

Mindfulness Workshop

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1 minute exercise

- Close your eyes
- Back straight
- Feet flat on the floor
- Observe thoughts, feelings, images that come to mind



Nature of the Mind

■ Constant movement

- Constantly on the move
- Latching on from object to object; “monkey mind”
- “automatic pilot”
 - While driving, showering...ask yourself “am I actually engaged with what I am doing?”
- Living in the past (past memories, regrets, associations, traumas, conversations, hurts...)
- Living in the future (what if’s, planning, worrying, fantasising, stories, arguing)



Nature of the Mind


- Quick knee jerk reactions to stimuli
 - i.e. someone cuts you off in the motorway and gives you a finger
 - i.e. you've saved a lot for a holiday with your partner and while checking in, informed that flights have been cancelled indefinitely





Consequences of letting the mind “go wild”, untethered, unskilled

- ❑ Inability to switch off
- ❑ Anxiety
- ❑ Depression
- ❑ Unable to enjoy life
- ❑ Life just passes by
- ❑ Worsening of medical conditions i.e. pain



Physical exercise versus mental exercise?

What is Meditation

■ Many definitions

- Concentrated attention on an object/ thought
- Reflection/ contemplation
- Relaxation

■ Many forms

- Yoga
- Christian contemplation
- Dynamic meditation
- Buddhist meditation











Mindfulness Meditation

- Specific form of meditation highly developed by the Buddhists
- Recently, researched and practiced separate from Buddhism
- Many daily uses
- Many **clinical uses**



Mindfulness Meditation

What it is NOT

-  Just a relaxation technique
-  Going into a trance
-  Mysterious, cannot be understood
-  Purpose is to become psychic
-  For saints, mystics, monks, not for regular people
-  Running away from reality
-  Think lofty thoughts
-  All my problems will go away








Mindfulness Meditation


- Paying attention / fully alert
- to moment by moment experiences
- in a non judgmental way



Mindfulness Meditation

Why?

-  See things as they really are
-  Quiets the mind but at the same time,
-  Alerts/ wakes the mind
-  Become gentle and non judgmental to self and others
-  More open to experiences

-  RESET button







Science and Meditation

- Left PFC activity > Right correlates strongly with feelings of calm and contentment (Davidson)
 - Tibetan monks
 - Office workers
- Thickening of the cortex involved in attention and sensory processing (Lazar)
- Decreased reactivity to unpleasant stimulus (i.e. gunshots)



Mindfulness Meditation




Different forms/ how

-  Mindfulness of Breathing
-  Body Scan
-  Walking meditation
-  Yoga



Mindfulness of Breathing Meditation





Remember the key things:

-  Observing the mind, feelings, thoughts
-  Paying attention to the moment (as in second by second)
-  Non judgment, kindness to oneself



Mindfulness of Breathing







HOW

-  Sitting
-  Breath becomes the focus/ anchor of attention
 -  Why the breath as the anchor?
-  When mind wanders



Mindfulness of Breathing

Sitting

-  Chair, floor, cushion, lotus?
-  Erect, back straight, spine like a stack of coins
-  Head straight, like hanging from a piece of string
-  Sustainable for allotted time (i.e. 5, 10, 20, 30 minutes?)
-  Eyes
 -  Easier for beginners to close eyes; can be half shut, just gazing lazily, unfocused straight ahead





Mindfulness of Breathing

- Once in a comfortable, alert position, pay attention to body sensations- just perceiving sensations from scalp to toes
- Not judging, just feeling and perceiving
- If you notice tension or some ache- just accept- “Oh, there is some tension around my neck- that’s ok” instead of “ Oh *&%#@, why do I get this tension! It’s freaking annoying”



Mindfulness of Breathing

- Then notice your breathing- your breath coming in and out
- Allow your breathing to do what it is supposed to do; try not to control it, just let it be
- Notice the sensation of the air from the tip of your nostrils, gently rushing in; feel the abdomen rise and fall



Mindfulness of Breathing

- Focus on the breathing for 1 minute
- If you can do 1 minute, try 2 and so on
- Many regular meditators will do 20 to 30 minutes a day



Mindfulness of Breathing

- When the mind wanders off (which will definitely happen!)
 - Gently, non judgmentally remind yourself to go back to the breathing
 - If your mind wanders off 100 times in 5 minutes, and you brought it back gently, non judgmentally 100 times, you exercised the mindful circuit in the brain 100 times! It's ok!




Mindfulness of Breathing

- For each time you notice that your mind was wandered- you have cultivated a moment of awareness- which is the main point of meditation practice







Mindfulness of Breathing

 What about noise? Neighbour coughing? Aches? Itches?



Mindfulness Meditation

Variations

-  1) counting of the breath- 1 to 10 then back to 1
-  2) walking meditation
-  3) eating meditation
-  4) body scanning







Medical Uses of Mindfulness Meditation

- Acute stress/ anxiety/ anger
- Dialectical Behavioural Treatment, for severe personality disorders like Borderline PD
- Sleep Disorders
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression
- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (for chronic pain)



3 minute Mindfulness of the Breath Meditation

Exercise

-  Sit comfortably, back straight, hands on your lap
-  Feel the sensation of your feet flat on the floor, hands in contact with your thigh;
-  Feel your breathing; it's natural rhythm, coming in, coming out; effortless, relaxed
-  If your mind wanders—that's ok, just gently bring it back to your breath and count again








Building a Practice

- Doing (more than just *wanting* to do it...not different from physical fitness or playing sport)
- Space/ materials
- Regularity
 - Formal sitting
 - Informal meditation throughout the day
 - Driving, eating, walking, telephone
- Group



Building a Practice

Informal Meditation (covert)

-  Walking to and from appointments
-  Telephone/ Text
-  Red Light
-  2 minutes every hour
-  Washing dishes



Resources

■ CALM website calm.auckland.ac.nz

■ Books

- Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness (Gunaratana)*
- Miracle of Mindfulness (Hanh)
- Full Catastrophe Living (Kabat Zinn)*

■ CD's

- Guided Mindfulness Meditation (Kabat Zinn)
- Art of Mindful Living (Hanh)
- Mindfulness of Breathing*
- Body Scan*
- Kindly Awareness*

* In Philson



Classes/ Groups

■ Introduction to Meditation Classes at the Auckland Buddhist Centre 381 Richmond Rd, Grey Lynn

■ Auckland University Buddhist Society every 2 weeks meditation at medical school

<http://groups.google.com/group/AKLUBS>

■ For individual teachers/coaches—just ask me

