

Syllabus – Introduction to Mindfulness Based Stress Management

Instructor: Randi E. Platt, M.Ed.

randiplatt@ymail.com

Phone: 215-732-6308 x 2

Session #1

Definition of mindfulness, formal vs. informal practice, attitude,
Introduction to Body Scan

Assignment to download 20 minute body scan & practice 1x per day using Formal Practice Log to record

Session # 2

Practice review/discussion

Wandering Mind

Walking meditation

Assignment for walking meditation 20 minutes per day using Formal Practice Log to record

Session # 3

Practice review/discussion

6 points of posture

Seat

Hands

Torso

Eyes

Mouth

Legs

Sitting Meditation

Assignment 20 minutes per day sitting with focus on breath or sound using Formal Practice Log to record

Session # 4

Practice Review/discussion

Sitting meditation

Walking meditation

Taking Practice Into Your Life

Bibliography – Introduction to Mindfulness Based Stress Management

Chodron, Pema, How To Meditate: A Practical Guide To Making Friends With Your Mind. Sounds True, Boulder, CO, 2013.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment- and Your Life, Sounds True, Boulder, CO, 2012.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, Full Catastrophe Living. Bantam, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1990.

Stahl, Bob and Goldstein, Elisha, A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook. New Harbinger, Oakland, CA, 2010.

Additional Resources

Self-Compassion Test:

<http://www.self-compassion.org/test-your-self-compassion-level.html>

Free Mindfulness Exercise Downloads (Body Scan and Seated Meditation)

<http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>

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Learning To Meditate

From the Learning To Meditate On-Line Course (Daily Om)

by [Madisyn Taylor](#) The following is an excerpt from the "Learning to Meditate" on-line course. If you would like to take the entire course, [click here](#). My wish for you is that meditation can be an opportunity to begin a simple practice of self-acceptance and self-love. If the mere idea of meditating feels uncomfortable—or scary even, that's okay. Exploring unknown territory usually does. But don't worry, you won't turn into a hippie, have to change your friends, or pack up and move to a commune in order to reap the benefits of your meditation practice. This is a gift you're giving yourself and nobody even needs to know you are meditating, but you just might love it so much that you will want to teach your friends and family. Let's take a moment to get clear on what meditation really is. The term "meditation" can refer to any process that leads you to an inner state of relaxed awareness. There needn't be any big mystery or drama about the process itself, and there's really no right or wrong way of doing it. There are simply different techniques that can be used as tools to help you focus and quiet your mind, and we'll work with some of these as the weeks unfold. This will allow you to choose which method works best for you as a person. We have all seen the vision of the yogi sitting crossed legged wearing robes and perhaps meditating in a cave. This is not what meditation is about for most of us and starting with an unrealistic idea of what meditation is about won't make it an enjoyable experience for you. I still have a hard time quieting my mind and I find that my meditation practice is more fulfilling for me while I'm in nature. Our main purpose here is to help you develop a meditation practice that's right for you. It'll be something you feel comfortable doing and that you're willing and able to do regularly. For those of us who already have a meditation routine, we've come to depend on the way our practice enhances our lives. We've discovered an ever-present source of inner peace and wisdom from which we can now draw strength, courage, clarity and compassion. It has become easier to respond to situations from a calm and grounded place, rather than acting out old dysfunctional patterns. We're also better able to navigate our lives in alignment with our own needs and goals. By giving ourselves the space to simply be ourselves, many of the distractions from other people's agendas melt away. For many of us, meditation has become an important way to take really good care of ourselves. You wouldn't dream about leaving your house in the morning without bathing or brushing your teeth and this is eventually how you will feel about your practice. A morning meditation will give you the quiet confidence and the strength you will need for your day.

Research has linked a regular practice of meditation to reduced levels of anxiety and stress, in addition to improved immune function and a host of other health benefits. Studies have shown that the nervous system actually begins responding differently to stressful situations—creativity flows more freely and new solutions begin to emerge. What's wonderful is that many of these advantages occur after just one session and continue evolving with regular practice. As you develop your own meditation program, you'll be able to track the benefits for yourself, from changes in your mood to improvements in your energy. Soon you will find yourself reacting from a place of centered calm rather than from your head. GETTING

STARTED The best results of meditation are seen in those who make it a regular practice. And as with anything, practicing consistently carves out a behavioral pattern that becomes more established and easier to follow over time. Try not to be hard on yourself as you begin this process. You're the only one who can take this journey and the best place to start is right where you are. At first you may not be able to sit for more than a few minutes and that's ok, but soon you'll be meditating for 10, 20 or 30 minutes with ease. The idea is to get a habit started, so aim for consistency (i.e., meditating 10 minutes a day, every day) over longer sessions (i.e., meditating for a whole half hour, every once in a while). You generally don't need to purchase anything to start a meditation routine and no special equipment or clothing is required as long as you're comfortable. Some people buy what's known as a meditation cushion, but it's certainly not necessary. Some also find that lighting a candle or incense signals an official start to their meditation and this can help the mind to focus. (Chimes, singing bowls and bells may also be used for this purpose.) Next week, we'll be exploring some particular meditation practices that use candles and incense, so if you don't already have these around your home, you may want to get some that you'll enjoy working with.

It is not uncommon for inspiring ideas and solutions to emerge during meditation. I always have a journal with me so I can jot down what comes up and return to my session without fear of losing the idea. You may want to experiment with this as well. It can help your mind return to silence. *Positioning* Let's explore a few different ways of sitting. You may be familiar with the classic lotus position or half-lotus position (see photos below) in which many long-term meditators are pictured. This position is ideal because it allows for a balanced and unobstructed flow of energy throughout the energy centers of your body. Some people cannot sit this way because they are physically inflexible or having back or knee issues. You may find that over time you gain the flexibility to meditate in the lotus position; or, you may simply decide that an alternate posture works better for

you. Please don't feel that you have to sit in these positions right away, it can take time to build up to it. The key to remember when selecting your meditation position is that you'll want to keep your back straight and your palms open or facing upward. There are a few different positions for your hands to take during meditation, but for the purpose of this course we will place our hands open toward the sky and having them rest on your thighs, knees or ankles depending on what is comfortable once you are in position with the rest of your body. Here are some positions you might try:

Using a Chair: Sit with your feet on the floor, spine straight against the back of the chair, and your shoulders back. If needed, you can add a pillow behind you for lower back support.

On the Floor: Sit crossed legged or in half or full lotus position. You may want to place a pillow under your tailbone for comfort.

On the Floor, against the Wall: If you have trouble getting your back straight, start out sitting against a wall. If necessary, fold up a small towel to tuck under your tailbone. This is usually the easiest position for beginners, with a wall supporting the back. Over time your muscles will get stronger and the support of a wall will likely become unnecessary.

In Your Bed: If sitting up straight is difficult or painful for you, start out lying down. Most of us associate our bed with sleeping and this can be a problem, as it may create the tendency to fall asleep. But turn yourself 90 degrees on the bed if it's big enough, or turn yourself 180 degrees and do not use pillows—this may trick your mind to stay awake, as your head will be at a different place than it usually is during the night. Once you have more meditation experience under your belt, try to move from the bed. The bed may also be used in a sitting position with your back against your headboard and pillows placed under your hipbones to get a nice



straight spine.

position (above): Sit upright with your spine straight and crossing your legs, right over left. You can see from the photo that both feet are off the ground and nested upon each of her legs.

Lotus



Half-Lotus position

(above): Sit upright with your spine straight and cross one leg on top of the other while the other leg is resting on the floor or cushion beneath you. *Finding Your Place* Once you've determined the most appropriate way of sitting (or lying down), select what will become your regular place for meditation. You'll want a location where you can spend time every day without interruption. While it doesn't need to be used solely for meditation, it is helpful to be at the same place for each sitting—especially as you try to create a new routine. The perfect spot may be your favorite living room chair, or in front of an altar if you have one, or maybe your bedroom if that's the most serene place. It just needs to be somewhere that's comfortable and as quiet as possible. Try to not get too preoccupied with not having a special room for meditation, few people have this luxury. When you've found a place that feels good, you might choose to make the area special by having a favorite pillow or candle nearby. These things aren't necessary for meditation; they may simply enhance your experience and help bring you to a daily routine. Not everybody has complete quiet time. You may have children or pets that need your attention, a noisy neighbor or cars driving by. Try not to let this

distract you. Meditation can be done even under the noisiest of circumstances. Please do not feel like you are at a disadvantage or that you won't get the results you desire. In fact, you may find the opposite is true. Having practiced meditation in a loud or raucous environment, you might soon discover that it's become natural for you to be at peace, no matter what is going on around you.

Preparation Take some time out now to plan your meditation schedule for the week ahead. Ideally you'll be able to sit during a morning hour, and if it can be the same hour each day, that's even better. Many people find that meditating just after they wake up is a great way to start the day. If you're not able to practice until later on in the afternoon or evening, or if you must sit at a different time each day, this is fine. It's far better to meditate anytime, than not at all.

You'll probably want to block out approximately 15 minutes for your sessions at this point. This will give you a couple minutes on either side of your practice and allow for a sitting time of 10 minutes. With 10 minutes of meditation a day, you'll be able to see and feel results without putting too much pressure on yourself. Advanced practitioners will meditate 20, 30 or more minutes per day. Pretty soon you'll understand how 30 minutes can be an easy routine to maintain.

After your sitting time is over, it's important to make sure that you're grounded. Sometimes meditating can bring you into higher realms and make it difficult to transition back to everyday reality. You may feel "floaty" and this can be a lovely feeling, but it means that you aren't securely grounded in your body and that is where you should be in daily life. There are many different techniques for grounding oneself, and you'll need to do some experimenting to come up with the practice that works best for you. You can try focusing your attention for a few moments on your connection to the earth, as though you have a light beam emitting down the tailbone of your body or roots like a tree that burrow deep into the earth's center. Another way is to hold your attention on your center of gravity (just below your navel) or at the base of your spine for a couple of minutes. Other things that may work are eating a light snack, drinking water, taking a short walk outside, or even stretching.

Beginning Your Meditation Practice Now for your first big step. Over the upcoming week, your job is to faithfully follow the meditation schedule you've created. You'll be sitting in meditation for 10 minutes every day and will undoubtedly have some interesting experiences. Try to pay attention to changes in the way you interpret and interact with the world outside of your meditation sessions. Do you feel calm? Anxious? Happy? Frustrated? There's no need to judge anything. This is simply an invitation to create greater self-awareness, which can help guide the way your practice evolves. Below you'll find a step-by-step

guide on a basic meditation process. This is the method you'll be using this week, so you may wish to print out this lesson and carry it with you into your sittings. **BASIC MEDITATION GUIDE** Before you begin:

1. Put on some loose, comfortable clothing that will not bind while you are sitting.
2. Turn off phones, TV, radio and anything else that may interrupt your quiet time.
3. Prepare your meditation area (every time) before you sit to meditate. A light dusting or cleaning up of the area will set the intention. It says to the Universe, "I am ready."

When you are ready:

1. If you have a candle or incense, a bell or singing bowl, use those items now. Light your candle or incense and ring your bell. (Again, these items are not necessary.)
2. Sit (or lie if you need to) in the position that works best for you and begin to relax. Place your hand on your knees or thighs and open them up towards the ceiling, palms heavenward. Take a giant deep breath and let it out. Acknowledge that this is now your meditation time.
3. Now simply sit and breathe. For the entire 10 minutes, just breathe. Make no judgment on what happens during this time. Most people will not be able to quiet their minds, and may drift into thoughts about their to-do lists, what other people should or shouldn't have done, and even what's on the menu that day. Your mind may wander and that's perfectly okay. As soon as you realize your mind has led you somewhere else, release it and breathe deeply. Do this every time your awareness leaves the present moment. If your mind comes up with something you cannot let drift by, write it down so you can get back to your awareness.
4. At the end of your session, take a couple of minutes to ground yourself.

For more information visit [Learning To Meditate On-Line Course](#)