



Penn Program for Mindfulness

Week 6: Listening to the Whole Person

Mindful Listening

We all sometimes listen with only part of our attention. Sometimes we don't listen at all. Mindful listening helps us to bring the people in our lives into focus.

During the next week, take advantage of as many opportunities as you can to listen intentionally. Do this very deliberately, almost as if it were a formal meditation practice. Mindful listening will work best if you do it with your full attention. Bring all of your activity to a complete stop. Notice what distracts you from being fully present, acknowledge it, and then direct all of your attention to the other person.

Don't just listen to thoughts and words. Take some time to look closely at the body, skin, face, posture and expression. Listen to the sound of the voice, the pitch and rhythm. Feel the emotion underlying the words and thoughts. Look for the expression in the body.

See if you can explore more deeply what they are communicating. Why is it being said now, in this way? How present are they? How do they really feel about what they are telling you? Try to remain mindful of your thoughts, emotions and sensations at the same time.

Sometimes it will feel too complicated. Just remember you can only experience one simple moment at a time. Don't try to do everything at once. Stop, come back to the breath, connect with the simplicity of the present moment, and start over. Look, listen, and feel.

Steps for Mindful Listening Practice

- 1) Come to a complete stop. Notice whatever is distracting you. Acknowledge it, accept it, and let it be.
- 2) Gather all of your attention and direct it to the other person.

Focus on:

- ◇ The physical body
- ◇ Appearance, posture and gestures
- ◇ Expressions
- ◇ Speech
- ◇ Sound, speed, inflections and information
- ◇ Emotions
- ◇ Hopes, fears, likes, dislikes,
- ◇ Self-image and awareness

- 3) Keep your responses simple and open-ended. Ask questions that give the other person the opportunity to expand upon what they think or feel. Your job, for now, is just to notice those thoughts and feelings with full precision.

Notice distractions that arise. There will be plenty of time for you to reach a conclusion, to respond, to say what you think and feel, to agree or disagree. The stronger your reaction, the more there is to learn and the more important that learning is. See what is really there.

Week Six Homework

Daily Mindfulness Practices:

- Sitting Meditation, 20 minutes each day, **AND**
- Choose from either:
 - ◊ The Body Scan, Movement, Walking, **OR** another period of Sitting Meditation.
- Practice at least one 20 minute sitting meditation period in silence.
- Make at least one practice session an uninterrupted 40 minute session.
- “20 Breaths”, twice a day
- Fill in the Daily Practice Guide.

Informal Practice:

- Every time you start a conversation, practice the mindful listening exercise detailed on this handout.
- Try to remind yourself to do this right before the conversation starts.
- Look for spontaneous moments to stillness and silence as you go about your day, and deliberately create them with the Stop, Breathe, and Be practice.

OPTIONAL Readings: Full Catastrophe Living

- Chapter 13: On Healing
- Chapter 16: Connectedness
- Chapter 28: People Stress
- Chapter 30: Hints and Suggestions for Reducing Work Stress

“During the next week, take advantage of as many opportunities as you can to listen with your full attention.”



RAISE

Use this approach to deal with what is hard to practice with, uncomfortable experiences, memories, or sensations that seem to return over and over. Or, use it to work with something that has just happened but is difficult to tolerate, unwelcome or unpleasant.

1. **Recognize** what is difficult or sticky. Noticing that something is happening under the surface may be the most difficult step. What is the uncomfortable thought, feeling or sensation? See it clearly, feel it directly.
2. **Allow** whatever you find to be as it is. You don't have to like it, to welcome it in any way, or to want it to stay. You just have to acknowledge that it is here in this moment. This can be difficult enough, and might require a fresh start, a deep breath, or renewed attention over and over. This could be a practice that occurs in steps. For instance, you could notice the thoughts that desperately want the situation to be different and that take you away from the experience of sensation. Then you might notice where resistance is held or felt in the body. Feel that resistance. Allow it. Notice it more closely just as it is. Then enter the sensation underneath. You might breathe into areas of discomfort or tightening; the breath can gently guide attention towards the sensation to soften anxiousness or resistance. Relax the body and feel into the experience that has gathered protection around it. Maybe it's not such a big deal after all. Maybe it is. There's no need to try to change the feeling or your resistance to it; you are simply allowing it all to be as it is, and doing your best to stay with what happens. Hold all of it in your awareness.
3. **Inquire** more closely into the experience. This isn't the kind of inquiry that involves thinking or analysis. You are feeling into the actual sensation. Look for the experience in the body. Be curious and open. Explore the details underneath or around what you've noticed. What else is there? What makes this experience so challenging? Look more closely, more deeply, so that you can see the parts of the experience that have not yet been seen or known or held. If you tighten up, spin off into thoughts, or become anxious, circle back to the "allow" step.
4. **Separate** At some point you may notice that you have become able to bear witness to the entire process. Your awareness, the part of you that is awake and naturally at peace, isn't tangled up in it all. Gradual separation from discomfort or distress arises naturally as you sit, breathe, feel your body, and hold your experience. You can't force it to happen. But if you stay with the experience it will happen by itself when it's time.
5. **Exhale** At some point you have to just let go. Take a deep breath, exhale, and release it all. Rest right there for as long as it lasts.

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Mindfulness-Based Tools for Living

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Practice	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Guided Sitting Meditation	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
Body Scan	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
Guided Movement	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
Walking Meditation	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
Sitting Meditation 2	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
(Silent) Sitting (20 minutes)	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
20 Breaths	Time 1:____ Time 2:____	Time:____ Time 2:____	Time:____ Time 2:____	Time:____ Time 2:____	Time:____ Time 2:____	Time:____ Time 2:____
Stop, Breathe, Be	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

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