) and your intention (what you intend to focus upon) before beginning
 - Intentionally incorporate present awareness and curiosity
 - ✦ Eating, breathing, listening, watching, sensations in body, etc.
- **Start with brief (5 minute) exercises**
- **When mind wanders, gently and persistently bring it back**
 - Remember, you ARE NOT trying to hold your mind still or produce deep relaxation – we are training in skills of awareness, curiosity, and gentle persistence – and that is all!

Mindful Suffering



**“When you know how to suffer well,
you suffer a lot less.”**

- Thich Nhat Hanh

- **Caring for our emotional and physical suffering**
- **Experiencing positive things in the midst of suffering**

Caring for Our Suffering



- **When we experience something aversive we tend to:**
 - Elaborate/ruminate on it (which makes it bigger)
 - Try to minimize it (which makes it more persistent)
 - ✦ Thus, we add a “2nd arrow” to our original injury which causes us to re-live the pain over and over
- **Coming back to the present moment provides refuge**
 - This means observing the thought/feeling with curiosity as it is, without trying to make it anything else
 - ✦ Like watching a deer you stumble upon in the woods

Caring for Our Suffering



- “Turning toward” our pain is an act of compassion for it and for ourselves
 - Welcoming it warmly, to sit together with you in mindful awareness
 - ✦ “Hello depression! I am here for you!”
 - Making space for hardship as a natural part of life helps us create ease with it
 - ✦ Like giving a restless child space to be wild
 - Caring for suffering in this way reduces our struggle with it

Positive Things Amidst the Suffering



- True reality is always bigger than one thought or emotion
 - When we focus on them they may become the whole of our attention, but they are never the whole of our reality
 - ✦ Waves in the ocean or clouds in the sky
 - Once they pass, we often forget how distressing they were
- While suffering is real, good things occurring alongside it are no less real
 - Observing mindfully helps us make contact with these good things, which alleviates or offers reprieve from suffering

Homework



- Practice mindfulness meditation daily
- Start with brief (5 minute) exercises
 - Practice observing physical and emotional pain as it is, without trying to make it something else
 - ✦ This takes courage! It is okay to be afraid!
 - Practice expanding your awareness to the good that is always occurring, even in the midst of suffering
- When mind wanders, elaborates, or wrestles with the pain
 - Gently and persistently bring it back to curious and present observation



Thank you!

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