

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

STUDENT WORKBOOK

SESSION 3



MINDFULNESS *of Emotions*

This week, following Session 3, individual practice will focus on sensing into emotions. Use the first two worksheets to grow familiar with the vast range of emotions and where they often are sensed in the body. Take this week to increase your comfort with acknowledging and naming emotions, sensing them in the body, and not judging yourself for any feelings.

The following exercises, meditations, and journal topics will give you something to focus on each day between sessions. Feel free to complete them in any order you like, and even to repeat any exercise you find helpful or interesting. Let yourself be led by your needs and interests this week.

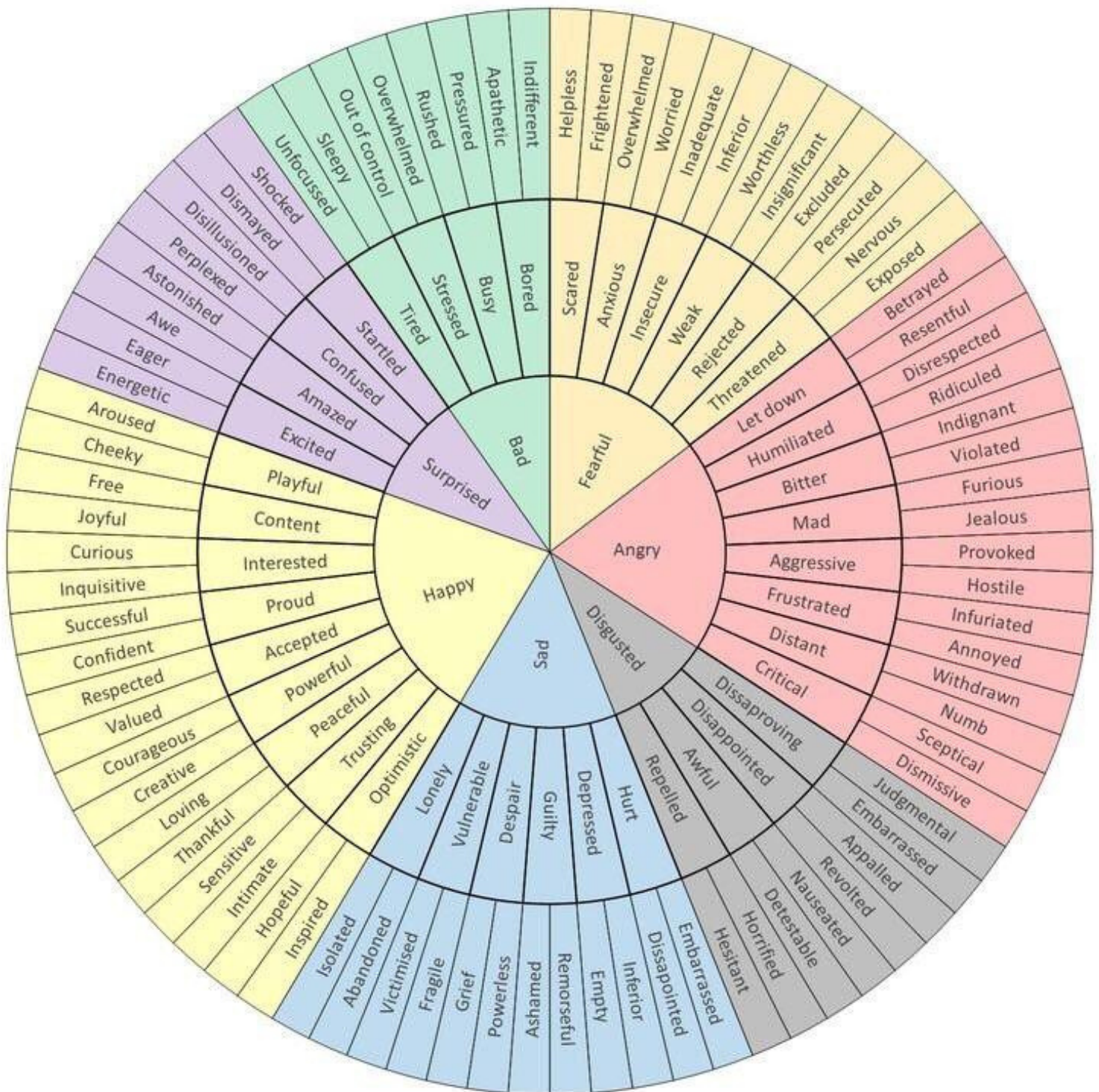
Session 3 Contents:

- Journal Topics
- Wheel of Feelings and Emotions
- Body Map of Emotions
- Clarifying Emotions
- Emotional Validation
- Sensing into Strong Triggered Feelings
- What Are Your Feelings?
- Emotional Journaling
- Letting Go of Limiting Stories
- The Impact of Emotions in Your Relationships
- Transforming Anger
- Cultivating an Inner Smile

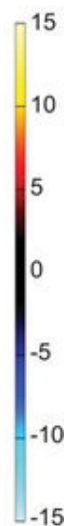
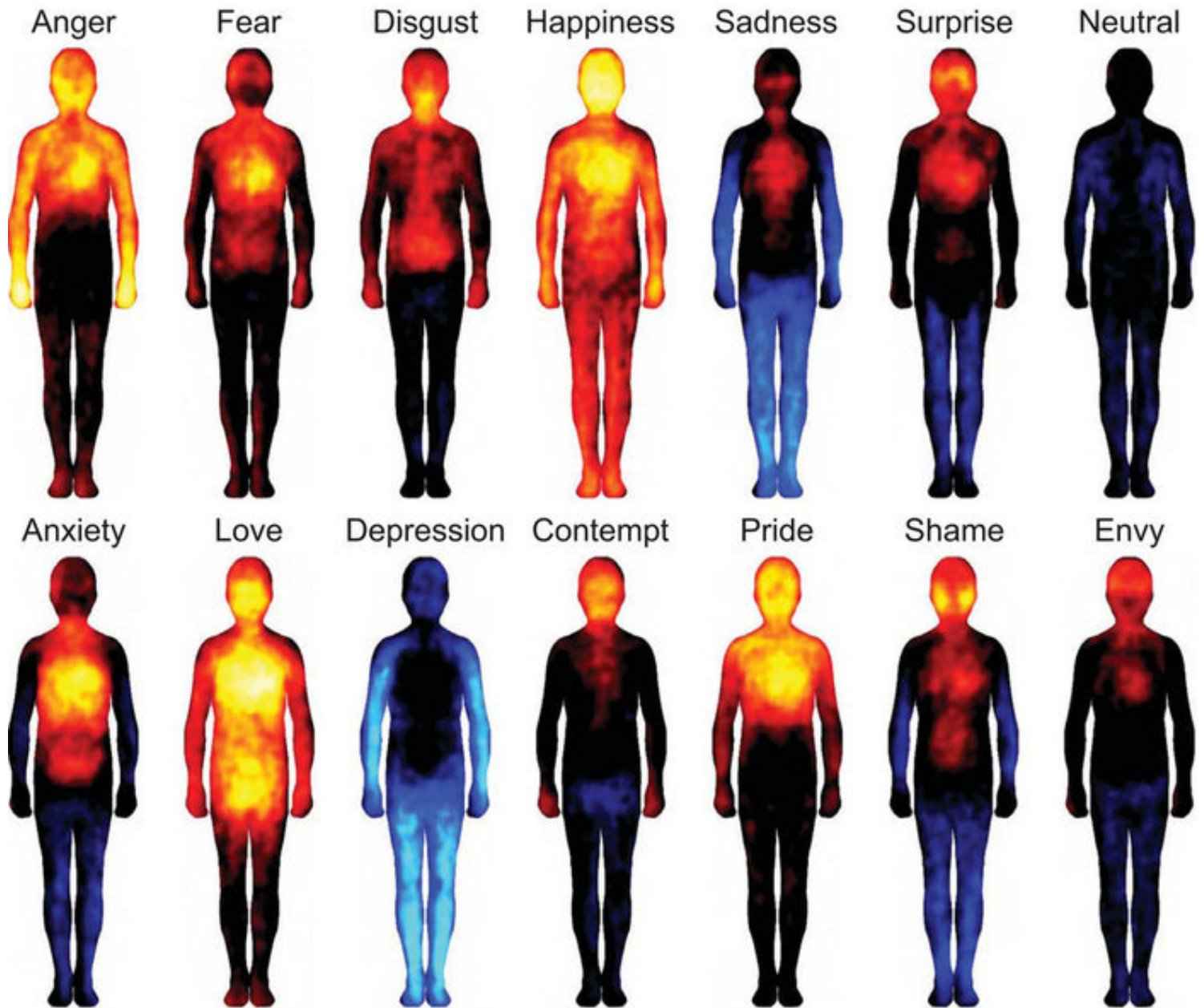
Session 3 Journal Topics:

1. Write about how you and your close circle of family or friends talk about emotions. Is it a regular topic of conversation? Are feelings easy or difficult to talk about? Are some emotions more acceptable to talk about than others? Why is this?
2. Reflect on the emotions that are most unwelcome in your life and your culture. Which emotions are we taught to avoid, fix, or dislike? Why do you think a culture would do this? Who or what stands to benefit by not welcoming certain emotions?
3. How do emotions affect your physical wellbeing? Is there a particular area where you feel emotions most strongly? Does your physical wellbeing improve or decline with your emotional state?
4. How are your feelings responded to by people in your life? What are their reactions to your positive and negative emotions? What might be the reasons for these reactions? How do you feel about the way people react to your emotions, whether at home, at work, with friends?

Wheel of Feelings and Emotions



Body Map of Emotions



Clarifying Emotions

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐

Thoughts?

☐

Heart?

☐

Body?

☐

None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Many people find it hard to know what they are feeling. This practice is a simple, effective way to learn to know which emotions you are experiencing. Because the technique encourages you to notice the body sensations associated with the emotion, it will build up a deep familiarity with your emotional states.

■ METHOD

Summary

Scan your body and label and emotions that you notice.

Long Version

1. Settle into a comfortable meditation posture.
2. Breathing normally, bring your attention to your emotions. Notice if you are feeling any emotions, no matter how faintly.

Clarifying Emotions

3. Once you detect an emotion, see if you can label which emotion it is. Here is a short, partial list of some of the possibilities:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> Shame | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassment | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt |

4. Try to stay simple and basic with these emotional labels. It is OK to guess, if you are not sure which exact emotion you are feeling.

5. Once you feel you know which emotion you are feeling, label it mentally. Keep making the label every 5 seconds or so, and then feeling the emotion in your body. So for example, if you are feeling sadness, you would label it like this “Sadness... Sadness... Sadness” in a gentle, matter-of-fact way every few seconds. With each label, you feel with your body the sensations of that emotion.

6. If you notice more than one emotion happening at the same time, you can either just focus on one, or you can “stack” the labels. So for example, if you were feeling both joy and love, you could label them as “Joy and Love.” And so on.

7. Continue labeling the emotions for as long as you wish.

HISTORY

Meditating on emotions is a traditional part of Vipassana practice in Buddhism. It is, for example, one of the four main techniques covered in the Vissudhimagga (The Path to Purity), an important Buddhist text. The version presented here is a summary of a practice given by American Buddhist teacher Shinzen Young.

NOTES

Do not get caught up in every nuance of differences in labeling the emotions. For example, in common English, there is a big difference between anxiety and terror. However, for the purposes of this exercise, they are both simply labeled as “Fear.” The point of the practice is not to get perfectly accurate labels, but rather to get a handle on what emotions are currently occurring for you, and how they express in the body. This practice should be repeated daily for at least 10 minutes over the course of at least a month to really gain the benefit.

Emotional Validation

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Validating our feelings and emotions is a simple yet effective method of managing highly intense emotions.

Instead of repressing or invalidating how we feel, which can subsequently heighten our current emotions, validation can serve to soothe intense feelings and make them more manageable. Validation can be used on one's own emotions or in relationships.

■ METHOD

Summary

During times of intense distressing emotions or experiences, identify and acknowledge what you are feeling and try to accept and understand your emotions by identifying some causes and explanations for them.

Emotional Validation

Long Version

When experiencing intense emotion(s):

1. Try to identify the emotion.

- If you have trouble identifying the emotion- practice various mindfulness techniques including the Emotional Awareness Meditation.
- If helping another person, you can say, “you seem to be saying that you feel (emotion), is that correct?”. Or, “You appear (emotion), is that correct?”.
- If you are unable to identify the emotion and just know that you feel a muddier, more general upset feeling, that is okay as well.

2. If you are unable to identify the emotion and just know that you feel a muddier, more general upset feeling, that is okay as well.

- See if you can work with accepting whatever you are feeling as a part of your current experience and acknowledge that this emotion is what is present right now for you.

3. Look for potential explanations and reasons why you or who you are communicating with is feeling that particular emotion.

- Try to find the source of your emotion by thinking about what makes the most sense as to why you are feeling that way.
- For example, if your child is upset and crying because their toy was taken by another child, you would validate their experience by reminding them that it is frustrating when a toy is taken and it is okay that they are feeling upset. Another example would be if you or a friend were very nervous before a presentation, simply reminding yourself or friend that it makes sense to feel nervous before public speaking and that the majority of people feel this way so you/your friend are not alone.

Emotional Validation

HISTORY

Emotional validation is widely used by many psychologists, social workers, caregivers and teachers. Some even consider it a natural component of interpersonal communication.

Dr. Marsha Linehan, a leading psychologist and creator of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), uses emotional validation as a central tool for her treatment and has done significant work to promote and enhance it in the field of psychotherapy.

NOTES

It is important to note that emotional validation does not mean you are agreeing with or supporting your own or another's emotional response (especially if the emotions are very destructive or irrational).

Validating means that we are acknowledging and working towards understanding why we (or another person) feel a certain way and accepting that that emotion is here and real for us right now.

One way to get a better idea of validation is to think of its opposite, which is invalidation. Invalidating someone else's (or your own) emotions would include expressions such as, "Stop being a baby", or "Get over it".

On the contrast, validating expressions convey understanding, such as, "It makes sense why you feel this way" or "Wow, that sounds really difficult". Validation can also be conveyed to others through facial expressions and body language such as nodding.

Sensing Into Strong, Triggered Feelings

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐

Thoughts?

☐

Heart?

☐

Body?

☐

None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
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- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



1. What event or conversation triggered strong feelings?

2. Specifically what were the feelings?

Sensing Into Strong, Triggered Feelings

3. How did you express your strong feelings?



4. What effect did expressing your strong feelings have on others? On how others think/feel about you?

5. How will you take what you learned from this forward into your life?

What are Your Feelings?

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
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1. How did you feel about yourself?

2. How did you feel about your contact / communication / connection with:

Your spouse / lover?

Your children?

People at work?

Other family members?

Friends?

Anyone else?

What are Your Feelings?

3. What did you feel most strongly?



4. What feeling(s) did you enjoy? What feeling(s) did you avoid / suppress?

5. What are your feelings telling you? About yourself? About people in your life? About what's important to you?

Additional Notes:

Emotional Journaling

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
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■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Getting your emotions down on paper can help you to process difficult times as well as help you with sorting out general emotional problems. A journal acts as a free talk therapist..."someone" you can spill all your feelings too, no matter what, without judgment. Using a journal to self-express can relieve anxiety, help you to understand negative emotional triggers, and resolve problems in your daily life.

■ METHOD

Summary

Write down your emotions every day as entirely as possible; re-read them later for insight.

Long Version

1. Choose a journal. You can use a plain notebook or a fancy one. You might even want to write an anonymous blog. There are also guided journals like Writing to Heal, Writing for Emotional Balance, and Time to Write to Yourself; guided journals may be helpful if you don't know where to start and feel uncomfortably overwhelmed just using the tips below.

Emotional Journaling

2. Before you begin, remember that this journal is personal. Don't try to write masterful prose or try to analyze your feelings too much. Just spill out your emotions as fully and truthfully as possible without self-judgment. Try to write for ten or fifteen minutes straight daily. Afterwards, re-read your writing for possible insight.

3. Start by describing a recent event. Answer all the basic details of who was there, what were they doing, where and when it occurred, and why things happened as they did. Write in detail, using all five senses to describe the moment. Remember, smells and tastes are as important triggers to emotional memory as sight and hearing. Now, express your feelings about this event – how all your sensory inputs and interactions with others made you feel. This exercise helps you to become comfortable with a full-spectrum emotional journaling experience.

4. Now, instead of focusing on an exterior event, focus on an interior feeling. Using the emotional trigger linking techniques above, try to understand the “big picture” of your emotional response. If you are anxious, consider the situations in which your anxiety arises and try to identify its triggers. Express your anxiety in its fullness; do not be ashamed. Nobody will read your personal journal; you must bare your raw feelings as much as possible. You will often find thoughts rising up that you couldn't have expressed otherwise. Follow these thoughts and feelings to their root and try to understand them.

5. You may want to use the event-describing techniques above to examine experiences in your past. Take a life-changing event (whether it is positive or negative) and try to describe it in its fullness. Find all the triggers for emotional response and explore them. You may find links you didn't realize were there!

6. If relationship troubles are part of your life, use your journal as a way to express your feelings and problems without hurting your partner's feelings. You may be able to see the situation more objectively after letting off steam. It also may help you to better pinpoint the reasons behind your anger or sadness so that, when you converse with your partner, you'll be able to resolve them.

7. Notice the words that you use. Sometimes they are the key to deeper feelings within the subconscious. Highlight or underline words and feelings that seem to recur. Try to understand why these particular things are important to the unconscious mind.

Emotional Journaling

■ HISTORY

Diaries and journals have existed for millennia; the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius' famous work *Meditations* began as a journal expressing his personal philosophy and shows remarkable emotional insight. However, the method of using a diary as a method of personal emotional exploration is mostly a 20th century phenomenon, seen in the journals of figures like Carl Jung.

Later, psychologists such as James W. Pennebaker began exploring the very real benefits of emotional journaling with experiments demonstrating that journaling (especially expressing undisclosed or unexamined trauma) strengthened mental wellbeing and even improved physical health.

■ CAUTIONS

Don't overthink while writing. Let your 10-15 minute writing period be stream-of-consciousness and nonstop. Later, after you've expressed all of your feelings, you can re-read what you wrote and analyze it. Do not, however, do it in the moment.

■ NOTES

Many choose to write before bed as a way to process the events of the day and to release any tension that might impede sleep.

Did you have a diary when you were a teenager? The emotional turmoil of adolescence leads many young people to journal.

If you choose to see a counselor and discuss your emotional progress, the journal can often act as a helpful jumping-off point.

Letting Go of Limiting Stories

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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The stories we tell ourselves are often so subconscious that we aren't fully aware of how they influence our lives.

These narratives tell the story of the world according to our own perception of it – and quite often, they limit what is possible for us. What would it be like to soften or release some of these stories? What new possibilities would open up if we explored this?

This practice is an invitation to do just that. Note that as you go through this practice, you are in full control. There is nothing you need to release here. Instead, curiously and compassionately explore what within you is yearning to be let go – even if only just for this moment.

PRACTICE:

1. Take a moment to find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably for the next ten to fifteen minutes. Close your eyes and take five to ten mindful breaths.
2. Maintaining a sense of curiosity and compassion, consider:

Letting Go of Limiting Stories

What stories do I hold about myself or about the world that limit my full potential for happiness?



3. Contemplate this question with openness for a minute or two, waiting to see what arises. If nothing comes up, consider:

How would I describe myself to another?

What do I believe about love, humanity, work, money, or any other facet of human life?

What do I label as 'good'? What do I label as 'bad'?

How has my personal history informed my view of the world?

4. Focus your compassionate attention on one story – on one limiting belief that you presently hold. What thoughts, emotions, or feelings are associated with this belief?

5. If it feels safe for you to explore this, consider where this belief may have come from. In cases of trauma or mental health issues, consult with a trained mental health professional.

Letting Go of Limiting Stories

6. Consider if this belief is 100% true of life or of yourself? Then, ask yourself: *What might be possible if I was not attached to this story?*



7. Focus on your breath as you visualize this story leaving your body with each exhalation for one minute. Notice how the mind and body respond.

8. What positive, nourishing, or supportive belief might you invite into your heart and mind in place of the previous one? Repeat this belief to yourself a few times in silence.

9. Let all thoughts soften as you come back to the natural flow of your breath. When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

NOTE:

Letting go of limiting beliefs is not something we can typically accomplish in one sitting. It takes time (and usually a variety of techniques) to unravel the history that imbedded the belief to begin with. This practice is simply a way of illuminating any beliefs that hold us back from our full potential. It is also a tool for coming back to the openness and unlimited potential of the present moment when we set aside our stories. In cases of trauma or mental health issues, explore this with a well-trained professional.

The Impact of Your Emotions in Relationships

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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1. What emotions did you observe in yourself?

2. What emotions did you observe in others?

The Impact of Your Emotions in Relationships

3. What patterns do you see by correlating #1 and #2 above?



4. What action will you take from what you observed in this exercise?

Additional Notes:

Transforming Anger

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
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■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Anger is a functional emotion, as it is a fitting evolutionary response to injury and loss. It often steels us toward constructive action.

However, anger, like stress, is incredibly taxing on the mind and body. People inclined to anger have more heart attacks and gastrointestinal problems than those who are not.

Anger also often incites violence, both physical and emotional. Using anger as a tool for right ends is possible by learning to transform it from a destructive, animal rage into a righteous expression of justice.

■ METHOD

Summary

Techniques of withdrawal, analysis, detachment, and compassion help turn anger into peace.

Transforming Anger

Long Version

1. **Spacious Withdrawal:** Retreat from the source of your anger and sit quietly, breathing deeply. Bring the situation to mind and then slowly expand your awareness to encompass more than the situation; focus on your breathing if you need to as the relative importance of your anger shrinks in your mind. This disengages the unthinking parts of your brain that make you want to lash out and engages the moderating, thoughtful parts.
2. **Counting Down:** An oldie but goodie. Count down slowly from twenty (or thirty...or whatever works for you). When you reach one, your emotional response will already have cooled.
3. **Counteremotional Exercise:** Use anger as a trigger for love. Use your anger as a spark to consider what you love and those things that you find beautiful in life. Most importantly, be compassionate toward your own anger.
4. **Structural Analysis:** In a meditative posture, consider the situation as objectively as you possibly can. Analyze the roles, intentions, and actions of everyone involved as well as the entirety of the event—its wins and losses. Respond clinically.
5. **Planning:** Use the anger to steel you and make you stronger. Focus your angry emotions on a plan to establish resources and skills to resolve the problem.
6. **Emptiness:** Using the same principles as structural analysis, take it a step further and recognize the transitory nature of human life and human squabbles.
7. **Abandoning the Self:** Feel the anger in your mind and observe it detachedly. Recognize how the state of anger ebbs and flows with electrochemical impulses in the brain. Your anger is not your Self. There is no self. Thus, there is no anger.
8. **Lovingkindness:** Respond with love; “turn the other cheek.” Some exercises on lovingkindness are here.
9. **Building Alliances:** Realize that you do not exist in isolation. Recognize that you are part of a community and a support network.

Transforming Anger

HISTORY

The teachings of the Buddha are full of reminders that anger is destructive and that detaching from it is one of the keys to enlightenment and happiness. Christ taught to “turn the other cheek” when we are struck instead of angering.

CAUTIONS

Serious anger issues that lead to extreme rage and violence may be better dealt with, at least initially, by a trained therapist with knowledge of anger management techniques.

NOTES

If you would like to test your ability to transform anger, you might try, during your next stressful traffic jam, silently sending out waves of lovingkindness to all the other cars on the road, even those who cut you off, don't pay attention, drive too slow, or lay on the horn.

You might also choose a relative or acquaintance who has been a source of frustration and anger in the past and try to hold them in your mind in a compassionate and loving state.

Cultivating an Inner Smile

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
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Life often gets taken quite seriously. While there are certainly times of great pain, grief, and difficulty, it is not uncommon to become unconsciously weighed down by the day-to-day.

Cultivating an inner smile is a practice that helps us to lighten up where we find ourselves contracted within the world or resistant to it. It is a way of shifting our energy and harnessing a sense of positivity, lightness, peace, and contentment.

PRACTICE:

1. Wherever you find yourself – seated, standing, or lying down – take a moment to bring a gentle smile to your inner world. This does not need to be reflected physically upon your face; rather, it is the cultivation of an inner feeling.
2. Notice where this inner smile presents itself. Is it generalized or localized? All over the body or in a particular area, such as the heart, the face, or the belly?
3. Imagine the energy of this inner smile filling you for two to three minutes. Within this time, notice if any thoughts or emotions arise in response.

Cultivating an Inner Smile

4. If challenging feelings come up, tend to these with compassion, love, and patience. Is it possible to meet these with warmth? With a soft, compassionate smile? Know that there are no right or wrong thoughts, feelings, or experiences to have here. Simply open to the possibility of holding whatever is here, even if that is some sort of duality (i.e. pain and ease).

Note: It is important to acknowledge that cultivating an inner smile is not in alignment with denying our challenging emotions or experiences. It is simply an invitation to meet our experience with kindness and compassion.

5. After a few minutes, or whenever you feel ready to finish this practice, root your attention in the breath for three to five cycles. Open your eyes when you feel ready.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What was this practice like for you today? Did it feel natural or unnatural for you to cultivate an inner smile?



2. If difficult or heavy feelings or thoughts were present, how did it feel to invite an inner smile to your experience? How did you hold this perceived duality?