



# Penn Program for Mindfulness

## Week 2: Practicing Mindfulness

### The Whole Story

Mindfulness can help you to relax, but relaxation is far from the whole story. With practice, mindfulness will lead you to something that is more important than simple relaxation. It will teach you to remain steady and balanced during stressful events even if you're not relaxed. When your mind is racing and your thoughts are churning, the practice connects you with a deeper steadiness, one moment at a time, awake and present. You might decide that you'd rather be somewhere else. But since you're not, you can at least feel confident that you can manage what is here. Mindfulness will help.

Sometimes it seems that we are never satisfied with the way things actually are. We want this moment to be better in some way; we might want to feel better, or we might want something or someone to be different than they actually are. When we practice mindfulness we are taking a break from this constant struggle with wanting our moments to be different. We don't have to like what happens, or even want it to continue. But we are willing to accept that the moment we are experiencing right now is already happening. It doesn't make much sense to be opposed to it. Struggle and strain don't help.

### The Truth of the Present Moment

We encounter a shift in intention almost immediately when we start to practice. Everyone's mind wanders when they try to stay present and so everyone thinks that they aren't doing the practice "right" or that it doesn't "work" for them. But the instructions don't suggest what is right or wrong, they simply ask you to notice exactly what happens. You notice the breath and you notice the wandering. Mindfulness isn't about the

breath; it's about the noticing. When your mind wanders, you see that. When you are stressed, distracted or uncomfortable, or at peace or happy, you observe that. You are not using mindfulness to **change** anything. You are simply training your attention to **remain** present, right in the center of your actual life.

This is radically different from our usual strategy. When we are clear about what is happening we are more effective. We are changing a habit that has been in place for our entire life, replacing inattention with awareness. It takes a lot of practice, and a lot of patience, to stay present. But with practice you will begin to notice that you spend less time worrying about the future and regretting the past. You might also find that you are able to refocus your attention more often when you choose to. For instance, during a difficult moment you might decide to shift the attention from fears and worries to the steady flow of breath in the center of your body. More of your resources will be available to help you deal with challenges when you are not consumed by worries. This is the start of bringing mindfulness practice to life.

### The Practice

Formal mindfulness practice is what makes this all possible. It is important to realize that the practice is just as helpful even when it doesn't feel good, or when the mind wanders constantly. The practice won't change a sad feeling into a happy one, or turn irritation into satisfaction. It is about finding a deeper balance in your life. In order to do that, you have to be willing to spend some time with yourself. Find the time and then stay with the practice; it will make all the difference.

## Week Two Homework

### Daily Mindfulness Practices:

- The Body Scan.
- Fifteen minutes of sitting meditation (you may use Sitting 2a or Sitting 2b).
- 20 Breaths Practice, 3 times a day.

### Informal Practice:

- Fill in the “Mindfulness of Pleasant Events Calendar”, one event for each day, on the next two pages.

### OPTIONAL Readings: Full Catastrophe Living

- Chapter Two: The Foundations of Mindfulness Practice: Attitudes and Commitments
- Chapter Five: Being in Your Body: The Body Scan

Practice	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Guided Sitting Meditation	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
Body Scan	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
20 Breaths (1)	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
20 Breaths (2)	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____
20 Breaths (3)	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____	Time:____ _____



# Mindfulness of Pleasant Events

**Instructions:** Each day during the upcoming week, when a pleasant event or experience occurs, focus your awareness on the event *while it is happening*. At a later time, use the form below to record a brief note about the event and how you experienced it. In order to gather all of the information about the event it is necessary to not just notice it but to pay careful attention to all of its qualities as it occurs.

**Day One**

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Day Two**

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Day Three**

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Mindfulness of Pleasant Events

### Day Four

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

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### Day Five

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

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### Day Six

What was the pleasant event? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you noticed while the pleasant event was occurring. How did your body feel? What mental events, thoughts, and emotions did you notice?

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**Penn Program for Mindfulness**

*Mindfulness-Based Tools for Living*

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