

***Session 8   
Mindfulness in Daily Life***

‘If I become a center of love and kindness in this moment, then in a perhaps small but hardly insignificant way, the world now has a nucleus of love and kindness it lacked the moment before’ *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

# More Loving Kindness

We are not always a ‘center of love and kindness’, even towards ourselves, or sometimes, especially not towards ourselves. In the Loving Kindness mediation we generate a feeling of loving kindness by remembering or imagining how it feels, or has felt, to be loved unconditionally, whether we feel we deserve that love or not. Holding this feeling in awareness we can wish for ourselves peace, love, safety….whatever we need for our well being in that moment.

We can become the source of that love towards ourselves as well as the recipient, holding ourselves with a sense of cherishing and complete acceptance. This does not always come easily and may take much practice before it comes naturally. When we find ourselves resisting a feeling of loving ourselves, maybe feeling undeserving of our own love, see if we can look at this as a thought, and accept it as just that while holding ourselves with acceptance and kindness.

We may find that difficult thoughts and feelings arise as we learn to accept ourselves and treat ourselves kindly. We can learn to hold and accept these feelings , with our breath, with being with feelings, with allowing and letting be, with dis-identification and with loving kindness.

We can also learn to direct loving kindness towards others, to specific people, groups of people, situations, even towards people who may have caused us harm in some way. In focusing loving kindness on others, we are not making ourselves vulnerable to them in any way, we are simply allowing ourselves to see that they too are human beings with fears and limitations and maybe we can see any wrong doing on their part as stemming from their fear and limits. As Yeats says, *‘Why, what could she have done, being what she is?’ (quoted in ‘Wherever You Go There You Are’ by Jon Kabat-Zinn)*

# Using Images in Meditation

Earth and water are elemental forces in the world and can be used in meditation to promote a sense of stillness and peace. Mountains are firmly rooted in the earth, and exist almost timelessly. Whatever may be happening on its surface, whatever weather, whatever seasons, whoever walks on it, the mountain maintains its essential being. This image can help us to remember why we sit in meditation, to stay connected to our stillness within.

Likewise, if we visualise a lake, things happen on the surface but deep down the water is barely disturbed. If someone tries to hit the lake with a hammer, all they get is a wet hammer. If we can stay connected to the stillness in the depth of the lake, in the depth of ourselves, we are not so disturbed by events on our surface.

# Ideas for Everyday Mindfulness

* On waking in the morning, observe 5 mindful breaths before getting out of bed. Every now and again during your day, just stop and take another 5 mindful breaths.
* Notice your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you change from one activity or position to another, e.g. as you change from a sitting position to standing.
* Use sounds you hear as bells of mindfulness to bring you into the present moment. A bird singing, a phone ringing, a car passing by, the sound of the wind…whatever you hear.
* Before eating or drinking, take a moment to see what is embodied by the food…the farmer, the sun, the earth… Eat a little with awareness, smelling, tasting, swallowing.
* Notice your body, where it makes contact with the ground or other surfaces. Feel the air on your skin. Notice what you are doing, and how you are doing it, and how you feel about it.
* Listen and speak with awareness. See if it’s possible to listen without judgement, without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, and without planning what to say next. Can you speak what you want to convey, without overstating or apologising? And without wanting the other to agree with you?
* Use the time when you need to queue for something to notice how your body feels, what your mind is doing, what emotions you feel. Us the time to be aware of the rise and fall of your breath in your abdomen.
* Notice areas of tension in your body as you go through your day. Direct your breath to such areas to see if these areas can soften. Give yourself loving kindness.
* Be aware of routine activities, such as washing up, cleaning your teeth, taking out the rubbish, dressing, bathing etc. See if you can be mindful of these activities.
* After getting into bed, observe 5 mindful breaths before settling to sleep.

*Weave your parachute every day.*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn*

# Case Study

‘Jackie, a nurse on a busy hospital ward [was] always “being knocked off her feet” with one thing after another. there simply seemed to be no time for her to relax, far less to sit and meditate. But she started to pay more attention within the busy-ness. She noticed that little spaces opened up even at the most hectic times. She said, for example, that she had needed to phone someone in another part of the hospital to get some test results on a patient. She phone several times but got no reply. This was one of the most frustrating aspects of her job, waiting for someone in another department to answer the phone when she had so much to do. She had started to get angry.

Then, she stopped. Here was 30 seconds in which she could not rush around; here was a moment of potential silence in the noise of the day. She started to use the lack of an answer as an opportunity to take a breathing space, to step back. Gradually, she started to notice many other times when she could step back, for example, pushing a drugs trolley, whose speed limited the pace of movement along the corridor, or walking to the other end of the ward to see a patient’s family. Prior to this, she had thought that meditation practice might best be done when taking a lunch break or going to the rest room. Now, she found she could look for the “in-between” spaces throughout the day, spaces that transformed her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour for the rest of the activities of the day.’

*Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002)*