**Mindfulness of the World & Mental States**

Intervention Script

## Instructions (text)

This is a 10 day mindfulness course, and each session is 10 minutes long. After each session there’s a follow up question about the practice, which you’ll need to complete before we can send the next day’s survey to you. Make sure to check your junk mail if you don’t receive an email, but be aware if you complete an exercise after midnight, you email will not arrive that same morning but the one after. There’s also a bigger survey like the one you just completed at the end of the study. You’re very welcome to rewind each day’s practice, or continue on yourself after the guided practice is over, or to practice mindfulness in your daily life, like when you’re doing a chore like the dishes or brushing your teeth, or going for a walk for example.

It’s important for the study to try to keep everybody’s experience the same, so please try to do one each day. You can take a total of 4 days between practices – with 3 reminder emails sent, one each day after a practice was missed. After those 4 days, the link to the survey will close and we will invite you to take the second main survey. After taking the main survey which ends the study, you will have access to all course materials and recordings. You’re welcome to email me about your experiences or with any issues that pop up at m.lovell@sussex.ac.uk. After the course is over, I’d be happy to talk to you in detail about it, and provide follow up materials and resources for you to look into. Feedback is also very welcome. Many thanks for your participation in the study!

# World

## Induction (text)

In this course, mindfulness means paying our full attention to the world around us, and our bodies, as it unfolds and changes around us. To do this, we’re going to sit down, with our eyes closed, for ten minutes, and try to remain fully alert to sounds, sights, tastes, smells, and things we can touch, just as they are in the present moment. In mindfulness, we try not to get wrapped up in judgements and thoughts about things and try to avoid getting involved in our train of thought as well. When we get distracted from our object of focus, we gently return back to our object of focus.

## Day 1: Body Scan

Welcome to the first mindfulness practice in the course, and thanks very much for taking part in the study. I’m just going to dive right into things as I think that’s the best way to learn. So, to prepare, you just need to be sitting down with your eyes closed. Normally people meditate sitting cross legged so they can keep their back straight but still relax into that position. Personally I use the Burmese pose with my shins flat on the floor, sitting on a pillow. If you’d rather you can keep your eyes open or you can lie down, particularly if you have some health condition that requires that. It might also be easier to focus in a quiet or dark room, if you can find one. Feel free to pause now if you’re still getting set up… And once we’re in position, for today, we’re going to be trying to bring our full, undivided attention to what we can notice in different parts of our body. So that’s quite a simple task but, you’ll notice that you’ll get distracted plenty, and when this happens, just bring your attention back to what you were doing. Don’t worry too much if you miss an instruction, just keep going as you were and wait for the next one. So, to begin, let’s focus in on our feet, just trying to be fully aware of our feet from one moment to the next.

[0:00]

[0:20]

Some of you might already be running into a classic issue with mindfulness practices – that there’s a lot of ways to approach these instructions. I think the best way to approach mindfulness is to just explore these different interpretations. You might want to scan around your foot, be aware of it more as a whole, notice our skin and what we can feel in the world around us, or of the muscles underneath, maybe the feeling of temperature, or your pulse.

[1:00]

And let’s now move onto the legs, starting at the ankle, moving slowly up to the knee bringing our full awareness to whatever we find here right now. You might notice some pain or discomfort in these areas. You can of course focus on these sensations too, but don’t push anything too far, changing position as you need to. If you do so, you can bring some awareness to your movements and to your new posture… moving our attention past the knee now, slowly up towards the hip, if we haven’t done so already.

[2:00]

As you focus on your body, things in the world around us and our thoughts, will inevitably intrude on this focus. When we notice that we’ve been distracted, or are lost in a day-dream, we move our attention back to the area of our body we were focusing on.

[2:20]

Let’s now move up to the hips and waist, noticing anything that stands out to you here - any tension or relaxedness, aches and pains… seeing things just ‘as they are’, not overly thinking about things or elaborating on them, staying in the present moment by constantly renewing this focus and attention.

[4:00]

Moving up now to the abdominal area, we might notice if we feel full or hungry, acidity arising from the stomach. Maybe there’s a feeling of tension in the muscles of this area, or a feeling of relaxation … And, if we’re breathing in a relaxed manner with our back straight, we’ll notice our stomach moving in and out with the breath. Let’s spend just a minute focusing in on this… aware of the breath all the way in, aware of any gap between breaths, and staying with it as it comes all the way out, aware of any pause between breaths here too, doing this for the next half a minute or so.

[5:00]

And moving up to the chest now, we can feel ribs expanding and contracting, noticing the shape of this area as it changes. Some of you might be able to feel you’re the pulse of your heart beat – if not, this is a good opportunity to bring up an interesting part of some mindfulness practices – noticing the lack of a sensation, of it’s absence, if you can. As always, if we find ourselves distracted, noticing this and then bringing ourselves back to the object of focus, which for now is the breath in our chest.

[5:50]

Let’s move that attention now round to our back, slowly moving up from the lower back to the shoulders. Of course, this is an area of discomfort and pain for a lot of us, myself included. Broadly speaking, we’ve got two options when confronted with this pain: we can avoid recoiling from it, let it in, approach it, explore it a bit - but this should be balanced with listening to our bodies, backing off before we push things too far, and changing position, perhaps lying down if we need to.

[6:20]

Moving past the shoulder blades, up to the shoulders

[7:00]

Let’s go through the shoulders now and down to the upper arms… the elbows… forearms… and hands, ending at the fingertips.

[7:30]

For continuity’s sake, let’s quickly move back up the arms and arrive at the neck. Moving through the neck and throat, noticing the skin, the spine, the breath, your pulse, whatever it may be, just as it is right now, without judgement.

[8:00]

And there’s a lot to notice in our faces, and let’s move from chin to forehead, and notice every feature of this area that we can.

[9:00]

And let’s move around to the back and sides of the head, up to the top of the head, ending at a point just on the very tip of our head…

[9:30]

and for the last 30 seconds, try to settle on an awareness of your body as a whole, as best you can.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of the first meditation practice, many thanks for joining.

## Day 2: Breath

Welcome to the second practice in the course, well done for coming back for another session. Today we’re going to jump around less, which might make focusing a little more difficult, and we’ll just be focusing in on our breathing. So, in your chosen meditation posture with your eyes closed if you like, let’s begin to focus on the breath at the stomach, just as we did in the last practice. [0:00]

[0:30]

Just giving our full attention given to the in and out movements of the breath, the in and out movements of the stomach as your lungs fill with air, in each moment, as it changes… balancing the application of some energy and focus to this, without straining too hard either… We really want to become fully absorbed in the breath at the stomach by observing it as it comes all the way in, the slight pause between breaths, and staying with it as it comes all the way out as well, another pause, and another in breath, one after the other…

[1:00]

You’re very welcome to control your breathing, if you find it helpful, but you don’t need to, and if you can, at least for today’s practice, try to relinquish that control of your breath and just breathe in as you naturally would if you weren’t paying attention to this process… On that note you might want to take note of however shallow or deep, or long or short, you find each the breath to be.

[2:00]

Some of us might notice that by doing this - focusing in on your breath or stomach, thoughts about these things will intrude on this practice, maybe judgements of your body or your breath. We might find our breathing relaxed, maybe not. In mindfulness we’re trying to avoid these judgements and thoughts about things, and just focusing on what’s happening right now, as it is… Whatever we notice we can return back to our intended focus, which is just to the breath and it’s movement of the abdominal area – trying to not let anything interrupt the focus we’re trying to achieve.

[3:00]

Let’s shift our awareness upwards now, moving gradually up to the chest, attending with some curiosity to all the different ways you can notice the breath here, and all the different things you can notice about this area – how it’s shape changes, the temperature of the air, for example.

[4:30]

At some point we’ll notice our mind has wandered off somewhere – or we might notice thoughts and feelings intruding in on this focus. If we’re distracted we just notice this as the normal functioning of the mind and then, to the best of our ability, with a light touch, return our focus to the breath. Noticing the depth and length of that cycle of in and out breaths.

[6:00]

For now, let’s move up slowly again, up through the throat, to the nose… becoming aware of what we can notice about the breath here… aware of the breath all the way in… the pause between breaths… staying with the breath on the way out.. again that pause… and another in-breath… Try to be,, in particular, aware of the air as it passes over your mouth and into your nose.

[7:00]

and really focus in on the movements of air just at the entrance to the nostrils. This is a more subtle area of focus, and if you’re not noticing anything here, then just being aware of not noticing anything here, and waiting to see when something eventually arises.

[8:00]

Letting your attention sort of rest here, on the air at your nostrils, observing it in a calm manner, and avoiding distractions.

[9:00]

And just for the final minute, let’s become aware of the whole process of breathing, over the whole body, and see where we can notice it.

[10:00]

And that concludes the second session, feel free to keep going if you like or to turn this form of awareness to any activity you’re doing throughout your day. Also don’t forget to finish today’s survey, and thanks for listening.

## Day 3: Sounds

Welcome to another session and well done for making it back. Today’s session will focus on the world around is as we hear it. If you like you can put a recording on to make things easier, particularly if you find yourself in a particularly quiet area. There’s plenty online made for situations like this, often of a gong sounding or waves on the beach, although you could use anything you like, or if not, we can just use the world around us as it is. So, in our chosen meditation posture, eyes closed perhaps, let’s get settled for a moment by focusing in on the movements of air by our nostrils. [0:00]

[1:00]

and then let’s turn this same form of awareness to what we can hear around us. Just taking a moment to take note of what’s happening around us.

[2:00]

For now let’s choose a nearby sound, and actually let’s choose something we’ve already been attending to - see if you notice sounds emanating from you. So that’ll likely be your breathing, or perhaps the blood rushing past your ears, or maybe the material of your clothes as they rub together.

[3:00]

This is a meditation that will differ depending on where you are much more than the previous ones. If you can, I’d like for you to try to focus on anything that’s making noise in your immediate vicinity. Perhaps try to locate these things in space, from closest to farthest away. And let’s confine this practice to perhaps the walls of the room you’re in, if that’s appropriate to where you’ve chosen to practice, just for the next minute or so. Remember to try to maintain a good posture, head held upright.

[4:00]

And now let’s expand this awareness to the world outside your room, maybe to the whole house or some nearby boundary, if you can. Again, try to locate these sounds in space and also apply a light categorisation to them, detailing what they are.

[5:00]

If we haven’t done so yet, let’s open our awareness to anything and everything that we can hear around us. Bringing that curiosity and openness, aware of whatever we might find, staying with it as it begins, changes, and ends, taking a moment to take stock of what’s happening in the world around us, without thinking about it too much.

[6:00]

Perhaps aware of the entire soundscape, if we can, anything and everything we can hear, noting what it is, attending to it as, changes.

[7:00]

We might also try picking out some single sound, or group of sounds, and focusing in on this, noting how it changes as we do so, maintaining that alert focus.

[8:00]

Remember that a curiosity in exploring the world around us is important for this process - and also a certain alertness and attentiveness.

[10:00]

And that’s the ten-minute mark so the end of the day’s meditation. If you’d like to stop now, you’re welcome to do so. Remember you can bring this form of attention to any activity in your day, perhaps listening to music. Many thanks for listening.

## Day 4: Tasting

Today we’ll be focusing on things that we can taste. I’d recommend pausing now and grabbing some food, maybe raisins, nuts, or seeds, for example, or it could be anything you like, but don’t eat them just yet. Or, if not, you can just focus on what you can taste anyway, and if you can’t taste anything, then be aware of that, and hopefully that’s not too difficult. For now, to begin with, let’s become aware of the air moving over our mouths and nostrils, maybe aware of the breath in the mouth too.

[0:00]

[0:30]

Aware of the length and depth of the breath, the temperature of the air, just as we find it, changing in each moment, avoiding distractions.

[1:00]

Be aware of the shape of the inside of the mouth, of our teeth, tongue, cheeks, of any moisture or dryness here.

[1:30]

And, without placing any food in your mouth, become aware of what you can taste here, about the inside of your mouth and maybe the air outside, and anything else that you can notice.

[2:00]

And if you have any food prepared, you can begin to eat that now, although at first, without biting down on it, see what flavours and textures you can notice.

[3:00]

If you like, now, you can start to eat the food, slowly and mindfully, aware of how it changes as you do so.

[4:00]

If you swallow the food at any point, be aware of this process mindfully, and any aware of any aftertaste, before starting again with another piece.

[5:00]

Really exploring anything and everything we might notice. I assume most of you will have a food you’ve tried many times before, but this practice is about not taking your assumptions about it at face value and taking your time to investigate the flavours and textures anew. For that reason, this is interesting to try next time you’re eating something you don’t like.

[6:00]

This exercise may be a particularly difficult one for people not to elaborate on, think about, or judge the object of meditation and just see it as it is. So, let’s just double down on our sense of calm accurate observation of the object.

[7:00]

And if you’ve chosen the more difficult route of not having any food today, then just being aware of the taste of your mouth and of the air that moves through your mouth and maybe just being aware of your breath here.

[8:00]

If you’re struggling continuing with this practice then moving to one of the other meditations we’ve tried so far, so long as we’re giving our full, alert awareness to the world around us.

[10:00]

And that brings us to 10 minutes and so the end of the day’s mediation. Well done and a bit thanks for making it this far, and feel free to bring this type of awareness to when you next eat something, if you like.

## Day 5: Looking

Welcome to another mindfulness practice, well done for making it half way, I know from experience it can be difficult to set the time aside. For today’s session, we’ll be focusing on things that we can see. If you can, to make things a little bit easier, try leaving the lights on for this session, and maybe even preparing an interesting object or picture to look at, if you like. We’ll begin, as usual, with our eyes closed, and for a few moments let’s centre our awareness on the movement of air at the nostrils. [0:00]

[0:30]

So this is a simple exercise of just noting what we can about that air as it moves past us, temperature, humidity, feelings on the skin, whatever it may be.

[1:00]

And for now, let’s become aware of the inside of our eyelids... really investigate what you see here… it’s it just blackness or is there some variation to it? Can you see where the sources of light are in the room?

[1:30]

Now let’s open our eyes. Trying not to move around too much, let’s begin to notice what is in our immediate vicinity, being aware of what the objects we come across are and moving on slowly to the next object… remaining somewhat open and being calmly and accurately aware of what we come across… Picking out aspects of it, colours, textures, light, shape, space, transparency, contrast. Maybe noting and saying what we find to ourselves.

[3:00]

Let’s now move our awareness out beyond our immediate vicinity to the farthest thing we can see, again being aware of what the objects that we come across are… and If we end up looking at a blank wall that’s fine… and notice that there’s plenty to see and be aware of here, as well.

[4:00]

And as we’ve done before, open up to everything you find around you, as much as you can, taking everything in… taking it in just as it is, not thinking about it, not getting distracted, calmly and accurately aware, if we can be… This might seem an odd exercise to some. All we’re really doing is attending to the world in a way we might not take the time to in everyday life, just watching the world go by, if you will… Taking note of the colour palette of the parts of the world around us we’re looking at… the variations in hue and brightness, and tone and depth

[6:00]

Past the half-way mark now, let’s relax a little and focus in on some specific object we can find. This might be an object you’ve seen a thousand times, but for now approaching it with some curiosity and openness, seeing it anew and really exploring the different aspects of it… If you’re finding this at all difficult, perhaps moving to a new object, or focusing back on hearing or the breath to centre your focus, and then opening back up to the world as you can see it.

[7:00]

Gently being aware of your chosen object of focus as a whole, aware of what it is, aware of it’s colour, how that colour varies through and across the object, with different light and shade, textures. Remember this is just a gentle application of energy, not over thinking these things.

[8:30]

Just for the final few moments, I’ll open this practice up for you to continue as you like, aware of the world as you can see it, maybe just gently gazing around and picking out what you can see… letting it all come and go, aware of things as they change, if you can.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of this slightly more unusual, and hopefully somewhat interesting meditation. Many thanks for taking part.

## Day 6: Touching

Welcome to another mindfulness practice, thanks for making it to another session. So, today we’ll be focusing on what we notice about the world around us as it makes contact with our skin. We can pause for a second here and find an object we think might be interesting to hold and touch later on in the practice if we like for later on in the practice. If not there’s plenty around us, including whatever we’re sitting on, we can use when we need to. So let’s begin, as usual, focused on breath, or more specifically the air as it makes contact with the skin around our nostrils, and explore this for a minute.

[0:00]

[0:30]

Not having to force anything, we can just let our awareness rest on the breath at the nostrils, letting what we notice come to us, and picking up on subtleties here and there.

[1:00]

I think an interesting place to start the main practice today is to be aware of your weight and the feeling of gravity acting on your body, as it pulls you down and you act against it to maintain your posture. Let’s notice this feeling of being pulled down, and of the weight of your own body, for a few moments, wherever you happen to notice it.

[2:00]

Brining that awareness now to the world around us, let’s start with the floor under you, as your feet and maybe legs press against it, and explore what you can notice about it. It’s hardness or softness, temperature, it’s texture, for example… If you’re sitting on a cushion or chair, including that in the focus as well… Attending moment to moment might be more difficult here than it is with the constantly changing noises around us, but there’s plenty to explore if we’re looking for it, maybe varying things up and changing position if we like as well.

[3:00]

Moving that awareness up now, through our legs, noticing what we are touching in the world outside us, our clothes and the air, will probably be the most prominent thing to notice here… not judging these things as good or bad, just observing them as they are… Moving past the knee area now, and to the upper legs, describing the things we notice we are touching, what they are, how they feel, not overthinking them but just using light labels and categorisations… Seeing things as they are, approaching them some curiosity, and maintaining a non-distracted focus.

[4:00]

Moving through the legs towards the abdomen now, repeating that process being aware of being aware of air and our clothes, of temperatures, textures, sharpness, weight, humidity, whatever it may be… and to the chest and torso, eventually moving round to the back… We can also consider the source of what we find… heat from a radiator or the sun, a draft from an open window, for example… Alert, calm, not distracted, just observing... moving to our arms now, scanning from shoulders to fingers…

[6:00]

And back up towards the neck and head. Scanning around the head, aware of the air and any air currents that move around you, or maybe it’s stillness… notice any jewellery, any hair or sweat if you can. This might be a bit more challenging, but just wait around to see if anything arises if so.

[7:00]

And then let’s settle in on an awareness of the world as a whole.

[8:00]

For the final couple of minutes I’d like for you to grab an object, maybe one you’ve prepared or in the nearby vicinity – or it could just be the floor or a wall, your clothes or a table leg, and turn it over in your hands. Much like the taste exercise we’re just focusing in on something we might otherwise gloss over, noticing whatever we can that’s new about it…. The same aspects of texture, temperature, shape, and space, apply… You don’t have to keep turning the object in your hands and can just settle into an awareness of it at some point, if you like, it’s up to you.

[10:00]

That concludes today’s session, a slightly harder and maybe slightly stranger one for some of you, but hopefully somewhat enjoyable. Don’t forget to fill out today’s survey and thanks for listening.

## Day 7: Smelling

Welcome back to another mindfulness practice, thanks for taking part in another session. You might’ve guessed what today’s practice will be about – and in the interest of completeness we’ll be attending to what we can smell. As this could be a bit more challenging than previous weeks, you can pause this recording and light a candle or some incense or place some nice smelling soap or an orange peel for example, just in front of you. If not, we can become aware of smell around us as it is if we like. Either way, let’s start by becoming aware of the breath at the nostrils, and the movement of air, for a minute or so.

[0:00]

[1:00]

Open your awareness to anything you can smell, being curious and accepting, and if you don’t smell anything then noticing that there are no smells around you, and maybe maintaining awareness on the nose… noticing what you can about it and the breath here… ready for when a smell might present itself to you.

[2:00]

You might notice something unpleasant, and in the usual mindful fashion we’re not recoiling from it or judging it too harshly, just observing it as it is, exploring it as it changes… again the different components of the things we can smell are of interest, noticing how these smells change over time.

[3:00]

Whether we pick up on something baking in the oven or an old sock, just be mindful of it without reacting, noticing what’s out there… On the other hand, if you really don’t smell anything and are finding this too difficult, then feel free to pay attention to your breath at the nostrils and the flow of air through the nostrils themselves

[4:00]

Some deep breathing here might really help to make this a little bit easier… With this practice we’re trying to, as with previous weeks, identify objects out there in the world, not focusing on the smells themselves but focusing on what we’re smelling.

[5:00]

If up to this point you’ve been focused on a single thing, perhaps for those of you who put some incense in the room this might be particularly relevant, really try to explore what else you can smell, what you might’ve missed at first glance.

[6:00]

See if you can taste these things in the air too, which is quite linked to our sense of smell… seeing if what we smell can be heard or even seen as well. Identifying what it is that we notice.

[7:00]

This is probably something more foreign to many of us, how something looks or sounds might be more prominent aspects of them that we’d usually focus on, hopefully that makes this a more interesting if not difficult practice.

[8:00]

Maybe broadening that awareness a bit, aware of everything we might smell, as we did in previous meditations with sounds, for example.

[9:00]

For the final minute here refocusing and doing some deep breathing to make sure we can take full advantage of this modality.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of today’s practice, don’t forget to fill in today’s survey, and many thanks for listening.

## Day 8: Simultaneous

Welcome to another mindfulness session, well done for making it this far in the course. Today’s exercise will up the difficulty a little bit, and we’ll focus on being aware of the world through several different sensory modalities at the same time, namely this will be touch, hearing, and vision. And being aware of these at the same time might require a fair bit of focus. So, let’s begin, cross legged, eyes closed in the dark or with the lights on, as you like, and bring our awareness to the movement of the air by our nostrils, just to establish that mindful focus for a minute or two. [0:00]

[1:00]

Opening up to touch again – aware of our clothes and the air around us, of textures, temperature, humidity, whatever it may be, giving some thought to where these things originate… Let’s put some extra effort into expanding the breadth of this awareness… You’ll of course be aware of different things at different times, but try to be aware of the whole world that you can feel through touch, all at the same time, to the extent that you can.

[3:00]

And now let’s try and bring sound into this awareness, at the same time as touch, to the extent that you’re able to… again pervading a broad area with sound, aware of as much as we can be at any one time. This is a difficult practice but it’s worth giving a go, as long as we’re not straining too hard… being aware of more than one thing at once might not be possible, but just experiment with how you can achieve this, jumping around as you need to, and do it to the best of your ability. Letting it all come and go as it pleases.

[5:00]

Let’s try opening our eyes now, bringing vision into this broad awareness of the world around us as it’s happening and changing right now, moment to moment... Aware of things as wholly as we can be, of colours and textures, hue, light, and integrating this with what we can hear and touch.

[6:00]

And become aware of any parts of the world that meet at more than one of these modalities, such as a radiator where you can feel the heat and see it and perhaps hear noises from it, sunlight that you can feel the heat from and see … the buzzing of some electronic component that you can see as well, for example.

[7:00]

And we’re of course welcome to bring smells and tastes into this practice…

[8:00]

Just letting your awareness settle in on a general sense of the world around you, flitting from one thing to the next, if you like.

[9:00]

And again, just for the last minute, really doubling down on this alert, accurate awareness of the world outside us and in this practice really focusing on pervading a broad area with this awareness.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of another practice, don’t forget to fill the survey out, and many thanks for listening.

## Day 9: Cycle/Open

Welcome back and thanks for joining and setting the time aside to make it to the second to last session. As the last session was a bit more intense perhaps, and we’ve already been through all the sensory modalities, in this session we’re going cycle through everything we’ve tried so far, and then try something a little different and allow the world outside us to dictate what we pay attention to some extent and allow our awareness to float around and move around by itself and see what we notice about the world. For the beginning of the practice, we’re going to take two minutes to establish our meditative mindset by focusing in on the air at our nostrils as we breathe, as usual. So, with our eyes closed and in the meditation posture, let’s begin. [0:00]

[1:00]

The in breath all the way in, the pause between breaths, and all the way out, returning back to our focus if we get distracted.

[2:00]

Let’s take a minute to scan up and down the body and notice what you can about it, as we did in the first session.

[3:00]

And now let’s take that focus on the body and externalise it, focusing on what we can touch around us – clothes and air, hair and sweat… noticing temperatures and textures.

[4:00]

Leaving that behind let’s focus on sounds again, following them from beginning to end and aware of how they change with some curiosity, as we’ve been doing.

[5:00]

Moving now to vision, opening our eyes and becoming aware of the shape, size, and space between different objects… Noticing colours, textures, light and darkness, and anything else we happen across. Again, avoiding judgements and distractions.

[6:00]

And let’s take a minute to look for things we can smell, and maybe even taste, too.

[7:00]

And now that we’ve established some that mindful focus, let’s open up and allow our attention to be pulled in the direction of anything that captures it. As long as we’re alert and aware… It may be more difficult in a practice like this to avoid getting distracted, and when your mind drifts off, again, gently recognise this has happened and gently bring your attention back to being mindful of the world.

[8:00]

Make sure that you’re open and receptive to things that you can touch, hear, smell, see, and taste… This is a meditation that you can do with your eyes open, if you like… Again, don’t over complicate the practice and remember we’re just taking a moment to see what’s happening in the world around you, avoiding judgements and overthinking things.

[9:00]

If you’re at all finding this practice difficult, we might choose to focus on some simple object of meditation and use this to ground ourselves before opening up to the task at hand.

[10:00]

That brings us to the end of the penultimate session. As always continue meditating if you like, and don’t forget to fill out today’s survey. Thanks for listening.

## Day 10: Self directed

Welcome back for the final session in the course – very well done making it through and a big thanks for taking part in the study. I’ll open up this final session so you can direct it yourself, and provide only minimal instructions. Just for the first two minutes, however, let’s do another breath meditation, which is often considered useful to help establish that focus. [0:00]

[2:00]

And we can open up now to our preferred meditation practice, aware of whatever we like here, using any of the objects of mindfulness we have been using, focusing in on one thing or allowing things to grab your attention, as long as we’re are focused on the world as it is right now, including your body, if you like, remaining mindfully aware of the present moment, as we have been practicing.

[3:00]

Remembering those pillars of mindfulness - non-judgemental, non-distracted observation, focused and alert in a calm manner. Watching the world go by, as it were.

[5:00]

At the halfway mark now, let’s perhaps not just choose the practice that we enjoyed the most but choose one that we find a bit more challenging… Of course, if you’re ever finding a practice too challenging, you can move back to one that you find a bit easier, perhaps focusing on sounds or the breath.

[7:00]

If we feel sluggish or tired, doubling down on that alert focus, maybe putting some energy towards the practice, and otherwise just settling in to that present moment awareness.

[10:00]

And this concludes our final session. A big thank you for your participation in the study. Once you have finished your mindfulness for the day, we need you to fill out the final survey on the website so that we can use your data properly. After that, we’ll debrief you on what the study was all about, and you are also free to contact me for any information regarding mindfulness, and your experience with this study. Many thanks for your help.

# Mental States

## Induction (text)

In this course, mindfulness means paying our full attention to whatever’s happening in the present moment – so the world around us, our bodies, and our minds (i.e. our thoughts and feelings). To do this, we’re going to sit down, with our eyes closed, for ten minutes, and try to remain fully alert to our experience of these things as they unfold and constantly change from moment to moment. In mindfulness, we try not to get wrapped up in judgements and thoughts about things, instead, focusing on them just as they are in the present. We’ll try to avoid getting involved in our train of thought as well, achieving some distance from our states of mind by observing them, and often categorising them in different ways. When we get distracted from our object of focus, we notice where our mind has drifted off to, and return back to what we were doing.

## Day 1: Body Scan

Welcome to the first mindfulness practice in the course, and thanks very much for taking part in the study. I’m just going to dive right into things as I think that’s the best way to learn. So, to prepare, you just need to be sitting down with your eyes closed. Normally people meditate sitting cross legged so they can keep their back straight but still relax into that position. Personally I use the Burmese pose with my shins flat on the floor, sitting on a pillow. If you’d rather you can keep your eyes open or you can lie down, particularly if you have some health condition that requires that. It might also be easier to focus in a quiet or dark room, if you can find one. Feel free to pause now if you’re still getting set up… And once we’re in position, for today, we’re going to be trying to bring our full, undivided attention to what we can notice in different parts of our body. So that’s quite a simple task but, you’ll notice that you’ll get distracted plenty, and when this happens, just bring your attention back to what you were doing. Don’t worry too much if you miss an instruction, just keep going as you were and wait for the next one. So, to begin, let’s focus in on our feet, just trying to be fully aware of any sensations we find here, [0:00]

[0:20]

Some of you might already be running into a classic issue with mindfulness practices – that there’s a lot of ways to approach these instructions. I think the best way to approach mindfulness is to just explore these different interpretations. You might want to scan around your foot, be aware of it more as a whole, notice sensations on the surface of the skin, or of the muscles underneath, maybe the feeling of temperature, or your pulse.

[1:00]

And let’s now move onto the legs, starting at the ankle, moving slowly up to the knee bringing our full awareness to whatever we find here right now. You might notice some pain or discomfort in these areas. You can of course focus on these sensations too, but don’t push anything too far, changing position as you need to. If you do so, you can bring some awareness to your intentions to move and to your new posture… moving our attention past the knee now, slowly up towards the hip, if we haven’t done so already.

[2:00]

As you focus on your body, thoughts, emotions, other states of mind, will inevitably intrude on this focus. We can notice these too, as part of what’s going on right now, and, for today’s practice, move our attention back to the area of our body we were focusing on. If you find yourself completely distracted, lost in a day-dream, perhaps *the* key component of mindfulness is noticing where your mind has drifted off to, and gently bringing it back to the task at hand.

[2:20]

Let’s now move up to the hips and waist. Noticing anything that stands out to you here - any tension or relaxedness, aches and pains… Perhaps try to focus on the raw sensations to some degree, seeing things just ‘as they are’, not overly thinking about things or elaborating on them, staying in the present moment by constantly renewing this focus and attention.

[4:00]

Moving up now to the abdominal area, we might some qualitatively quite different sensations here, of fullness or hunger, acidity arising from the stomach. Maybe there’s a feeling of tension in the muscles of this area, or a feeling of relaxation … And, if we’re breathing in a relaxed manner with our back straight, we’ll notice our stomach moving in and out with the breath. Let’s spend just a minute focusing in on this… aware of the breath all the way in, aware of any gap between breaths, and staying with it as it comes all the way out, aware of any pause between breaths here too, doing this for the next half a minute or so.

[5:00]

And moving up to the chest now, we can feel ribs expanding and contracting, noticing the shape of this area as it changes. Some of you might be able to feel you’re the pulse of your heart beat – if not, this is a good opportunity to bring up an interesting part of some mindfulness practices – noticing the lack of a sensation, of it’s absence, if you can. As always, if we find ourselves distracted, noticing this and then bringing ourselves back to the object of focus, which for now is the sensations in our chest.

[5:50]

Let’s move that attention now round to our back, slowly moving up from the lower back to the shoulders. Of course, this is an area of discomfort and pain for a lot of us, myself included. Broadly speaking, we’ve got two options when confronted with this pain: we can avoid recoiling from it, let it in, approach it, explore it a bit - but this should be balanced with listening to our bodies, backing off before we push things too far, and changing position, perhaps lying down if we need to.

[6:20]

Moving past the shoulder blades, up to the shoulders

[7:00]

Let’s go through the shoulders now and down to the upper arms… the elbows… forearms… and hands, ending at the fingertips

[7:30]

For continuity’s sake, let’s quickly move back up the arms and arrive at the neck. Moving through the neck and throat, noticing the skin, the spine, the breath, your pulse, whatever it may be, just as it is right now, without judgement.

[8:00]

And there’s a lot to notice in our faces, and let’s move from chin to forehead, and notice every feature of this area that we can.

[9:00]

And let’s move around to the back and sides of the head, up to the top of the head, ending at a point just on the very tip of our head…

[9:30]

and for the last 30 seconds, try to settle on an awareness of your body as a whole, as best you can.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of the first meditation practice, many thanks for joining.

## Day 2: Breath

Welcome to the second practice in the course, well done for coming back for another session. Today we’re going to jump around less, which might make focusing a little more difficult, and we’ll just be focusing in on our breath. So, in your chosen meditation posture with your eyes closed if you like, let’s begin to focus on the breath at the stomach, just as we did in part of the last practice. [0:00]

[0:20]

Our full attention given to the in and out movements of the breath, moment to moment… balancing the application of some energy and focus to this, without straining too hard either… Observing the breath as it comes all the way in, the slight pause between breaths, and staying with it as it comes all the way out as well, one breath after the other…

[1:00]

You’re very welcome to control your breathing, if you find it helpful, but you don’t need to, and if you can, at least for today’s practice, try to relinquish that control of your breath and just breathe in as you naturally would if you weren’t paying attention to this process… On that note you might want to take note of however shallow or deep, or long or short, you find each the breath to be.

[2:00]

Some of us might notice that by doing this - focusing in on your breath or stomach, thoughts about these things will intrude on this practice, maybe judgements of your body or your breath. Mindfulness is often practiced with an emphasis on a certain ‘non-judgemental’ attitude in this regard. Likewise, we might find this practice quite relaxing, maybe not. Maybe we find the breath laboured and can notice an expression of anxiety in there. This sort of highlights that mind-body connection that means that this isn’t always just an exercise about focusing on your body. By all means include an awareness of these thoughts and feelings as part of what’s happening right now, but something separate to the focus of today’s practice – which is just to the breath and it’s movement of the abdominal area – trying to not let these states interrupt the focus we’re trying to achieve.

[3:00]

Let’s shift our awareness upwards now, moving gradually up to the chest, attending with some curiosity to all the different ways you can notice the breath here, and all the different things you can notice about this area.

[4:00]

At some point we’ll notice our mind has wandered off somewhere – or we might notice thoughts and feelings intruding in on this focus. When these thoughts pop up, we can become aware of them, take note of what they are, and if we need to, allow them to be there in the background. Then, to the best of our ability, with a light touch, return our focus to the breath.

[5:00]

We might feel at this point, a mix of different things, perhaps relaxed or restless or bored, and this too is something to notice mindfully, before you return back to observing the flow of your breathing.

[6:00]

For now, let’s move up slowly again, up through the throat, to the nose… becoming aware of what we can notice about the breath here… aware of the breath all the way in… the pause between breaths… staying with the breath on the way out.. again that pause… and another in-breath…

[7:00]

and really focus in on the breath just at the entrance to the nostrils. This is a more subtle area of focus, and if you’re not noticing anything here, then just being aware of not noticing anything here, and waiting to see when something eventually arises.

[8:00]

And if we notice that our attention has drifted away from the breath completely, and we’re thinking about something unrelated, we should recognise that this is normal functioning of the brain, and then we should as always with a light touch, move our attention back to the breath just at the nostrils, remaining also aware and taking note of any mental state we found ourselves in.

[9:00]

And just for the final minute, let’s become aware of the whole process of breathing, over the whole body, and see where we can notice it.

[10:00]

And that concludes the second session, feel free to keep going if you like or to turn this form of awareness to any activity you’re doing throughout your day. Also don’t forget to finish today’s survey, and thanks for listening.

## Day 3: Sensations

Welcome to another mindfulness session, thanks and well done for making it back! Speaking from experience I know it can be difficult to find the time. Today’s practice will open up to the world around us a bit more, focusing on the five major senses – hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell. As we’ll be looking at things with our eyes open at some point during the exercise, you’re welcome to leave the light on for this practice if you don’t normally and you’d like to make things a little easier. Let’s begin, with another breath meditation at the nostrils to establish that mindful focus. [0:00]

[1:00]

Bringing our awareness to sounds, and whatever we can hear in the world around us… As I’ve said before, we can think about different ways of approaching this. To begin, let’s try, to be aware of some single sound or group of sounds, following them as they begin, change, end, aware of their absence… We might also focus on the soundscape as a whole, open to anything that might pop up… As with breathing this doesn’t need to be an entirely externally focused meditation – we can also take a moment to notice not just the sounds themselves but the sensations of hearing, being aware of our awareness and experience of the world around us… On that note, as before, thoughts and emotions will arise as we do this and we can regard them mindfully, moving back to the current focus of meditation… we can notice the different aspects to sounds, from the raw sensory input to the categorisations, elaborations, judgements, and reactions to them, not taking our interpretations at face value, all of it a part of that experience of hearing from moment to moment, letting it all come and go as it pleases…

[4:00]

Let’s move to the sensations of touch now, which includes an awareness of not just your body, as we did before, but the sense of the world around you you have through the skin. Maybe let’s just start by being aware of the ground underneath us as we can feel it, and maybe aware of that awareness… Including now an awareness of the sensations of touch over the rest of the body, of your clothes, or the air around you, as these things make contact with your skin.

[5:00]

Just scanning around, aware of things as they change, open to what we might find. This can be a very simple exercise in paying attention – many of the instructions I give in these sessions are just intended as food for thought. We’re just taking a moment out of our day to sit and take stock of what’s actually happening right now.

[6:00]

Many meditations are done with the eyes open, for various reasons. So let’s try that now, opening our eyes and becoming aware of what we can see… As always we can pick out various aspects of the world and our perception of it… colours, textures, light, different objects… even just generally aware of the modality of vision itself… aware of any thoughts streaming by as well, but primarily just allowing our awareness to rest on vision, for the minute.

[8:00]

To finish up, let’s allow our awareness to move to any modality, including sensations of smells or tastes, if we can… Of course, we also have other sensations like hunger and thirst, and movement and posture, and whatever you can notice can be included in this practice.

[10:00]

That brings us to the end of this practice, although you’re of course free to continue on if you like. You might also want to try this exercise next time listening to music or eating food, or doing some activity we aren’t always brining our full awareness. Thanks for listening.

## Day 4: Mental states

Welcome to another mindfulness practice, thanks for making it back to another session. Today we’re going to bring our focus more to what’s going on in our minds, our thoughts and emotions. But for now, let’s begin by focusing in on our breathing – which is something we can return to at any point in the practice.

[0:00]

[0:30]

Breathing meditation is sort of a cornerstone of many mindfulness practices and it can have a sort of grounding effect if we’re finding paying attention particularly difficult. Feel free to do this at point, if you find it useful.

[1:00]

If you haven’t done so already, take a moment to be aware of what’s happening in your mind - what you’re thinking about or feeling at any given moment, just taking note of what you find and watching it as it changes… If we don’t notice anything happening in our minds, we can simply notice this absence and mental space, or return back to our experience of the world or our bodies, as we like.

[2:00]

The stance we’re taking here is described by some as a sort of ‘objectifying’ of states of mind. So that just means, whatever we find, we treat it as an object, the way you might regard a tennis ball flying overhead, or a glass of water sitting on a table. A thought is just a thought, with some content, that kind of just appears to us, and disappears as well, and so is separate from us, to some degree. We’re just observing them, whether good or bad, painful or not, with some distance, letting them come and go, see how they change as we do… A big part of this is that we’re not getting too involved in our train of thought – not necessarily suppressing thoughts, but not clinging to them either. Stepping outside of that usual self-chatter and state of distraction we exist in most of the time.

[3:00]

Whether our thoughts or emotions are subtle or strong, whether they refer to the past or future, or other thoughts and feelings, whatever it may be, and try to see them just ‘as they are’. We’re trying to see each thought as an observable event we can watch pass, approaching them with some curiosity, and perhaps lightly describing or categorising them to help this process. If we like we can incorporate a sense of our breath or body into this to help anchor us in the present moment.

[4:00]

That act of ‘letting go’ can mean quite a few things. It's one of those phrases that, as you meditate, the meaning of it might change slightly. I can't tell you exactly what 'letting go' is supposed to mean because that's up for interpretation, and we're talking about states of mind here that are difficult to describe. I prefer to think of 'letting go' as a concept I continually re-evaluate. When thoughts pop up, I may choose to put them out of my mind, to force them out or maybe stand strong against them, or perhaps take a more dismissive stance, more like 'shooing' them away. At other times letting them go means allowing them to be, and at others allowing them in. This all seems more clear in reference to difficult and more extreme emotions, but ultimately it's relevant to anything we encounter as we meditate. So this is a concept you can play with as we sit here and attend to our experiences.

[5:00]

The state you find yourself as you do this might not be particularly relaxing. There's a lot of differing opinions on meditation out there. People often use it for relaxation but when we're aware of what's happening in our minds we might not find ourselves to be particularly relaxed. Others place a big emphasis on remaining ‘tranquil’ no matter what we find. Part of meditation is figuring out what meditation is - or more accurately all the different ways you can behave towards your own experience of the world and yourself. What's best to do with what you find is ultimately up to you.

[6:00]

It’s important to say that if you encounter something particularly difficult, it’s important to listen to yourself and be aware if you’re pushing too hard perhaps backing off and focusing on the breath or something relaxing, maybe even stopping the practice for today, if you need to.

[7:00]

For what it's worth, the buddhist path was always one geared towards knowing the truth, seeing what is there, past the ways our mind obscures that reality. That's all a bit heady and for the moment, we're just focusing in on our present experience, but questioning and contemplating the different aspects of this practice and your longer term goals (or maybe lack thereof), are what can make meditation so interesting and textured. I was a little surprised when someone told me they compared meditation to falling asleep - depending on how you practice, and how you fall asleep, it might share some similarities. But equally, as we're trying to be as fully aware of what's going on around and within us, you might think there's actually more sensory and cognitive stimulation - and in that light it's more like being fully awake and alert than it is to drifting off.

[9:00]

And just for the final minute here, doubling down on, or gently re-establishing this alertness to mental or physical sensations.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of the practice for today. You’re of course welcome to keep going if you like, or to replay this recording, or bring this form of awareness to some activity throughout your day at any point. Thanks for listening.

## Day 5: Compassion

Welcome to another mindfulness practice, thanks for making it back. Let’s begin again by diligently focusing in on our moment to moment breathing, as we’ve done before.

[0:00]

[1:00]

Let’s open up to our thoughts, feelings, whatever else we notice happening in our minds as well… And I’ll also note that in mindfulness, we don’t always have to keep everything at a distance. For some, meditation is more about taking a moment to assess what it is that we notice, and then choosing what we want to do with it. Letting some things in, pushing others away, choosing those things we want to encourage and distancing ourselves from others.

[2:00]

In the ancient scriptures there's some debated words about being aware of things 'internally and externally'. Perhaps this refers to being aware of the world around you, and your mind. However, when referring to emotions this seems slightly confusing, and so it's often taken to be an awareness of other people's experiences. There's an emphasis on empathy and compassion in the Buddhist scripture that can get lost in modern practices, that I think can be quite useful. Much of what intrudes into our minds as we sit here will probably reference other people, and it's worth, in those moments, to remember that the stance we take to our own state of mind in meditation can be equally applied to those we remember or imagine in others.

[3:00]

Approaching our thoughts of others using some compassion can equally help us see the people they reference, and the associated thoughts, a little more clearly. This is a cornerstone of how these practices can encourage 'selflessness' - in opposition to 'selfishness'. Equally, this mode of compassion can be directed towards yourself, some say that's actually a precursor to that compassion towards others. As with others, this can help us be more mindful of thoughts and feelings that refer to ourselves.

[4:00]

We can always focus in on the breath, if we like, mindful of any thoughts and feelings as and when they emerge.

[5:00]

The idea of actively using some compassion and empathy as a sort of antidote to certain emotions or thoughts, that allows us to be more mindful of them, is an interesting one, I think. Other emotions might have their own complementary antidotes you can consciously evoke to try get some perspective on them. This idea of consciously evoking emotions might stand in contrast to my instructions in previous sessions to just observe and be aware - but again mindfulness is no one thing, and you can consider this another tool in your meditative toolbelt, if you like.

[7:00]

The idea of compassion towards others isn't intending to ask too much of you - there's obviously some others who you won't want to take a compassionate stance to, and that's fine - this is as always a personal practice and the implementation is up to you. Many of these, what's called 'loving-kindness' meditations, a translation of the word 'Metta', will often start off with feeling compassion towards the self, and then someone you love, moving outwards to someone you perhaps just 'like', then an acquaintance you feel indifferent towards, onto someone you slightly dislike, and so on. This scaffolded approach might be best as you practice Metta meditation today or at some other time, and perhaps consider how you feel in general towards those that you happen to think of as you meditate.

[9:00]

Remember as well, if we notice ourselves lost in thoughts, forgetting to be mindful, that this is the normal functioning of the mind, and the very point of mindfulness is to notice in these moments, where we are and what we’re doing, and to gently bring the mind back to the task of being mindful and noticing. In some ways this is an attentional training exercise, and you can’t expect yourself to be particularly good at it at first.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of another practice, as always feel free to rewind or continue, and to bring this practice to some other activity in your day. Don’t forget to fill out the survey whilst the practice is fresh in your mind, and many thanks for participating.

## Day 6: Hinderances

Welcome to the sixth practice, where we’ll be doing our usual routine and I’ll try highlight some difficulties that arise when meditating and some strategies to get around them. So let’s start with a simple breath-focusing exercise, as we’ve been doing before, aware of the in-breath and out-breath as fully as we can.

[0:00]

[0:30]

Letting anything that arises come and go, not clinging to anything, approaching things with curiosity and openness, some empathy and equanimity.

[1:00]

That term, ‘equanimity’, is quite often central to mindfulness practice, and it means approaching whatever we find, good or bad, as just more stuff, more phenomena, to be aware of, just as it is, not overly reacting to anything… An older practice to help build one’s equanimity is to just label things as ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’, as they appear to you… We can continue to focus on our breath if we like, or sounds or something else, but try to keep one eye on the goings on in your mind, if you can.

[2:00]

This act of labelling and categorising things is a useful one for helping us gain that meditative distance we spoke about before, and you can use it for other states too. Labelling your anxious thoughts as ‘worries’, anger as ‘anger’, for example, seeing them as these simple appearances with some certain content.

[3:00]

Another way many of our positive and negative thoughts are sometimes grouped in meditation is with the categories of ‘desire and aversion’. We’re often either desiring something pleasurable, maybe craving some chemical addiction like caffeine, something distracting or just enjoyable maybe. At other times, or maybe at the same time, we’re often experiencing an aversion to something we don’t like, some worries or anxieties, pains or aches in our body; from sitting down right now even. And these can be particularly difficult states to mindfully observe and so noting them as such is intended to help with this.

[4:30]

Some of the more common aversive states include worries as I’ve mentioned, but also tiredness, sluggishness, laziness even, can make the practice difficult and it can help to take a moment to recognise them as such. Maybe, as we spoke about in a previous session, conjuring up some energy to put towards the practice to combat them… Finally, another common problematic state is doubt – perhaps self-doubt. Much of this restlessness and doubt may refer to mindfulness practice itself – and it’s not that you have to enjoy this practice, or get anything out of it; doubts about the usefulness of this practice are of course fine but it’s worth noting that these too, as with the other states I’ve mentioned today, can become the objects of a mindful observation.

[6:00]

Of course, in the interest of this being a practice geared towards your own personal experience, if you realise there is some particular state that hinders your own mindfulness practice, take note of it as such as well.

[7:00]

I spoke in the last session about cultivating certain states and letting them in. It’s important to note that there’s not necessarily anything wrong with these obstacles to meditative focus I’ve spoken about today. It’s just important to note their effect so, if we choose what we want to do with them – whether that be letting them go, whatever that means to you, or combatting them and stopping yourself assenting to the ideas they present.

[8:00]

As we sit here and attend to the world and our minds, obviously one of the bigger obstacles to this is just plain old being distracted, and as with the other states mentioned, this practice isn’t about chastising yourself or getting frustrated, but seeing these things as just how your mind works, and returning back to your focus.

[9:00]

For the last minute here, doubling down on the energy we’re putting towards focusing on the present moment.

[10:00]

And that’s ten minutes and so the end of another practice. Feel free to continue on by yourself if you like, well done for making it this far, and many thanks for listening.

## Day 7: Intentions

Welcome to another mindfulness practice. Let’s start off today with another breath meditation, simply aware of each breath, however deep or shallow, long or short, in each moment, for the next minute or so.

[0:00]

[1:00]

During most of this course you’ve probably been allowing your breath to come and go as it likes, but let’s take a moment to do some controlled breathing. Breathing in, holding your breath for a few moments, and breathing out. Inhale again, and repeat this for a minute or so, with deep breaths.

[2:00]

Controlled breathing is actually a fairly common meditative practice which some of you might find useful. But today’s session is more focused around intentions. You might be able to notice, when we make this choice to breathe in or out, that we have an intention to breathe which we realise by acting on it. So continue this controlled breathing and try to see if you can notice this state of mind as it occurs.

[3:00]

Intentions occur in all sorts of forms – those states of mind that pop up indicating a choice to act, the aim to achieve some goal through a plan, or just your sense of willpower and your own volition – and which are separate from the action itself. These are a quite specific but also pervasive type of thought that it can be useful to be aware of in meditation – ones which as usual we don’t have to react to or act on, and can let go of and watch pass away on their own. For now, we can return back to our normal practice of mindfulness, if we like, and remember that label of ‘intention’ when it seems suitable.

[4:00]

Often our own intentions can go by unbeknownst to us - sometimes we don’t know why we do the things we do and being attuned to catching those fleeting intentional states when we can sometimes help with this. Focusing in on them might highlight how this practice is intended as a form of introspection aimed at fostering some greater self-awareness.

[5:00]

You might notice an intention to move your body, to scratch an itch, to get up and do something else entirely, or perhaps you start making plans for the future. We are also intending to be mindful – to continue to sit here, and remain focused on present phenomena, and hold and move our attention, and this can be noticed as well. If this practice seems difficult, you can return back to some controlled breathing, or, with some patience, waiting around to see if we can notice an intention arise, or the absence of one.

[6:00]

Not all states will fit easily into this category and at this point feel free to meditate as you like, keeping in mind everything we’ve learnt in the course so far.

[7:00]

Asking what you’re aware of at the moment, pointing and concentrating this awareness to the moment by moment happenings around you and within your body and mind.

[8:00]

During these last two minutes, just checking in with how we’re focused and how we’re feeling. Watching whatever it is that we notice as it changes, open to whatever it is that we might find, seeing it ‘as it is’ if you will.

[10:00]

That brings us to the end of maybe a slightly more challenging meditation, but one which hopefully you found useful. Well done making it this far, don’t forget to fill out today’s survey, and thanks for participating in the study.

## Day 8: Meta-awareness

Hi again, welcome to another mindfulness practice. Today’s session will be quite a general one, just simply paying attention to any phenomena that appear in the world around us and our minds, and I’ll take the opportunity to talk about some different aspects of mindfulness that we’ve not touched on yet. So, let’s begin again, attending to our breath.

[0:00]

[0:30]

Just simply observing one in breath and one out breath, one after the other.

[1:00]

We can also try to incorporate some of those different ways of understanding ‘mindfulness’ I’ve spoken about. Things like non-clinging, non-distraction, equanimity, curiosity, empathy, to name a few.

[1:30]

However we choose to understand and deploy ‘mindfulness’ it’s going to be a sort of careful balancing between a few different states… It takes time to hone this mindful balancing act, and actually it’s something that’s supposed to be reflected on and may always be changing.

[2:00]

There’s this meta-awareness involved in mindfulness which keeps us on track. In the most basic sense we’ll be asking ‘am I being mindful’, and even if the answer is ‘no’, you’re still being aware of your state of mindfulness, and it’s absence. I suppose the point is, the more you practice the more your understanding of the practice changes, and so you’ll spend time examining your own state of ‘mindfulness’ and adjusting your focus as required.

[3:00]

Concentration is obviously a key part of the practice, and the amount of energy and focus we’re putting into the practice is something to keep track of and notice. Doing so doesn’t necessarily mean straining as hard as you can to only be aware of one thing. Again, here, there’s a balance between a being a bit lazy, diligent alertness, and over-exertion, that you’ll have to feel out for yourself.

[4:00]

That balancing act is made more difficult by the interrelation between these different components of mindfulness. Over-straining yourself trying to concentrate can affect your attitude of openness and curiosity. These things are also related to what’s referred to as the ‘breadth’ of your awareness – some mindfulness practitioners try to have a fairly broad, pervasive awareness to everything that they can notice at all times.

[4:30]

This is something we’ve touched on previously when focusing on different sensory states, but the breadth or narrowness of your focus can equally apply to your awareness of your mind, as well. If you think you’ve been overly narrow in your awareness so far, you can take a moment to embody that ‘openness’ and look around for anything you might’ve missed.

[5:30]

It’ll be worth asking too, not just what ‘mindfulness’ is or ‘how well am I doing it’, but how it feels to be doing what we’re doing now – is it any different to how we normally think or attend to the world? What’s the qualitative experience of being mindful like, what are the outcomes of doing this, where does it lead, and things like that.

[6:00]

Again, all of this isn’t to overly complicate the practice, rather to open up some possibilities for it to be a little more interesting and textured. It’s a perfectly valid to meditate by just focusing in on the breath or some other simple object of meditation, if we like.

[7:00]

Take a moment to ask yourself what’s going through your mind, what’s happening in the world around you, incorporating all of that into a picture of this ‘full awareness of the present moment’, a broad, but concentrated focus.

[8:00]

Spend the minute or so meditating as you please, maybe choosing your favourite session so far and taking some time to just relax and enjoy the practice, if you can.

[10:00]

And that brings us to the end of a slightly more challenging practice, well done for making it this far and I’ll hopefully see you next time. Thanks.

## Day 9: Open-monitoring

Welcome to another mindfulness practice – this is the penultimate session, where we’ll be opening things up a bit more, and looking into a style of meditation called ‘open monitoring’. To begin with let’s spend the first two minutes establishing an awareness on the breath.

[0:00]

[1:00]

Brining that full awareness to the breath in each moment, not just lost in it but aware that we are aware of the breath as well, to some degree. Avoiding distractions, elaborations, judgements, and constantly renewing that focus.

[2:00]

I spoke last session about pervading a broad area of awareness – let’s try to open up now to have as broad a focus as possible, taking in as much as we can, aware of as much as we can be aware of… using all our sensory and mental modalities to see things as a whole to some degree.

[3:00]

And now let’s let go of that directing of the mind, allowing your attention to move around and land on whatever it pleases. As long as we’re aware that it is doing so, we’re still meditating… letting go of this direction can be a tricky balancing act, and if you find yourself too easily distracted, try to focus in on your breath to anchor yourself for a while, before turning back to that undirected attention.

[5:00]

Those of you who have been following and trying out each suggestion in the course have been jumping around from one thing to another, quite a lot. But there’s other equally valid approaches to meditation that some enjoy. You might’ve heard of mindfulness described as a state of ‘non-doing’ or just ‘being’. This is obviously a slightly different approach to all the things we’ve been actively doing thus far, but I think it’s worth trying out and seeing if it works for you. Essentially here we’re trying, maybe somewhat counter-intuitively, perhaps even contradictorily, to not do anything. We spend a lot of our time doing, and it can be useful to try, however it is that you interpret it, to try to inhabit a mode of ‘non-doing’ and just being here sitting in meditation. So let’s try that for a minute or two.

[7:00]

Again, the previous day’s focus will link back here – we may have to apply some conscious effort to letting go of the things we intend to do in order to just ‘be’. Of course, exploring how doing so relates to non-doing is something practitioners struggle with, but try not to let the apparent contradictions get in the way of an attempt at this ‘just being’ practice. Perhaps calling it ‘just sitting’, as it has been called, highlights and entry point into how you can be ‘doing’ as little as possible.

[9:00]

Noticing the effect this practice has on you, if any, adjusting your practice accordingly.

[10:00]

That’s the ten-minute mark. You’re welcome to continue on by yourself, and I hope to see you in the last practice next session. Thanks for joining.

## Day 10: Self-directed

Welcome to the final session in the course, well done for making it to the end – not everyone does, and it’s not easy to work this practice into a regular routine. I’d also like to extend a big thanks for helping out with the study. For this final session, I’ll wind down the talking and instruction and allow you to self-direct your own meditation. To help keep you on track and jog your memory, I’ll recap everything we’ve covered in the course so far. So let’s begin, as you like, although perhaps settling in with a breath meditation, as is commonly done.

[0:00]

[1:00]

The course has covered meditations that initially appear separate – those based on physical things, the body or world around us, and those based on mental events. But there’s a connection between the two that shouldn’t be forgotten as we progress with our practice.

[2:00]

As an example, what you think about can affect your heart and breathing, and I think the connection between how our bodies and minds interact is fairly clear. But we’re also able to be aware of any physical state as a mental state, we’re aware of the world through our minds, in our perceptions of it, and these too can be a focus of mindfulness, at times.

[4:00]

The mind-focused meditations have taken up the majority of the course. And using them I’ve highlighted some different meditative approaches that actually apply to any object of meditation, whether it be in the mind or not. We’ve talked about concentration and openness, non-clinging and letting go, equanimity and objectifying phenomena, effort and calmness, cultivating empathy and observing hinderances. All of this can be a lot to take in and so it’s worth noting that I just wanted to make this course short, but fairly comprehensive too. This is a personal practice and you should meditate in a way you like, and try to work these things into your practice, as you can.

[6:00]

We can choose to focus our attention, pervade a broad area, allow that attention to float around – and to inhabit a mode of ‘being’ or ‘non-doing’. Which ever we choose, as long as we’re aware of it as such, we’re being mindful.

[8:00]

I’ve talked about the present-moment over and over in this course – but I think perhaps this confusing phrase is better explained by the idea of change – mindfulness is being aware of things as they change and how they change, aware of changing and the impermanence in ourselves and the world around us, and the interconnection between the two.

[10:00]

That’s another ten minutes and the end of the course. Once you’ve finished with today’s question on your practice, the second main survey, which is similar to the first one, will be sent out to you. Well-done for making it through, big thanks for taking part in the course.