



INSTITUTE
for LIVING
Courageously

AN 8-WEEK MINDFULNESS TRAINING

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Session 8

Integration

INTEGRATION

The preceding 7 sessions explored various themes and exercises. Undoubtedly, everyone had different experience of which exercises we useful, what information offered the most insight, what exercise was difficult, or what exercise was enjoyable. An important question for each one of us is, what is next? A wise saying says that the last meeting lasts for the rest of your life. And that is true. Mindfulness is a process that keeps developing over time. In this final session, we will reflect on what has been learned, integrating the previous themes with each other. We will also reflect on how this knowledge and experience gained from the training can be integrated into your life.

**THIS TRAINING IS
ONLY A BEGINNING.
MINDFULNESS IS A
JOURNEY THAT
DEVELOPS INFINITELY
OVER TIME.**



INTEGRATING THE SEVEN THEMES

Although the 7 themes were introduced separately, in reality, they form an inseparable entity. Together they form the concept of mindfulness. In this section, we will map the links between the themes.

Session 1: Attention and the Now

We started with attention for a good reason. Attention is the most fundamental building block of change and insight. Attention ensures that we are aware. If we are not aware of something, we cannot change it. Thus, by learning to consciously regulate attention, we become aware of our automated actions (2). This allows us to make new choices. Attention is necessary to become aware of the fact that we judge (3), that we avoid or stick to situations or feelings or fight them (4), that we are too attached to the busy-ness of our goals, or (5) that we are mercilessly critical to ourselves or others (6). Without attention, we can never see how our identification with things affects us. Attention is required to see through our ego and to limit its influence. When our attention is not judgmentally focused on the experience of the moment, then we become direct observers. This observer is the non-ego (7).

1. **ATTENTION & NOW**
2. **AUTOMATICITY**
3. **JUDGMENT**
4. **ACCEPTANCE**
5. **GOALS**
6. **COMPASSION**
7. **THE EGO**

Session 2: Automaticity

Automatisms keeps us from changing. Only by becoming aware of our automatisms, we can change them. All the themes that have been discussed concern automatisms. Without knowing, we often live in the future or the past (1), we judge (3), we create a struggle (4), we are too focused on goals (5), and we listen to the critical voice asks for our attention (6). Without being aware of it, we identify with things like our appearance and status and create a story about who we are, which automatically influences our thinking, actions, and feelings.

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Session 3: Judgment

By judging, we often create an immediate conflict or struggle (4). If we judge a certain feeling as “bad” or “undesirable”, this causes a conflict between how things are now (bad) and how they should be (good). The judgment is also strongly reflected in our critical voice (6). This voice convinces others or ourselves of failing. A judgment often comes from our ego (7). It is our own story about who we believe we are that creates a standard against which we compare ourselves and others.

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Session 4: Acceptance

By struggling with the moment, by saying “no” to what is happening in the here and now, the moment may not be there anymore. The attention does not linger in the now (1) but rather in the future. The future becomes the place where we can achieve our goal (5). This goal can be to feel better, to be happier, to be released from something, or to be more successful, among others. By making the moment an enemy, you make the ego stronger, and in this undesirable situation or conflict, your mind can identify with you as a victim. Your mind fabricates stories about the current state. This is your ego talking. By adopting/accepting what is, you immediately free yourself from the identification of your mind. Acceptance allows the ego to be silent.

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Session 5: Goals

By focusing too much on our goals, we stop paying attention to the here and now (1). If we are unable to achieve goals, resistance and struggle are likely (4). We do not want the current situation to be true. We can hardly accept that we did not achieve our goals. An inevitable consequence is often the critical, compassion-less voice in our head that judges us (6). Goals can also arise from our ego (7). In that case, we strive to achieve certain goals because we expect that these goals can add something to our identity (becoming better, richer, more important). On our way to achieving the goal, the goal becomes more important than the path to the goal.

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Session 6: Compassion

By increasing compassion for others and ourselves, the separation between us and others decreases. Our ego separates us from others through the stories that we create about ourselves and others. Instead of focusing on the differences with others based on our identifications, compassion helps us see the similarities with others. We see what connects us to others. The tendency to judge others as negative will decrease (3) and so will the influence of our ego (7).

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Please note that the above are only brief examples to show how the themes relate to each other. Many more subtle connections exist between each theme, but we have shown only the most important ones.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

This training can best be considered a start. What has been learned and experienced in the past weeks can be a starting point for further development. Mindfulness is not something that you can achieve in 8 weeks. You cannot become mindful, you can only be mindful.

By practicing and applying these concepts, the effects will be stronger and it will become easier to be mindful. In other words, the more mindfulness is integrated into your daily life, the greater its influence will be. During the training, a number of exercises were discussed. Not only formal exercises, such as the body scan and the seated meditation, but also exercises that can easily be integrated into your daily living, such as working with more attention or mindful eating.