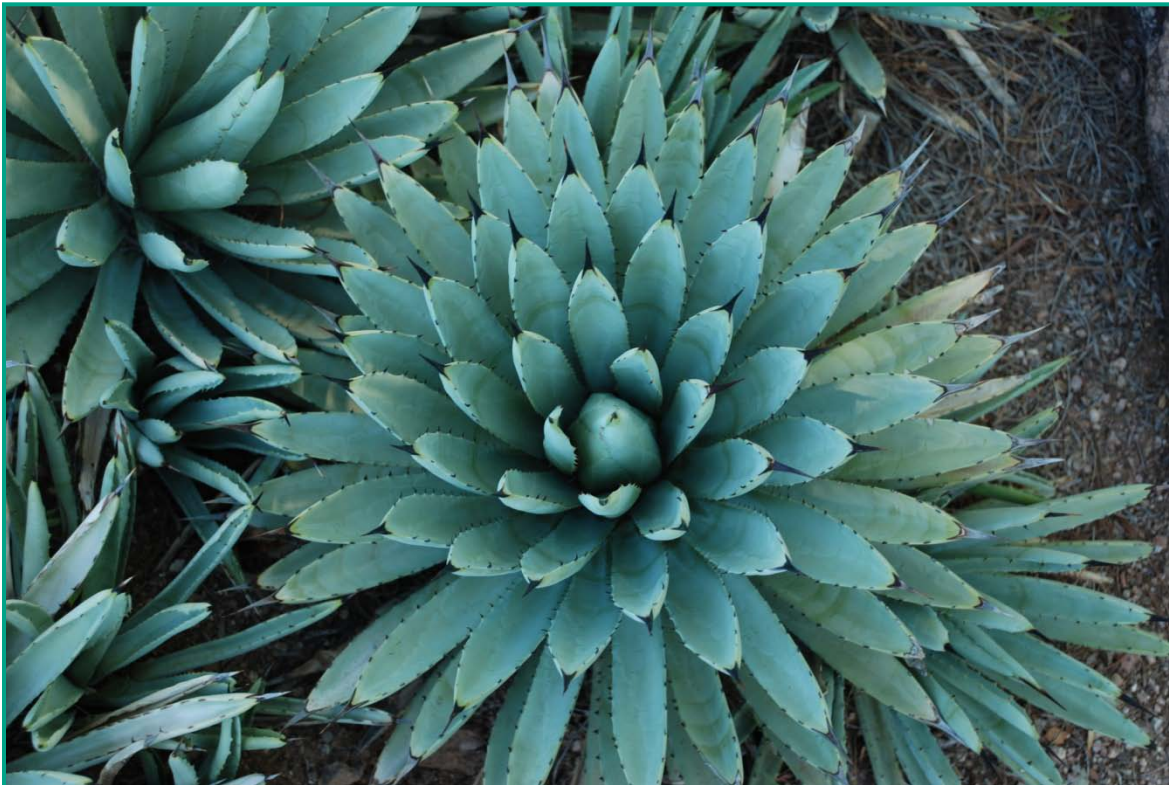


# MINDFULNESS & EMDR

## Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

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Collection by George J. Joumas, M.A.

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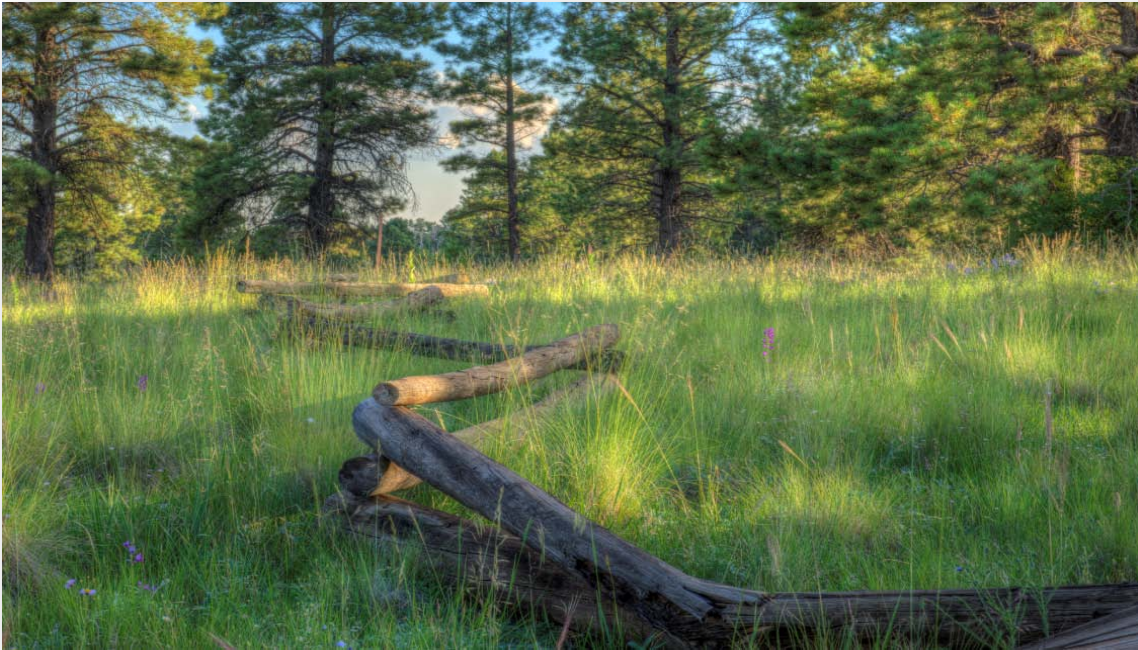
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## I. INTRODUCTION TO CD: MINDFULNESS, DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS & EMDR

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The following collection of mindfulness skills are from the various sources indicated in the bibliography at the end of this paper. Mindfulness is being fully attuned, being fully present to what is happening in the moment without judgment or critique. Mindfulness is being full present to the beauty, form, color and texture of a plant. Mindfulness is being fully present to the sounds, emotions and change in blood pressure in the midst of a traffic jam. It can be brought to any moment and situation. Mindfulness is rooted in the meditation and contemplative practices of most spiritual traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism.

Mindfulness can help us see the beautify in the simple and broken:

Teaism is a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence. It inculcates purity and harmony, the mystery of mutual charity, the romanticism of the social order. It is essentially a worship of the Imperfect, as it is a tender attempt to accomplish something possible in this impossible thing we know as life.<sup>1</sup>

Mindfulness can help us be more present so that we are able to hear ourselves and others:

Centering: that act which precedes all others on the potter's wheel. The bringing of the clay into a spinning, unwobbling pivot, which will then be free to take innumerable shapes as potter and clay press against each other. The firm, tender, sensitive pressure which yields as much as it asserts. It is like a handclasp between two living hands, receiving the greeting at the very

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<sup>1</sup> Okakura Kakuzo, Cited in chapter, "The Cup of Humanity," in *The Book of Tea* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co, 1956), 3-4.

moment that they give it. It is this speech between the hand and the clay that makes me think of dialogue. And it is language for more interesting than the spoken vocabulary that tries to describe it, for it is spoken not by tongue and lips but by the whole body, by the whole person, speaking and listening. And with listening too, it seems to me, it is not the ear that hears, it is not the physical organ that performs that act of inner receptivity. It is the total person who hears. Sometimes the skin seems to be the best listener, as it prickles and thrills, say to a sound or silence; or the fantasy, the imagination: how it bursts into inner pictures as it listens and then responds by pressing its language, its forms, into the listening clay. To be open to what we hear, to be open in what we say ... <sup>2</sup>

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares. <sup>3</sup>



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<sup>2</sup> Richards, Mary Caroline, *Centering: in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Nouwen, Henri J. M., *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974) 34.



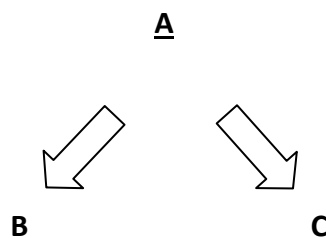
## II. INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Mindfulness is a more recent participant on the stage of psychotherapeutic interventions. Although scientific research indicates addiction is primarily a biological genetic illness; emotional, behavioral and cognitive experiences can also contribute to this disease. A brief introduction to psychological theories of treatment might prove helpful.

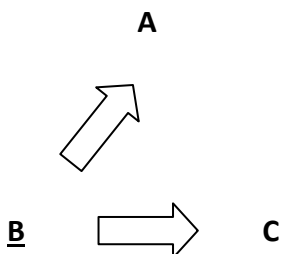
We all have psychological experiences that can become psychological symptoms. In a very basic way, we will identify three areas of human experience as **A – B – C**: **A = affect** or emotion; **B = behavior and body**; and **C = cognition** or thinking. Psychological symptoms can occur in these same three areas of human experience; **A – B – C**. We may have cognitive [**C**] symptoms such as distractibility or increased self-critical thoughts that decrease self esteem. Many will experience behavioral or body (physical) [**B**] symptoms such as isolation or disruptions in sleep or appetite. Finally, we may also experience affective (emotional) [**A**] symptoms such as depressed mood or decreased enjoyment or meaning in life, also known as anhedonia. Psychological theories of treatment can flow or originate from these same three perspectives of **A - B - C**.

**Emotional or affective [A]** forms of psychotherapy focus on changing our emotion or **affect** directly; with the understanding that when you change **A (affect / emotion)** directly, indirectly you can also change cognition / thinking [**C**] and behavior [**B**].



Contemporary research using imaging, including PET scans, demonstrates that affective / emotional [A] forms of therapy will also change brain chemistry and contribute to patients reporting decreased symptoms.

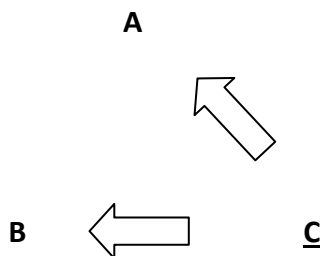
**Behavioral [B]** forms of psychotherapy focus on changing our **behavior** directly. This theory suggests that if you change the **B (behavior)** directly, indirectly you can change emotion or affect [A] and cognition / thinking [C].



In AA this might be called “fake it till you make it.” You may start to establish some new healthy behaviors, although initially they feel fake, artificial or mechanical. However, if you repeat these healthy behaviors overtime, not only do they become a new habit, but they also change emotions and feelings so that they are experience as more genuine and authentic.

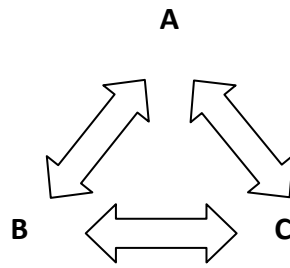
We also know from modern research using imaging, including PET scans, behavioral [B] forms of therapy will change brain chemistry and contribute to patients reporting decreased symptoms.

Finally, **Cognitive [C]** forms of psychotherapy focus on changing our thinking or cognitions directly; with the understanding that if you change the **C (cognition)** directly, indirectly you can change emotion or affect [A] and behavior [B]. In Twelve Step this might be called changing our “stinking thinking.”



Once again, we know from empirical research using imaging, that cognitive [C] forms of therapy will also change brain chemistry and contribute to patients reporting decreased symptoms. Meditation and mindfulness fall under the category of cognitive therapy.

The buzz word the last fifteen years in psychotherapy is “CBT,” which stands for Cognitive – Behavioral Therapy. However, current empirical research is demonstrating that the most effective therapeutic approach between **A, B, or C** is to have all three of these tools in your treatment tool box; psychotherapies that use affective, behavioral and cognitive interventions.



Mindfulness, I might suggest, although identified as a cognitive approach, actually helps to transform, affect, behavior-body, and cognition. You might read Daniel Siegel's book called "***Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation***" to gain additional understanding of the contemporary underlying scientific theory of mindfulness meditation. You will find this author in the bibliography on this recording. We will also talk about Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, known as [EMDR]. EMDR is a hybrid protocol that also combines **A – B – C** tools in treatment to help our brain reprocess trauma memories and facilitate healing. EMDR treatment also incorporates mindfulness – meditation.





### III. BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO EMDR: EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING

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*I would like you to imagine you are driving in your car; you are sitting in your seat, the driver's seat, feeling very comfortable and relaxed. You are listening to relaxing music. You feel very present in the moment. You control the steering; you control the speed of your car. You control the braking and determine when you want to stop or go, when you go left, right or straight. Once again. You feel very relaxed, you feel very present in the moment ... very mindful of the present.*

*In front of you is the windshield. This represents your future. You are still very present in the moment, and as you look out your windshield you also have an awareness; a dual awareness, of your future and where you are going, and of the present. You are very present in the moment, but also feel secure and confident as you navigate your future.*

*Now keeping with this metaphor, you have a third awareness, you have the rearview mirror. You don't stare at it. It is not very big. It represents your past.*

*Once again, you are feeling very relaxed sitting in your driver's seat. You are very present in the moment, and also have awareness and confidence about your future as you look through the windshield, and every once in a while, you glance at your rearview mirror and have an awareness of your past. You feel very centered and balanced ... A healthy balance of mindfulness of the present moment, future, and past.*

*Now what if as you are sitting in the driver's seat all of a sudden your rearview mirror becomes as large as your front windshield. How do you feel? How do you feel about being in the present? You are not able to be present. Your past has taken over. And how do you feel about the future if your rearview mirror was this huge. You cannot see the future; the past has blocked your future. The past, the rear view mirror has intruded and become your future.*

This is what trauma can do us ... it makes the past ... it makes the rear view mirror to large.

“Often, when something traumatic happens, it seems to get locked in the nervous system with the original pictures, sounds, thoughts, feelings, and so on. Since the experience is locked there, it continues to be triggered whenever a reminder comes up. It can be the basis for a lot of discomfort “Often, when something traumatic happens, it seems to get locked in the nervous system with the original pictures, sounds, thoughts, feelings, and so on. Since the experience is locked there, it continues to be triggered whenever a reminder comes up. It can be the basis for a lot of discomfort and sometimes a lot of negative emotions, such as fear and helplessness, that we can't seem to control. These are really the emotions connected with the old experience that are being triggered. The eye movements and other techniques [Bilateral Stimulation] we use in EMDR seem to unlock the nervous system and allow your brain to process the experience. That

may be what is happening in REM, or dream sleep: The eye movements may be involved in processing the unconscious material. The important thing to remember is that it is your own brain that will be doing the healing and that you are the one in control." <sup>4</sup>

EMDR help to turn the rearview mirror back to its normal size, so that there is some awareness of the past, but in healthy balance of being very present in the moment with some confidence about the future.

The mindfulness exercises that are described in the rest of this paper and presented on the CD are some of the therapeutic techniques that we use in EMDR and other cognitive forms of therapy to bring that rearview mirror back to its proper size and help you be more relaxed and present in the moment. Mindfulness techniques can help you feel more centered ... that healthy and proper balance between the present, future, and past.

You skip the longer introduction to EMDR, which follows on the next two tracks and go directly to the mindfulness exercises if you wish.



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<sup>4</sup> Shapiro, Francine (2001-08-06). *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)*, Second Edition. Guilford Press. Kindle Edition.

## IV. INTRODUCTION TO EMDR: EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING - PART ONE

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Once again, EMDR helps to turn the rearview mirror back to its normal size, so that there is some awareness of the past, but in healthy balance of being very present in the moment with some confidence about the future. The eye movements and other techniques we use in EMDR seem to unlock the nervous system and allow your brain to process or re-process the experience.

### NEURO-BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

What does history of treatment and neuro-biological research suggest? Before we look at cognitive theory I would like to give you a simple 3D model of our brain.

First, hold out your hand. Next; fold your thumb across the palm of your hand. And now fold your four fingers over your thumb.

On this 3D model, your wrist represents the brain stem. This is the oldest part of the brain, we share this part of our brain with earthworms. It controls breathing, heart beat and digestive system. Your thumb folded inward represents the emotional part of the brain called the limbic system. We share this part of the brain with reptiles and other mammals. This is the part of the brain that kicks off anxiety and fight or flight response to keep us safe. This is the part of the brain that kicks off fight or flight response at times when we don't want it and are not in any logical or rational danger. This is the part of the brain that is responsible for our passion and enjoyment of life, relationships, activities that bring us passion. This is the part of the brain that remember big and small trauma to keep us safe in the future. And the fingers folded over represent the cortex. This is the logical part of our brain.

Now let's first look at basic cognitive theory.

- I. **Environmental Events**  
↓
- II. **Experience of Events through sensory input**  
↓
- III. **Interpretation – self-talk (rational or irrational ideas) cognitions**  
↓
- IV. **Emotional System**  
↓
- V. **Behavioral / Physical System**

Cognitive Theory suggest that it is # 3 "Cognitions or interpretations" that causes # 4 "The emotional reactions" and resulting # 5 "Behavioral choices;" not #1 "the event itself."

And NEURO RESEARCH, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE and BRAIN IMAGING support cognitive theory

On scans we see the Cortex lighting up before the limbic system. I find cognitive therapy is very successful with many patients

But not always.

I have had many patients exclaim. "I know that it is an irrational thought, but no matter how many times I attempt to challenge it, even with your empathy ... the irrational thought keeps getting triggered rather than the rational thought."

Research and brain imaging indicates that at times, the emotion system or limbic System is being activated first

And this in turn activates the cortex and interpretation and cognition  
This in turn impacts behavioral responses

### **In a sense, the internal Emotional Reaction has become the Environmental Event(s)**

The amygdala is part of the emotional part of the brain or limbic system, represented by the thumb in our 3D model. The amygdala provides the central crossroads junction where information from all senses is tied together and endowed with emotional meaning. In the brain's architecture, the amygdala is poised like an alarm, wherein incomplete or confusing signals from the senses prompt the amygdala to scan experiences for danger.

**Sensory signals from the eyes, mouth, skin, and ears** travel first to the thalamus and then across a single synapse to the amygdala.

**Sensory signals from the nose** are routed directly to the amygdala, bypassing even the thalamus.

A second signal from the thalamus is routed to the neocortex. This branching allows the amygdala (emotional part of the brain) to respond before the neocortex, the logical part of the brain.

### **Amygdaloid Activation**

As the amygdala becomes aroused from **external stress, excitation, or internal anxiety**, the adrenal gland triggers a secretion of epinephrine and, from the brainstem, norepinephrine, eliciting alertness. These neurotransmitters activate the receptors on the vagus nerve, regulate the heart, and also carries signals back into the brain. They activate neurons within the amygdala to signal other brain regions to strengthen the memory of what just happened. This amygdaloid arousal seems to **imprint in memory** those moments of emotional arousal (pleasant or unpleasant) with an **added degree of strength**

The more intense the amygdaloid arousal, the **stronger the memorial imprint**.

Some examples of the amygdala's role in information processing.

If I asked those older than 50 to tell me the date of **President Eisenhower's death** and where you were when you heard the news,

I would guess that only some of you may remember the date and likely would not remember where you were when you received the news.

On the other hand, if I ask the same question regarding **President Kennedy's death**, almost everyone in their late 50s or older will recall the date, where they were upon hearing the news, and possibly even the person delivering that news.

***"3<sup>rd</sup> grade, afternoon in class room, over the public address system, ride home with the Hordas family"***

For those younger the same questions could be applied to the **terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001**.

The reason for the differences in information processing and memorial recall is the mediation of the amygdaloid system, which imbues the neural encoding of President Kennedy's death and September 11 with profound emotion. Once again, the more intense the amygdaloid arousal, the **stronger the memorial imprint**. This happens with many traumas.

Another important region of the limbic system is the **Hippocampus**. The hippocampus has been referred to as the "gateway" to the limbic system, or "map maker," or "master puzzle memory. In addition to state dependent memory. It is here that information from the neocortex is processed and transmitted to the limbic system, where **memory and emotion are integrated**. It appears to process memory in terms of perceptual patterns and contexts. It is the hippocampus that recognizes the difference in significance of a bear that you see in the **zoo** versus one that you see in **your backyard**. It also differentiates the significance of events that happened long ago from that of events that are recent.

However, **when people are under severe stress** endogenous stress hormones affect the strength of memory consolidation. At the time of the trauma **over-consolidation of traumatic memories occurs**.

**Excessive stimulation of the amygdala interferes with hippocampal functioning**, inhibiting cognitive evaluation of experience and semantic representation. Memories are then stored in sensorimotor modalities, somatic sensations, and visual images. As a result of this stress or trauma this information has been processed incorrectly rather than adaptively.

According to the Adaptive Information Processing [AIP] model that guides EMDR practice, we would say that this event **has been insufficiently processed** and these automatically arising thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions may be inappropriately coloring our perceptions and actions in similar present circumstances.

We may react negatively to authority, groups, new learning experiences, or whatever strands are evident in that memory. The dysfunctionally stored memory still has within it some of the sensory perceptions and thoughts that were there at the time of the event. Essentially, the childhood or "trauma" perspective is locked in place and causes the person to perceive the present from a similar vantage point of defectiveness (e.g., I'm unlovable/not good enough), lack of safety, or lack of control. **These are not merely conditioned responses**; they are responses inherent in the stored memory.

When an event has been sufficiently processed, we remember it **but do not experience the old emotions or sensations in the present**. We are informed by our memories, not controlled by them. Therefore it does not matter whether it is a "big T" traumatic event that precipitates PTSD or the more subtle "small t" events that are rampant throughout childhood. There is a long-lasting negative effect upon self and psyche.

The initial goal of EMDR therapy is to process (or reprocess) these experiences and help liberate the patient from the past into the present.

The Eye movement of EMDR that we will talk about is one of many forms of bilateral stimulation. And the Desensitization is simply a product or consequence of the reprocessing. The bilateral stimulation, can be:

- Eye movement, light bar
- Hand pulsars, alternating vibrations from one hand to others.
- alternating bilateral hand taps
- and alternating auditory tones from Head phones from one ear to the other,

These bilateral stimulations activate alternately the left and right hemispheres of our brain. AIP processing theory suggests that EMDR BLS is causing the same Adaptive Information Processing that occurs in REM sleep. REM sleep, Rapid – Eye – Movement is also causing bilateral stimulation and reprocessing of the past day's stressful event in the hippocampus. The bilateral stimulation is also activating the same dual awareness that takes place in mindfulness approaches. Dual attention stimulation is merely one component integrated with procedural aspects synthesized from all the major psychological orientations.

In EMDR reprocessing there is the dual focus on the past memory, and also the present bilateral stimulation.

I would suggest that in my early twenties, sitting at the pottery wheel, reprocessing the day's events in a somewhat mindful or meditative state, I was also doing eye movement, and EMDR. Psychiatrist Daniel J. Siegal, MD, in his book on mindfulness, titled *Mindsight* has a chapter titled, Crepes of Wrath. After his own inappropriate decompensation after a failed an intervention with his younger children at a restaurant serving crepes, he goes out roller blading to let off steam and process his regressing and becoming what he promised he would never do, handle family conflict like his own parents. I would suggest that his insights and changes in cognition are partially a consequence of his roller blading which is also bilateral stimulation.

EMDR protocol includes interventions from many theoretical modalities. Francine Shapiro, in reference to EMDR states, **“I align myself fully with those who believe that we strengthen clinical repertoires through integration, not through displacement or exclusion.”** In this spirit, the development of EMDR over the past years has moved it from a simple technique to an integrated psychotherapy approach. As we shall see, the emphasis is not solely on the elimination of overt suffering, but also on attention to the comprehensive clinical picture that incorporates multifaceted personal growth and integration into the wider social systems. For that reason, clinicians of all orientations will find commonalities between EMDR and their clinical practices, as well as complementary aspects of other disciplines that may enhance their work. It is in this synthesis that patients can best be served.

AIP model or theory, Shapiro suggests, is not specific to EMDR. Desensitization, spontaneous insights, cognitive restructuring, and association to positive affects and resources are viewed as by-products of the adaptive reprocessing taking place on a neurophysiological level. The invocation of A NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL LEVEL SHIFT. is a **simple recognition** that this is where all change ultimately occurs. It is **not assumed to be specific to EMDR**; rather, any form of successful therapy will ultimately be correlated with A NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL SHIFT. However, rather than targeting the client's reaction

to the disturbing event—as biofeedback, flooding, or relaxation training does—EMDR focuses on the memory itself.

EMDR is used to

1. Help the client reprocess and learn from the negative experiences of the **past**,
2. Desensitize **present** triggers that are inappropriately distressing, and
3. incorporate templates for appropriate **future** action that allow the client to excel individually and within her interpersonal system.

The EMDR clinician must therefore identify the events that have been dysfunctionally stored and are stunting and coloring the client’s present and assist in processing or “re-processing” them. EMDR facilitates learning on multidimensional emotional, cognitive, and physiological levels.

Once again, EMDR uses a standard three-pronged protocol to afford patients a comprehensive treatment of past, present, and future.

Since the initial efficacy study (Shapiro, 1989a), positive therapeutic results with EMDR have been reported with a wide range of populations. Both the American Psychological and Psychiatric Associations consider EMDR as the Gold Standard for big “T” Trauma of PTSD. However, research demonstrates that is also very effective for small “t” trauma.

## EIGHT PHASES OF EMDR TREATMENT

### PHASE ONE: CLIENT HISTORY AND TREATMENT PLANNING

Patient history and evaluation is similar to any other psychiatric or psychological intake. However, the first phase of EMDR treatment therefore includes an **evaluation of the client safety factors** that will determine client selection. A major criterion for the suitability of clients for EMDR is their ability to deal with the high levels of disturbance potentially precipitated by the processing of dysfunctional information.

As in any form of psychotherapy, the purpose of history-taking sessions is to identify the complete clinical picture before attempting to treat the patient. This will include developing a **HISTORY OF TRAUMA**

### PHASE TWO: PREPARATION

The preparation phase involves establishing a therapeutic relationship and alliance, and explaining the EMDR process and its effects, addressing all of your concerns, and initiating relaxation and safety procedures.

### PHASE THREE: ASSESSMENT

In the assessment phase the clinician identifies the components of the target and establishes a baseline response before processing begins. Once the memory has been identified, the client is asked to select an image or picture that best represents that memory. You do not need to recall the whole experience or all the details of this trauma. This is why EMDR is the least intrusive of all trauma therapies.

During this phase clinician determines components of the target memory and establishes baseline measure of patient's reactions to the process.

After the patient designates a single image or picture, the next step is to identify the negative cognition, that is, the negative self-statement associated with the event.

These negative cognitions are not true. However these negative self images become associated with the trauma and stored in memory. These negative cognitions about self may take on themes of "responsibility or defectiveness," e.g. "I should have known better," "I did something wrong," "I should have done something" "I am worthless." There may be negative beliefs about self in the areas of "safety or vulnerability," e.g., "I cannot trust my judgment," "I cannot trust anyone," or "I am in danger." Negative beliefs in the areas about the "future and control / choices" may be associated with the trauma, e.g., "I have to be perfect ... I have to please everyone," "I am a failure ... I will fail," or "I cannot get what I want."

The next step in the history phase is to ID the positive cognition that the patient would prefer come to mind when then think about the trauma. Rather than "I cannot trust anyone," "I can choose whom to trust and not trust." Once the patient has developed the positive cognition, the Validity of Cognition or



**VOC** level for that cognition is ascertained to provide a baseline and ensure that the positive cognition is actually possible (and not a product of wishful thinking).

***“When you think of the incident (or picture), how true do those words [clinician repeats the positive cognition] feel to you now on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 feels completely false and 7 feels totally true?”***

In order to complete the assessment of baseline measures, the patient is next asked to bring up the image of the event and hold it in mind, along with the negative cognition.

***“When you bring up the picture (or incident) and those words “I should have done something,” what emotion do you feel now?”***

After the patient has named the emotion the therapist will determine the level of discomfort that this trauma now triggers using the SUD or subjective units of discomfort or SUD Scale.

***“On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no disturbance or neutral and 10 is the highest disturbance you can imagine, how disturbing does it feel now?”***

Finally the therapist the patient , ***“Where do you feel it [the disturbance] in your body?”*** Clinical experience with EMDR has shown that the responses of the body to a trauma are often an important aspect of treatment.

#### **PHASE FOUR: DESENSITIZATION**

The fourth phase focuses on the client’s negative affect as reflected in the SUD Scale. This phase of treatment encompasses all responses, including new insights and associations, regardless of whether the client’s distress level is increasing, decreasing, or stationary. This is when the eye movement or other forms of [BLS] Bilateral Stimulation, and at times cognitive interweaves are used.

***“We are going to take a train ride, you are inside train with me where it is safe. We will have to ride my the memories which are outside of the train to reprocess these experiences. You are in control and can stop the processing at any time.”***

The fourth phase, is called the desensitization phase. However, desensitization, or removal of disturbance, is actually a by-product of the reprocessing, as is the positive restructuring of the cognition, elicitation of insights, and so forth.

During processing there may be:

- **Changes in Image**
- **Changes in Sounds**
- **Changes in Cognitions**
- **Changes in Emotions**
- **Changes in Physical Sensation**

Processing continues until the SUDS scale has decreased to a one or zero.

### **PHASE FIVE: INSTALLATION**

The fifth phase of treatment is called the installation phase because the focus is on **accentuating and increasing the strength of the positive cognition** that the client has identified as the replacement for the original negative cognition.

The most appropriate positive cognition might be the one the client identified during the assessment phase of the EMDR treatment session, or it might be one that has emerged spontaneously during the successive sets.

The clinician will continue the sets (with the patient simultaneously focusing on the positive cognition and the target event) in order to ensure the greatest possible strengthening of the cognition.

### **PHASE SIX: BODY SCAN**

After the positive cognition has been fully installed, the patient is asked to hold in mind both the target event and the positive cognition and to scan her body mentally from top to bottom. She is asked to identify any residual tension in the form of body sensation. These body sensations are then targeted for successive sets. In many cases the tension will simply resolve, but in some cases additional dysfunctional information will be revealed; and then will be processed

### **PHASE SEVEN: CLOSURE**

This phase includes debriefing, relaxation or mindfulness intervention to help the patient achieve some equilibrium at the end of each session. The patient will be invited to keep a log or journal of the negative thoughts, situations, dreams, and memories that may occur. This is called the TICES log and is also available on my website [Joumasconsulting.com](http://Joumasconsulting.com)

### **PHASE EIGHT: REEVALUATION AND USE OF THE EMDR STANDARD THREE-PRONGED PROTOCOL**

Reevaluation, the eighth phase of treatment, should be implemented at the beginning of each new session. The clinician has the patient re-access previously reprocessed targets and reviews the client's responses to determine if treatment effects have been maintained.

## **STANDARD THREE-PRONGED EMDR PROTOCOL**

While the standard EMDR procedure takes place during each reprocessing session, the standard three-pronged EMDR protocol guides the overall treatment). Each reprocessing session must be directed at a particular target. The generic divisions of the targets are defined in the standard protocol as:

**(1)** The **past** experiences that have set the groundwork for the pathology,

(2) The **present** situations or triggers that currently stimulate the disturbance, and

(3) The templates necessary for appropriate **future** action.

All of the specialized EMDR protocols (e.g., those regarding phobias or somatic disorders) are interfaced with this standard format. (p. 76).

The mindfulness exercises on the rest of this CD are some of the therapeutic techniques that we use in EMDR and other cognitive forms of therapy to bring that rearview mirror back to its proper size and help you be more relaxed and present in the moment.

Mindfulness techniques can help you feel more centered ...  
that healthy and proper balance  
between the present, future, and past.

## X. MINDFULNESS & BREATHING

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### Exercise: Mindful Breathing<sup>5</sup>

An exercise that will help you stay focused in the present moment is breathing. It sounds simple, but we often don't breathe as well as we should. Think about it: who ever taught you how to breathe? If you're like the rest of us, probably no one. And yet, you do it about fifteen times a minute or almost 22,000 times a day! Everyone knows that we breathe air to take in oxygen. But how much of the air you breathe is actually oxygen—100 percent, 75 percent? The correct answer is that the air you breathe is only about 21 percent oxygen, and when your body doesn't get enough oxygen it can knock your biological system off balance. For this reason alone, taking full, slow breaths is important. But another benefit of breathing fully is that this simple technique can help you relax and focus. Many spiritual traditions combine slow breathing techniques with guided meditations to help people focus and relax.

Here's a breathing exercise that many people find helpful. This type of breathing is also called diaphragmatic breathing because it activates the diaphragm muscle at the bottom of your lung cavity. Engaging the diaphragm helps you take fuller, deeper breaths, which also helps you relax.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. Set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock for five minutes and practice breathing until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique to help you relax, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like ten or fifteen minutes. But don't expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, five minutes is a long time to sit still and breathe.

When using this new form of breathing, many people often feel as if they become "one" with their breathing, meaning that they feel a deep connection to the experience. If that happens for you, great. If not, that's okay, too. Just keep practicing. Also, some people feel light-headed when they first begin practicing this technique. This may be caused by breathing too fast, too deeply, or too slowly. Don't be alarmed. If you begin to feel light-headed, stop if you need to, or return your breathing to a normal rate and begin counting your breaths.

#### Instructions

*To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths and relax. Place one hand on your stomach. Now slowly breathe in through your nose and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils, and then feel your breath blowing out across your lips. As you breathe, notice the sensations in your body.*

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<sup>5</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01). *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook: Practical DBT Exercises for Learning Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation, and Distress Tolerance*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc. Kindle Edition

*Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body resting on whatever you're sitting on. With each breath, notice how your body feels more and more relaxed.*

*Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breaths each time you exhale. You can count either silently to yourself or aloud. Count each exhalation until you reach "4" and then begin counting at "1" again. To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Count "1." Again, breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Count "2." Repeat, breathing in slowly through your nose, and then slowly exhale. Count "3." Last time—breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count "4." Now begin counting at "1" again.*

*When your mind begins to wander and you catch yourself thinking of something else, return your focus to counting your breaths. Try not to criticize yourself for getting distracted. Just keep taking slow breaths into your belly, in and out. Imagine filling up your belly with air like a balloon. Feel it rising with each inhalation and falling with each exhalation. Keep counting each breath, and with each exhale, feel your body relaxing, deeper and deeper.*

*Keep breathing until your alarm goes off, and then slowly return your focus to the room you're in.*

*You might try this exercise again and using your imagination that you are breathing in God's spirit. In Hebrew Scriptures, also known as the Old Testament we find the word Ruah. Ruah is the creative and loving "spirit" or "breath" of God. As you breath, imagine you are inhaling this creative and loving spirit or breath of God.*

Over thousands of years of human history, from East to West, virtually all cultures have developed some form of practice that harnesses the power of mindfulness to cultivate well-being. These include body- and energy-centered practices such as yoga, tai chi, and qigong; devotional practices such as centering prayer or chanting; and various forms of sitting and walking meditation that were first introduced into the West by Buddhist practitioners.

I elected to teach Jonathon a practice called “insight meditation,” both because I had learned it myself from experienced teachers and because it had the most research backing up its potential to help develop the brain. Other techniques might have been just as reasonable a starting point, but I felt most comfortable with this one. Here is a transcript of the meditation exercise that I teach my patients and students. Feel free to read through this, and then try it out if you’re in a comfortable place that will allow you to dive into the sea inside.

*It’s helpful to be able to become aware of your own mind. That can be a very useful awareness to have. Yet not much happens in school or in our family life that lets us come to know ourselves. So we are going to spend a couple of minutes now doing just that.*

*Let yourself get settled. It’s good to sit with your back straight if you can, feet planted flat on the floor, legs uncrossed. If you need to lie flat on the floor that’s okay, too. And with your eyes open at first, just try this. Try letting your attention go to the center of the room. And now just notice your attention as you let it go to the far wall. And now follow your attention as it comes back to the middle of the room and then bring it up close as if you were holding a book at reading distance. Notice how your attention can go to very different places.*

*Now let your attention go inward. You might let your eyes close at this point. Get a sense inside yourself of your body in space where you’re sitting in the room. And now let yourself just become aware of the sounds around you. That sense of sound can fill your awareness. (Pause for some moments.)*

*Let your awareness now find the breath wherever you feel it most prominently—whether it’s at the level of your nostrils, the air going in and out, or the level of your chest as it goes up and down, or the level of your abdomen going inward and outward. Perhaps you’ll even just notice your whole body breathing. Wherever it comes naturally, just let your awareness ride the wave of your in-breath, and then your out-breath. (Pause.)*

*When you come to notice, as often happens, that your mind may have wandered and become lost in a thought or a memory, a feeling, a worry, when you notice that, just take note of it and gently, lovingly, return your awareness toward the breath—wherever you feel it—and follow that wave of the in-breath, and the out-breath. (Pause.)*

*As you follow your breath, I’m going to tell you an ancient story that’s been passed through the generations.*

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<sup>6</sup> Siegel, Daniel J. (2009-11-30). *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* Random House, Inc. Kindle Edition.

*The mind is like the ocean. And deep in the ocean, beneath the surface, it's calm and clear. And no matter what the surface conditions are like, whether it's smooth or choppy or even a full-strength gale up there, deep in the ocean it's tranquil and serene. From the depth of the ocean you can look toward the surface and simply notice the activity there, just as from the depth of the mind you can look upward toward the waves, the brain waves at the surface of your mind, all that activity of mind—the thoughts, feelings, sensations, and memories. Enjoy this opportunity to just observe those activities at the surface of your mind.*

*At times it may be helpful to let your attention go back to the breath, and follow the breath to reground yourself in the tranquil place at the deepest depth of the mind. From this place it's possible to become aware of the activities of the mind without being swept away by them, to discern that those are not the totality of who you are; that you are more than just your thoughts, more than your feelings. You can have those thoughts and feelings and also be able to just notice them with the wisdom that they are not your identity. They are simply one part of your mind's experience. For some, naming the type of mental activity, like "feeling" or "thinking," "remembering" or "worrying," can help allow these activities of the mind to be noted as events that come and go. Let them gently float away and out of awareness. (Pause.)*

*I'll share one more image with you during this inward time. Perhaps you'll find it helpful and want to use it as well. Picture your mind as a wheel of awareness. Imagine a bicycle wheel where there is an outer rim and spokes that connect that rim to an inner hub. In this mind's wheel of awareness, anything that can come into our awareness is one of the infinite points on the rim. One sector of the rim might include what we become aware of through our five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight, those senses that bring the outside world into our mind. Another sector of the rim is our inward sense of the body, the sensations in our limbs and our facial muscles, the feelings in the organs of our torso: our lungs, our heart, our intestines. All of the body brings its wisdom up into our mind, and this bodily sense, this sixth sense, if you will, is another of the elements to which we can bring our awareness. Other points on the rim are what the mind creates directly, such as thoughts and feelings, memories and perceptions, hopes and dreams. This segment of the rim of our mind is also available to our awareness. And this capacity to see the mind itself—our own mind as well as the minds of others—is what we might call our seventh sense. As we come to sense our connections with others, we perceive our relationships with the larger world, which perhaps constitutes yet another capacity, an eighth relational sense.*

*Now notice that we have a choice about where we send our attention. We can choose which point on the rim to visit. We may choose to pay attention to one of the five senses, or perhaps the feeling in our belly, and send a spoke there. Or we may choose to pay attention to a memory, and send a spoke to that area of the rim where input from our seventh sense is located. All of these spokes emanate from the depth of our mind, which is the hub of the wheel of awareness. And as we focus on the breath, we will find that the hub grows more spacious. As the hub expands, we develop the capacity to be receptive to whatever arises from the rim. We can give ourselves over to the spaciousness, to the luminous quality of the hub. It can receive any aspect of our experience, just as it is. Without preconceived ideas or judgments, this mindful awareness, this receptive attention, brings us into a tranquil place where we can be aware of and know all elements of our experience.*

*Like the calm depths of the sea inside, the hub of our wheel of awareness is a place of tranquility, of safety, of openness and curiosity. It is from this safe and open place that we can explore the nature of the mind with equanimity, energy, and concentration. This hub of our mind is always available to us, right*

*now. And it's from this hub that we enter a compassionate state of connection to ourselves, and feel compassion for others.*

*Let's focus on our breath for a few more moments, together, opening the spacious hub of our minds to the beauty and wonder of what is. (Pause.)*

*When you are ready you can take a more voluntary and perhaps deeper breath if you wish and get ready to gently let your eyes open, and we'll continue our dialogue together.*

How was that? Some people have a tough time diving in; others feel at ease with the experience. If the breath doesn't work for you after a few sessions, you may want to find another form of mindful focus. Yoga or tai chi or walking meditation might be a more comfortable place for you to begin. Just a few minutes a day of this or another basic mindful-awareness practice can make a big difference in people's lives.



## XII. SAFE-PLACE VISUALIZATION <sup>7</sup>

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Safe-place visualization is a powerful stress-reduction technique. Using it, you can soothe yourself by imagining a peaceful, safe place where you can relax. The truth is, your brain and body often can't tell the difference between what's really happening to you and what you're just imagining. So if you can successfully create a peaceful, relaxing scene in your thoughts, your body will often respond to those soothing ideas.

Make sure you conduct this exercise in a quiet room where you'll be free from distractions. Turn off your phone, television, and radio. Tell the people in your home, if there are any, that you can't be disturbed for the next twenty minutes. Allow yourself the time and the freedom to relax. You deserve it. Read the following directions before you begin. If you feel comfortable remembering them, close your eyes and begin the visualization exercise. Or, if you would prefer, use an -audio--recording- device to record the directions for yourself. Read them aloud using a slow, soothing voice. Then close your eyes and listen to the guided visualization you created.

Before you begin the exercise, think of a real or imaginary place that makes you feel safe and relaxed. It can be a real place that you've visited in the past, such as the beach, a park, a field, a church/ temple, your room, and so on. Or it can be a place that you've completely made up, such as a white cloud floating in the sky, a medieval castle, or the surface of the moon. It can be anywhere. If you have trouble thinking of a place, think of a color that makes you feel relaxed, such as pink or baby blue. Just do your best. In the exercise, you'll be guided through exploring this place in more detail. But before you begin, make sure you already have a place in mind, and remember— thinking of it should make you feel safe and relaxed.

Complete the following sentences about your safe place before beginning the visualization:

My safe place is \_\_\_\_\_

My safe place makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions

*To begin, sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting comfortably, either on the arms of the chair or in your lap. Close your eyes. Take a slow, long breath in through your nose. Feel your belly expand like a balloon as you breathe in. Hold it for five seconds: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then release it slowly through your mouth. Feel your belly collapse like a balloon losing its air. Again, take a slow, long breath in through your nose and feel your stomach expand. Hold it for five seconds: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. One more time: take a slow, long breath in through your nose and feel your stomach expand. Hold it for five seconds: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. Now begin to take slow, long breaths without holding them, and continue to breathe smoothly for the rest of this exercise.*

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<sup>7</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

*Now, with your eyes closed, imagine that you enter your safe place using all of your senses to ground yourself in the scene.*

*First, look around using your imaginary sense of sight. What does this place look like? Is it daytime or nighttime? Is it sunny or cloudy? Notice the details. Are you alone or are there other people or animals? What are they doing? If you're outside, look up and notice the sky. Look out at the horizon. If you're inside, notice what the walls and the furniture look like. Is the room light or dark? Choose something soothing to look at. Then continue looking for a few seconds using your imaginary sense of sight.*

*Next, use your imaginary sense of hearing. What do you hear? Do you hear other people or animals? Do you hear music? Do you hear the wind or the ocean? Choose something soothing to hear. Then listen for a few seconds using your imaginary sense of hearing.*

*Then use your imaginary sense of smell. If you're inside, what does it smell like? Does it smell fresh? Do you have a fire burning that you can smell? Or, if you're outside, can you smell the air, the grass, the ocean, or the flowers? Choose to smell something soothing in your scene. Then take a few seconds to use your imaginary sense of smell.*

*Next, notice if you can feel anything with your imaginary sense of touch. What are you sitting or standing on in your scene? Can you feel the wind? Can you feel something you're touching in the scene? Choose to touch something soothing in your scene. Then take a few seconds to use your imaginary sense of touch.*

*Last, use your imaginary sense of taste. Are you eating or drinking anything in this scene? Choose something soothing to taste. Then take a few seconds to use your imaginary sense of taste.*

*Now take a few more seconds to explore your safe place using all of your imaginary senses. Recognize how safe and relaxed you feel here. Remember that you can come back to this place in your imagination whenever you need to feel safe and relaxed. You can also come back whenever you're feeling sad, angry, restless, or in pain. Look around one last time to remember what it looks like.*

*Now keep your eyes closed and return your focus to your breathing. Again, take some slow, long breaths in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Then, when you feel ready, open your eyes and return your focus to the room.*

*An operational working definition of mindfulness is: the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.* —Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003)

### Mindfulness Skills: What Are They?

**Mindfulness**, also known as meditation, is a valuable skill that has been taught for thousands of years in many of the world's religions, including Christianity (Merton, 1960), Judaism (Pinson, 2004), Buddhism (Rahula, 1974), and Islam (Inayat Khan, 2000). Beginning in the 1980s, Jon Kabat-Zinn began using nonreligious mindfulness skills to help hospital patients cope with chronic pain problems (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, & Burney, 1985; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, & Sellers, 1987). More recently, similar mindfulness techniques were also integrated into other forms of psychotherapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), including dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a). Studies have shown mindfulness skills to be effective at reducing the odds of having another major depressive episode (Teasdale et al., 2000); reducing symptoms of anxiety (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992); reducing chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1987); decreasing binge eating (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999); increasing tolerance of distressing situations; increasing relaxation; and increasing skills to cope with difficult situations (Baer, 2003). As a result of findings like these, mindfulness is -considered one of the most important core skills in dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a).

So what exactly is mindfulness? One definition is offered above by mindfulness researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn. But for the purposes of this book, ***mindfulness is the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions— in the present moment— without judging or -criticizing -yourself or your experience.***

Have you ever heard the expressions “be in the moment” or “be here now”? These are both different ways of saying: “be mindful of what’s happening to you.” But this isn’t always an easy task. At any moment in time, you might be thinking, feeling, sensing, and doing many different things. For example, consider what’s happening to you right now. You’re probably sitting somewhere, reading these words. But at the same time, you’re also breathing, listening to the sounds around you, noticing what the book feels like, noticing the weight of your body resting in the chair, and maybe you’re even thinking about something else. It’s also possible that you’re aware of your emotional and physical states of being happy, sad, tired, or excited. Maybe you’re even aware of bodily sensations, such as your heart beating or the rising and falling of your chest as you breathe. You might even be doing something that you’re completely unaware of, like shaking your leg, humming, or resting your head in your hand. That’s a lot to be aware of, and right now, you’re just reading a book. Imagine what’s happening to you when you’re doing other things in your life, like talking with someone or dealing with people at work. The truth is, no one is 100 percent mindful all the time. But the more mindful you learn to be, the more control you will gain over your life.

But remember, time never stands still and each second of your life is different. Because of this, it’s important that you learn to be aware “in each present moment.” For example, by the time you finish

reading this sentence, the moment that you started reading it is gone and your present moment is now different. In fact, you are now different. The cells in your body are constantly dying and being replaced, so physically you're different. Equally important, your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and actions are never exactly the same in every situation, so they're different too. For these reasons, it's important that you learn to be mindful of how your experience changes in each individual moment of your life.

And lastly, in order to be fully aware of your experiences in the present moment, it's necessary that you do so without criticizing yourself, your situation, or other people. In dialectical behavior therapy this is called radical acceptance (Linehan, 1993a). As described in chapter 2, radical acceptance means tolerating something without judging it or trying to change it. This is important because if you're judging yourself, your experience, or someone else in the present moment, then you're not really paying attention to what's happening in that moment. For example, many people spend a lot of time worrying about mistakes they've made in the past or worrying about mistakes that they might make in the future. But while they're doing this, their focus is no longer on what's happening to them now; their thoughts are somewhere else. As a result, they live in a painful past or future, and life feels very difficult.

So to review, mindfulness is the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions— in the present moment— without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience.

## A “MINDLESS” EXERCISE <sup>8</sup>

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Obviously, mindfulness is a skill that requires practice. Most people get distracted, “zone out,” or spend most of their daily lives being unmindful or running on autopilot. As a result, they then get lost, anxious, and frustrated when a situation doesn’t happen as they expect it to. Here are some common ways in which all of us have experienced being unmindful. Check ( ) the ones that you’ve done:

- While driving or traveling, you don’t remember the experience or which roads you took.
- While having a conversation, you suddenly realize that you don’t know what the other person is talking about.
- While having a conversation, you’re already thinking about what you’re going to say next before the other person has even stopped speaking.
- While reading, you suddenly realize that you’ve been thinking about something else and have no idea what you just read.
- While walking into a room, you suddenly forget what you came to get.
- After putting something down, you can’t remember where you just put it.
- While taking a shower, you’re already planning what you have to do later and then you forget if you’ve already washed your hair or some other body part.
- While having sex, you’re thinking about other things or other people.

All of these examples are fairly harmless. But for people with overwhelming emotions, being unmindful can often have a devastating effect on their lives. Consider the example of Lee. Lee thought that everyone at work hated him. One day, a new employee whom Lee found attractive approached him in the cafeteria and asked to sit down. The woman tried to be friendly and make conversation, but Lee was more engaged in the conversation in his own head than he was in the one with the woman.

“She’s probably just stuck up like the rest of them,” he thought. “Why would someone like her be interested in me anyway? Why would she want to sit with me? It’s probably just a joke someone else put her up to.” From the moment the woman sat down and tried to talk with him, Lee just became angrier and more suspicious.

The woman did her best to make small talk. She asked Lee how he liked working at the company, how long he’d been there, and she even asked him about the weather, but Lee never noticed. He was so wrapped up in his own conversation, and in paying attention to his own -self-critical thoughts, that he never even recognized that the woman was trying to be friendly.

After five minutes of unsuccessfully trying, the woman finally stopped talking to Lee. Then a few minutes later, she moved to a different table, and when she did, Lee congratulated himself. “I knew it,” he thought, “I knew she wasn’t really interested in me.” But at the expense of being right, Lee’s unmindfulness and self-criticism had cost him another opportunity to meet a potential friend.

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<sup>8</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

## WHY ARE MINDFULNESS SKILLS IMPORTANT?

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Now that you have a better idea of what mindfulness is— and isn't— it's probably easy to see why this skill is so important. But for the purposes of this workbook, let's be very clear about why you need to learn mindfulness skills. There are three reasons:

1. Mindfulness skills will help you focus on one thing at a time in the present moment, and by doing this you can better control and soothe your overwhelming emotions.
2. Mindfulness will help you learn to identify and separate judgmental thoughts from your experiences. These judgmental thoughts often fuel your overwhelming emotions.
3. Mindfulness will help you develop a skill that's very important in dialectical behavior therapy called wise mind (Linehan, 1993a).

Wise mind is the ability to make healthy decisions about your life based on both your rational thoughts and your emotions. For example, you've probably noticed that it's often difficult— or impossible— to make good decisions when your emotions are intense, out of control, or contradict what's rational. Similarly, it's often difficult to make informed decisions when your thoughts are intense, irrational, or contradict how you feel. Wise mind is a decision-making process that balances the reasoning of your thoughts with the needs of your emotions, and it is a skill that will be discussed further in chapter 4.

This section will introduce you to beginning mindfulness exercises to help you observe and describe your thoughts and emotions more carefully. In dialectical behavior therapy, these are called “what” skills (Linehan, 1993b), meaning they'll help you become mindful of what you're focusing on. Then in the next chapter, you'll be taught more advanced mindfulness skills. In dialectical behavior therapy, these are called “how” skills (Linehan, 1993b), meaning they'll help you learn how to be both mindful and nonjudgmental in your daily experiences.

The exercises in this chapter will teach you four “what” skills:

1. To focus more fully on the present moment
2. To recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations
3. To focus on your moment-to-moment stream of awareness
4. To separate your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations

As you read the following exercises, it's important that you practice them in the order in which they're presented. The exercises in this chapter are grouped according to the four “what” skills, and each exercise builds on the previous exercise.

## EXERCISE: FOCUS ON A SINGLE MINUTE <sup>9</sup>

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This is the first exercise that will help you focus more fully on the present moment. It's simple to do, but it often has an amazing effect. Its purpose is to help you become more mindful of your own sense of time. For this exercise, you'll need a watch with a second hand or, preferably, a stopwatch. Many people feel that time goes by very quickly. As a result, they're always in a rush to do things and they're always thinking about the next thing they have to do or the next thing that could go wrong. Unfortunately, this just makes them more unmindful of what they're doing in the present moment. Other people feel that time goes by very slowly. As a result, they feel like they have more time than they actually do and they frequently find themselves running late. This simple exercise will help you become more mindful of how quickly or slowly time actually does go by.

### Instructions

*To begin this exercise, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes and turn off any distracting sounds. Begin timing yourself with your watch or stopwatch. Then, without counting the seconds or looking at the watch, simply sit wherever you are. When you think that one minute has passed, check the watch again, or stop the timer.*

Note how much time really has passed. Did you allow less than a full minute to pass? If so, how long was it— a few seconds, twenty seconds, forty seconds? If it wasn't a full minute, consider how this affects you. Are you always in a rush to do things because you don't think you have enough time? If so, what does the result of this exercise mean for you?

Or did you allow more than a minute to pass? If so, how long was it— one-and-a-half minutes, two minutes? If so, consider how this affects you. Are you frequently late for appointments because you think that you have more time than you really do? If so, what does the result of this exercise mean for you?

Whatever your results were, one of the purposes of learning mindfulness skills is to help you develop a more accurate awareness of all your moment-to-moment experiences, including your perception of time. If you'd like, return to this exercise in a few weeks after you've been practicing your mindfulness skills and see if your perception of time has changed.

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<sup>9</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

## EXERCISE: FOCUS ON A SINGLE OBJECT <sup>10</sup>

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Focusing on a single object is the second mindfulness skill that will help you concentrate more fully on the present moment. Remember, one of the biggest traps of being unmindful is that your attention wanders from one thing to the next or from one thought to the next. And as a result, you often get lost, distracted, and frustrated. This exercise will help you focus your attention on a single object. The purpose of this exercise is to help you train your “mental muscle.” This means you will learn to maintain your focus on whatever it is you’re observing. And with practice, you’ll get better at focusing your attention, just like an athlete who exercises certain muscles to become stronger.

During this exercise, you will eventually become distracted by your thoughts, memories, or other sensations. That’s okay; this happens to everyone who does this exercise. Do your best not to criticize yourself or stop the exercise. Just notice when your mind wanders and return your focus to whatever object you’re observing.

Pick a small object to focus on. Choose something that can rest on a table, is safe to touch, and is emotionally neutral. It can be anything, such as a pen, a flower, a watch, a ring, a cup, or something similar. Don’t choose to focus on something that could hurt you or on a picture of someone you don’t like. These will stir up too many emotions for you right now.

Find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for a few minutes, and put the object on a table in front of you. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you have a stopwatch or an alarm clock, set the timer for five minutes. Do this exercise once or twice a day for two weeks, choosing a different object to focus on each time.

You can photocopy the instructions if you want extra copies to refer to, or you can record the instructions in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device and play them while you’re exploring the object.

### Instructions

To begin, sit comfortably and take a few slow, deep breaths. Then, without touching the object, begin looking at it and exploring its different surfaces with your eyes. Take your time exploring what it looks like. Then try to imagine the different qualities that the object possesses.

- *What does the surface of the object look like?*
- *Is it shiny or dull? Does it look smooth or rough?*
- *Does it look soft or hard?*
- *Does it have multiple colors or just one color?*
- *What else is unique about the way the object looks?*

Take your time observing the object. Now hold the object in your hand or reach out and touch the object. Begin noticing the different ways it feels.

- *Is it smooth or is it rough?*
- *Does it have ridges or is it flat?*
- *Is it soft or is it hard?*

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<sup>10</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).



- *Is it bendable or is it rigid?*
- *Does the object have areas that feel different from each other?*
- *What does the temperature of the object feel like?*
- *If you can hold it in your hand, notice how much it weighs.*
- *What else do you notice about the way it feels?*

Continue exploring the object with both your sight and your sense of touch. Continue to breathe comfortably. When your attention begins to wander, return your focus to the object. Keep on exploring the object until your alarm goes off or until you have fully explored all the qualities of the object.

## EXERCISE: BAND OF LIGHT <sup>11</sup>

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This is the third exercise that will help you focus more fully on the present moment. It will help you become more mindful of the physical sensations in your body. Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the process. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you're doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device and play them while you're observing the sensations in your body.

As with the other exercises in this chapter, most likely your focus will begin to wander while you're doing this exercise. That's okay. When you recognize that your focus is drifting, gently return your attention to the exercise and do your best not to criticize or judge yourself.

### Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths and then close your eyes. Using your imagination, envision a narrow band of God's loving white light circling the top of your head like a halo. As this exercise progresses, God's loving band of light will slowly move down your body, and as it does, you will become aware of the different physical sensations you're feeling beneath the band of light.

As you continue to breathe with your eyes closed, continue to see God's loving band of white light encircling the top of your head and notice any physical sensations you feel on that part of your body. Perhaps you will notice your scalp tingling or itching. Whatever sensations you notice are okay.

- *Slowly the band of light begins to descend around your head, passing over the tops of your ears, your eyes, and the top of your nose. As it does, become aware of any sensations you feel there, even small sensations. Notice any muscle tension you may be feeling on the top of your head.*
- *As the band of light slowly descends over your nose, mouth, and chin, continue to focus on any physical sensations you might be feeling there.*
- *Pay attention to the back of your head where you may be having sensations.*
- *Notice any sensations you may be feeling in your mouth, on your tongue, or on your teeth.*
- *Continue to watch God's loving and healing band of light in your imagination descend around your neck, and notice any feelings in your throat or any muscle tension on the back of your neck.*
- *Now notice as God band of healing and loving light widens and begins to move down your torso, across the width of your shoulders.*
- *Notice any sensations, muscle tension, or tingling you might be feeling in your shoulders, upper back, upper arms, and upper chest area.*
- *As God's band of light continues to descend down around your arms, notice any feelings you're aware of in your upper arms, elbows, forearms, wrists, hands, and fingers. Become aware of any tingling, itching, or tension you might be holding in those places.*
- *Now become aware of your chest, the middle of your back, the side of your torso, your lower back, and stomach. Again, notice any tension or sensations, no matter how small they might be.*
- *As this healing and loving band of light continues to move down your lower body, become aware of any sensations in your pelvic region, buttocks, and upper legs.*

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<sup>11</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

- *Be sure to pay attention to the backs of your legs and notice any feelings there.*
- *Continue to watch God's band of light descend around your lower legs, around your calves, shins, feet, and toes. Notice any feelings or tension you're experiencing.*

*Then as the band of light disappears after completing its descent, take a few more slow, long breaths, and when you feel comfortable, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.*

## EXERCISE: INNER-OUTER EXPERIENCE <sup>12</sup>

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Now that you've practiced being mindful of both an object outside of yourself and your internal physical sensations, the next step is to combine the two experiences. This is the first exercise that will teach you how to recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. This will be done by teaching you to shift your attention back and forth in a mindful, focused way between what you are experiencing internally, such as your physical sensations and thoughts, and what you are experiencing externally, such as what you notice using your eyes, ears, nose, and sense of touch.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you're doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device so that you can listen to them while you practice shifting your focus between your internal and external awareness.

### Instructions

*To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths and relax.*

*Now, keeping your eyes open, focus your attention on an object in the room. Notice what the object looks like. Notice its shape and color. Imagine what that object would feel like if you could hold it. Imagine what the object must weigh. Describe the object silently to yourself, being as descriptive as possible. Take a minute to do this. Keep breathing. If your focus begins to drift, simply return your attention to the exercise without criticizing yourself. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*When you have finished describing the object, return your focus to your body. Notice any physical sensations that you might be experiencing. Scan your body from your head to your feet. Notice any muscle tension you might be holding, any tingling you might be experiencing, or any other sensations of which you are aware. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Now redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear. Notice sounds you hear coming from outside your room and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*When you have finished listening to the sounds that you can notice, return your focus to your body. Again, notice any physical sensations. Become aware of the weight of your body resting in the chair. Notice the weight of your feet resting on the floor. Notice the weight of your head resting on top of your*

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<sup>12</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

neck. Notice in general how your body feels. If you become distracted by your thoughts, just notice what they are and refocus your attention as best you can on your physical sensations. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise. If you don't notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished using your sense of smell, once again return your focus to your physical sensations. Notice any sensations that you might be feeling. Once again, scan your body from your head to your feet and become aware of any muscle tension, tingling, or other physical feelings. If your thoughts distract you, do your best to return your focus to your physical sensations. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, finally, redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Reach out with one of your hands to touch an object that is within reach. Or, if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you're sitting on or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it's smooth or rough. Notice if it's pliable or rigid. Notice if it's soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you're touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you've finished, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room.

## EXERCISE: RECORD THREE MINUTES OF THOUGHTS <sup>13</sup>

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This is the second exercise that will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. In this exercise, you will identify the number of thoughts you have in a three-minute period. This will allow you to become more mindful of just how quickly your mind really works. This exercise will also help you prepare for the next exercise, Thought Defusion.

The instructions for this exercise are simple: set a timer for three minutes and begin writing down every thought you have on a piece of paper. But don't try to record the thought word for word. Just write down a word or two that represents the thought. For example, if you were thinking about a project you have to complete at work by next week, simply write "project" or "work project." Then record your next thought.

See how many of your thoughts you can catch in three minutes, no matter how small the thoughts are. Even if you start thinking about this exercise, write "exercise." Or if you start thinking about the paper you're writing on, write "paper." No one else ever has to see this record, so be honest with yourself.

When you've finished, count the number of thoughts you had in three minutes and multiply that number by twenty to get an idea of how many thoughts you might have in an hour.

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<sup>13</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

## EXERCISE: THOUGHT DEFUSION

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This is an exercise that will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Thought defusion is a technique borrowed from acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), which has proven to be a very successful treatment for emotional distress.

When distressing thoughts keep repeating, it's often easy to get "hooked" on them, like a fish biting on a bait hook (Chodron, 2003). In contrast, thought defusion will help you mindfully observe your thoughts without getting stuck on them. With practice, this skill will give you more freedom to choose which thoughts you want to focus on and which thoughts you want to let go of instead of getting stuck on all of them.

Thought defusion requires the use of your imagination. The object of this skill is to visualize your thoughts, either as pictures or words, harmlessly floating away from you without obsessing about them or analyzing them. Whichever way you choose to do this is okay. Here are some suggestions that other people have found helpful:

- Imagine sitting in a field watching your thoughts float away on clouds.
- Picture yourself sitting near a stream watching your thoughts float past on leaves.
- See your thoughts written in the sand and then watch the waves wash them away.
- Envision yourself driving a car and see your thoughts pass by on billboards.
- See your thoughts leave your head and watch them sizzle in the flame of a candle.
- Imagine sitting beside a tree and watch your thoughts float down on leaves.
- Picture yourself standing in a room with two doors; then watch your thoughts enter through one door and leave through the other.

If one of these ideas works for you, that's great. If not, feel free to create your own. Just be sure that your idea captures the purpose of this exercise, which is to visually watch your thoughts come and go without holding on to them and without analyzing them. Remember to use the concept of radical acceptance while doing this exercise. Let your thoughts be whatever they are and don't get distracted fighting them or criticizing yourself for having them. Just let the thoughts come and go.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the instructions in a slow, even voice so you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you are first using thought defusion, set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes and practice letting go of your thoughts until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like eight or ten minutes. But don't expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, three to five minutes is a long time to use thought defusion.

## Instructions

*To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, relax, and close your eyes.*

*Now, in your imagination, picture yourself in the scenario that you chose, watching your thoughts come and go, whether it's by the beach, near a stream, in a field, in a room, or wherever. Do your best to imagine yourself in that scene. After you do, start to become aware of the thoughts that you're having. Start to observe the thoughts that are coming up, whatever they are. Don't try to stop your thoughts, and do your best not to criticize yourself for any of the thoughts. Just watch the thoughts arise, and then, using whatever technique you've chosen, watch the thoughts disappear. Whatever the thought is, big or small, important or unimportant, watch the thought arise in your mind and then let it float away or disappear by whichever means you've chosen.*

*Just continue to watch the thoughts arise and disappear. Use pictures to represent the thoughts or words, whatever works best for you. Do your best to watch the thoughts arise and disappear without getting hooked into them and without criticizing yourself.*

*If more than one thought comes up at the same time, see them both arise and disappear. If the thoughts come very quickly, do your best to watch them all disappear without getting hooked on any of them. Continue to breathe and watch the thoughts come and go until your timer goes off.*

*When you've finished, take a few more slow, long breaths and then slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.*



## Exercise: Describe Your Emotion

This exercise will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. So far, the exercises in this chapter have helped you learn to be more mindful of your physical sensations and thoughts. This next exercise will help you become more mindful of your emotions. As with some of the other exercises, the instructions for this exercise might sound simple, but the results can be powerful. This exercise will ask you to choose an emotion and then to describe that emotion by drawing it and exploring it.

So, to begin, pick an emotion. It can be either a pleasant or an unpleasant emotion. Ideally, you should choose an emotion that you're feeling right now, unless that emotion is overwhelmingly sad or self-destructive. If it is, you should wait until you feel more in control of your emotions before beginning this exercise. On the other hand, if you can't identify what you're feeling now, choose an emotion that you were feeling recently, something that you can easily remember. But, whichever you choose, try to be specific about what the emotion is. For example, if you got into a fight with your spouse or partner recently because he or she did something to you, that's the situation, not the emotion. Maybe this situation made you feel angry, hurt, sad, stupid, or something else. Be specific about how you feel. Here's another example. Maybe someone recently gave you a gift. That's the situation. Your emotion would depend on how you felt about the gift. If it was something you've always wanted, you might feel elated. If the gift came from someone you don't know very well, you might feel anxious about its purpose. Be specific about how you feel. To help you choose an emotion, use this list of some commonly felt emotions.

### List of Commonly Felt Emotions

adored	delighted	fragile	lonely	smart
afraid	depressed	frightened	loved	sorry
angry	determined	frustrated	loving	strong
annoyed	disappointed	glad	mad	surprised
anxious	disgusted	guilty	nervous	suspicious
apologetic	disturbed	happy	obsessed	terrified
ashamed	embarrassed	hopeful	pleased	thrilled
blessed	empty	hopeless	proud	tired
blissful	energetic	horrified	regretful	unsure
bored	enlightened	hurt	relieved	upset
bothered	enlivened	hysterical	respected	vivacious
broken	enraged	indifferent	restless	vulnerable
bubbly	enthusiastic	infatuated	sad	worried
cautious	envious	interested	satisfied	worthless
cheerful	excited	irritated	scared	worthy
confident	exhausted	jealous	scattered	
content	flirtatious	joyful	secure	
curious	foolish	lively	shy	

When you finish identifying the emotion you want to explore, write it down at the top of the **Describe Your Emotion Form** (on the next page) or use a blank piece of paper.

Then, using your imagination, draw a picture of what your emotion might look like. This might sound hard to do, but just do the best you can. For example, if you are feeling happy, maybe a picture of the sun expresses how you feel or maybe a picture of an ice-cream cone would do better. The picture doesn't have to make sense to anyone else but you. Just give it a try.

Next, try to think of a sound that would further describe the emotion. For example, if you are feeling sad, maybe the sound of a groan would describe how you feel, such as "ugh." Or maybe a certain song expresses your emotion better. Describe the sound as best you can, and write it near your drawing.

Then describe an action that "fits" your emotion. For example, if you are feeling bored, maybe the action would be to take a nap. Or if you are feeling shy, maybe the action would be to run away and hide. Do your best to describe the action, and write it near your drawing.

The next step of this exercise is to describe the intensity of the emotion on which you're focusing. This will require some thought. Do your best to describe the strength of this emotion. Feel free to be creative and use metaphors if you need to. For example, if you are feeling very nervous, you might write that the feeling is so strong that your "heart feels like a drum at a rock concert." Or if you are only feeling a little angry, you might write that the intensity is like a "mosquito bite."

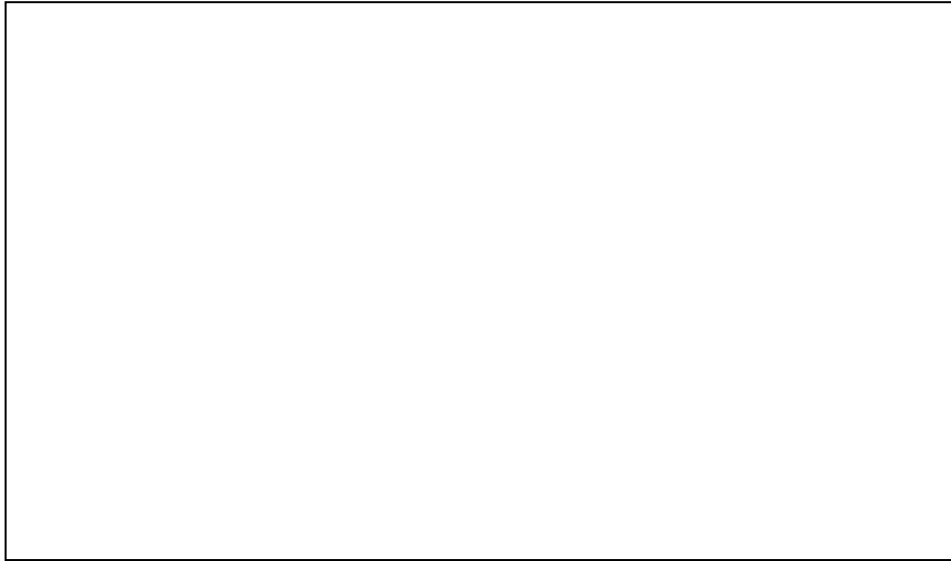
After describing the intensity of the emotion, briefly describe the overall quality of what the emotion feels like. Again, feel free to be as creative as you need to be in your description. If you are nervous, maybe it makes you feel like your "knees are made of jelly." Or if you are getting angry, it might make you feel like "water that's about to boil." Be as accurate as you can in your description and be as creative as you need to be in order to convey your feelings.

Finally, add any thoughts that arise due to your emotion. But be clear that what you describe is a thought and not another emotion. For example, don't choose any of the words in the list above to describe your thoughts. Those are emotions, not thoughts. Your thoughts should be able to finish the following sentences: "My emotion makes me think that..." or "My emotion makes me think about..." It's important that you begin separating your thoughts and your emotions because this will give you better control over both of them in the future. Here are some examples of thoughts that can arise from emotions. If you are feeling confident, a related thought might be that you think you can ask your boss for a raise, or it makes you remember other times in your life when you felt confident and were successful. Or if you are feeling fragile, a related thought could be that you think you can't handle any more stress in your life, or it makes you think about how you're going to struggle with future problems if you don't get stronger.

**Describe Your Emotion Form**

Name your emotion: \_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture of your emotion



Describe a related action \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe a related sound \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the intensity of the emotion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the quality of the emotion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe thoughts related to the emotion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE: FOCUS SHIFTING <sup>14</sup>

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This next exercise will teach you the third “what” skill, which is learning to identify what you are focusing on in your moment-to-moment stream of awareness. Now that you’ve practiced being mindful of both your emotions and your sense experiences (seeing, hearing, touching), it’s time to put the two experiences together. This exercise is similar to the Inner-Outer Experience exercise because it will also help you shift your attention back and forth in a mindful, focused way. However, this Focus Shifting exercise will address the shift between your emotions and your senses and help you differentiate between the two.

At some point in our lives, we all get caught in our emotions. For example, when someone says something insulting to you, maybe you feel upset all day, think poorly of yourself, get angry at someone else, or look at the world in a much gloomier way. This “emotional trap” is a common experience for everyone. But for someone struggling with overwhelming emotions, these experiences happen more frequently and intensely. Mindfulness skills will help you separate your present-moment experience from what’s happening inside you emotionally, thereby giving you a choice as to which one you’ll focus on.

Before starting this exercise, you’ll also need to identify how you are currently feeling. If you need to refer to the list of emotions in the previous exercise, go ahead. Do your best to be as accurate as possible about how you feel. Even if you think that you’re not feeling anything, you probably are. A person is never completely without emotion. Maybe you’re just feeling bored or content. Do your best to identify what it is.

Read the instructions before beginning this exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you’re doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device so that you can listen to them while you practice shifting your focus between your emotions and your senses. If you need to, set a timer for five to ten minutes for this exercise.

### **Instructions**

*To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, and relax.*

*Now close your eyes and focus your attention on how you are feeling. Name the emotion silently to yourself. Use your imagination to envision what your emotion might look like if it had a shape. The image doesn’t have to make sense to anyone but you. Just allow your imagination to give your emotion a form or shape. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Now open your eyes and put your focus on an object in the room where you’re sitting. Notice what the object looks like. Notice its shape and color. Imagine what that object might feel like if you could hold it. Imagine what the object must weigh. Describe the object silently to yourself, being as descriptive as possible. Take a minute to do this. Keep breathing. If your focus begins to drift, simply return your*

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<sup>14</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

attention to the exercise without criticizing yourself. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you've finished describing the object, close your eyes and return your focus to your emotion. Think of a sound that might be related to your emotion. The sound can be anything that you think describes your emotion. It can be a noise, a song, or whatever. When you're done describing the sound to yourself, think of an action related to your emotion. Again, it can be anything that further enhances your understanding of your emotion. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, keeping your eyes closed, redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear. Notice sounds you hear coming from outside your room and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished listening to the sounds that you can notice, return your focus to your emotion. Keeping your eyes closed, silently describe the intensity and quality of your emotion to yourself. Again, feel free to be creative and use comparisons if you need to. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise. If you don't notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished using your sense of smell, once again return your focus to your emotions. Notice any thoughts you might be having that are related to your emotion. Be as specific about the thought as you can, and make sure your thought isn't really another emotion. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, finally, redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Reach out with one of your hands to touch an object that is within reach. Or if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you're sitting in or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it's smooth or rough. Notice if it's pliable or rigid. Notice if it's soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you're touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you've finished, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room.

## EXERCISE: ADVANCED MINDFUL BREATHING <sup>15</sup>

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This Mindful Breathing exercise will help you learn the fourth “what” skill, which is learning to separate your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations. (You already learned the basics of mindful breathing in chapter 2, Advanced Distress Tolerance Skills, but this exercise will give you an additional understanding of the skill.) Very often, when you’re distracted by your thoughts and other stimuli, one of the easiest and most effective things you can do is to focus your attention on the rising and falling of your breath. This type of breathing also causes you to take fuller, deeper breaths, which can help you relax.

In order to breathe mindfully, you need to focus on three parts of the experience. First, you must count your breaths. This will help you focus your attention, and it will also help you calm your mind when you’re distracted by thoughts. Second, you need to focus on the physical experience of breathing. This is accomplished by observing the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. And third, you need to be aware of any distracting thoughts that arise while you’re breathing. Then you need to let the thoughts go without getting stuck on them, as in the previous Thought Defusion exercise. Letting go of the distracting thoughts will allow you to refocus your attention on your breathing and help you further calm yourself.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you first start this technique, set a timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes, and practice breathing until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique to help you relax, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like ten or fifteen minutes. But don’t expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, three to five minutes is a long time to focus and breathe. Later, when you become more accustomed to using this style of breathing, you can also begin using it while you’re doing other daily activities, like walking, doing the dishes, watching television, or having a conversation.

When using mindful breathing, many people feel as if they become “one” with their breathing, meaning that they feel a deep connection to the experience. If that happens for you, that’s great. If not, that’s okay, too. Just keep practicing. Also, some people feel light-headed when they first begin practicing this technique. This may be caused by breathing too fast, too deeply, or too slowly. Don’t be alarmed. If you begin to feel light-headed, stop if you need to, or return your breathing to a normal rate and begin counting your breaths.

This is such a simple and powerful skill that, ideally, you should practice it every day.

### Instructions

*To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for as long as you’ve set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you feel comfortable closing your eyes, do so to help you relax.*

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<sup>15</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

*To begin, take a few slow, long breaths, and relax. Place one hand on your stomach. Now slowly breathe in through your nose and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils, and then feel your breath blowing out across your lips. As you breathe, notice the sensations in your body. Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body resting on whatever you're sitting on. With each breath, notice how your body feels more and more relaxed.*

*Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breaths each time you exhale. You can count either silently to yourself or aloud. Count each exhalation until you reach "4" and then begin counting at "1" again. To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Count "1." Again, breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Count "2." Repeat, breathing in slowly through your nose, and then slowly exhale. Count "3." Last time—breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count "4." Now begin counting at "1" again.*

*This time, though, as you continue to count, occasionally shift your focus to how you're breathing. Notice the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. Again, feel the breath moving in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. If you want to, place one hand on your stomach and feel your breath rise and fall. Continue counting as you take slow, long breaths. Feel your stomach expand like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Continue to shift your focus back and forth between counting and the physical experience of breathing.*

*Now, lastly, begin to notice any thoughts or other distractions that remove your focus from your breathing. These distractions might be memories, sounds, physical sensations, or emotions. When your mind begins to wander and you catch yourself thinking of something else, return your focus to counting your breath. Or return your focus to the physical sensation of breathing. Try not to criticize yourself for getting distracted. Just keep taking slow, long breaths into your belly, in and out. Imagine filling up your belly with air like a balloon. Feel it rising with each inhalation and falling with each exhalation. Keep counting each breath, and with each exhalation, feel your body relaxing, more and more deeply.*

*Keep breathing until your alarm goes off. Continue counting your breaths, noticing the physical sensation of your breathing and letting go of any distracting thoughts or other stimuli. Then, when your alarm goes off, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.*

## EXERCISE: MINDFUL AWARENESS OF EMOTIONS <sup>16</sup>

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This exercise will help you learn to separate your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Mindful awareness of your emotions starts with focusing on your breathing—just noticing the air moving in through your nose and out through your mouth, filling and emptying your lungs. Then, after four or five slow, long breaths, shift your attention to how you feel emotionally in the present moment. Start by simply noticing if you feel good or bad. Is your basic internal sense that you are happy or not happy?

Then see if you can observe your emotion more closely. What word best describes the feeling? Consult the list of emotions from the Describe Your Emotion exercise if you're having trouble finding the most accurate description. Keep watching the feeling, and while you do, continue describing to yourself what you observe. Notice the nuances of the feeling or perhaps the threads of other emotions woven into it. For example, sometimes sadness has veins of anxiety or even anger. Sometimes shame is intertwined with loss or resentment. Also notice the strength of your emotion and check to see how it changes while you watch it.

Emotions invariably come as a wave. They escalate, then they reach a crest, and finally they diminish. You can observe this, describing to yourself each point in the wave as the feeling grows and passes.

If you have difficulty finding an emotion that you're feeling in the present moment, you can still do this exercise by locating a feeling that you had in the recent past. Think back to a situation during the last several weeks when you had a strong emotion. Visualize the event—where you were, what was happening, what you said, how you felt. Keep recalling details of the scene until the emotion you had then is being felt again by you right now.

However you choose to observe an emotion, once the emotion is clearly recognized, stay with it. Keep describing to yourself the changes in quality, intensity, or type of emotion you are feeling.

Ideally, you should observe the feeling until it has significantly changed—in quality or strength—and you have some sense of the wave effect of your emotion. While watching your feeling, you'll also notice thoughts, sensations, and other distractions that try to pull your attention away. This is normal. Just do your best to bring your focus back to your emotion whenever your attention wanders. Just stay with it until you've watched long enough to observe your emotion grow, change, and diminish.

As you learn to mindfully observe a feeling, two important realizations can emerge. One is the awareness that all feelings have a natural life span. If you keep watching your emotions, they will peak and gradually subside. The second awareness is that the mere act of describing your feelings can give you a degree of control over them. Describing your emotions often has the effect of building a container around them, which keeps them from overwhelming you.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. If you

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<sup>16</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).



record the directions, pause between each paragraph so you can leave time to fully experience the process.

### **Instructions**

*Take a long, slow breath and notice the feeling of the air moving in through your nose, going down the back of your throat, and into your lungs. Take another breath and watch what happens in your body as you inhale and let go. Keep breathing and watching. Keep noticing the sensations in your body as you breathe. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Now turn your attention to what you feel emotionally. Look inside and find the emotion you are experiencing right now. Or find an emotion that you felt recently. Notice whether the emotion is a good or a bad feeling. Notice whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Just keep your attention on the feeling until you have a sense of it. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Now look for words to describe the emotion. For example, is it elation, contentment, or excitement? Or is it sadness, anxiety, shame, or loss? Whatever it is, keep watching and describing the emotion in your mind. Notice any change in the feeling and describe what's different. If any distractions or thoughts come to mind, do your best to let them go without getting stuck on them. Notice if your feeling is intensifying or diminishing, and describe what that's like. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Keep observing your emotion and letting go of distractions. Keep looking for words to describe the slightest change in the quality or intensity of your feeling. If other emotions begin to weave in, continue to describe them. If your emotion changes into an altogether new emotion, just keep observing it and finding the words to describe it. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]*

*Thoughts, physical sensations, and other distractions will try to grab your attention. Notice them, let them go, and return your focus to your emotion. Stay with it. Continue observing it. Keep going until you've observed your emotion change or diminish.*

You've now learned some basic mindfulness skills. Hopefully, you have a better understanding of how your mind works and why these skills are important to learn. You should continue using them on a daily basis.

## ADDITIONAL MINDFULNESS SKILLS

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### ENHANCING YOUR MINDFULNESS SKILLS USING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

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In dialectical behavior therapy, a core “how” skill is being nonjudgmental. In mindfulness-based stress reduction, a mindfulness approach to stress reduction developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and others, nonjudging is the first of seven attitudes considered to be the foundation of mindfulness practice. The others are patience, beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 33).

Yet you may have noticed that it is not always so easy to be nonjudging. In fact, the habits of judging and criticizing are deeply ingrained in nearly everyone, for a wide variety of reasons.

Because of this deep-habit energy of judging, meditation teachers have long taught the importance of building a foundation for mindfulness upon attitudes of kindness and compassion.

For example, the well-respected meditation teacher Christina Feldman has observed that “attention, awareness, understanding, and compassion form the basic skeleton of all systems of meditation.” She goes on to say, “Compassion is a fundamental principle of meditation. Meditation is not a narcissistic, self-interested path. It provides the foundation for love, integrity, compassion, respect and sensitivity” (Feldman, 1998, p. 2).

In recent years, health psychologists have begun to look more deeply at “positive” emotions and attitudes and their role in promoting health. The rich tradition of positive mental health inquiry builds on the work of psychologists Gordon Allport and Abraham Maslow in the 1960s and continues strongly today. It is motivated in large part by an interest in developing an expanded vision of human capacity and potential. Of particular interest on this theme is that expanded human potential has been one of the primary goals of meditation training since ancient times.

Contemporary health psychologists and researchers Shauna L. Shapiro and Gary E. R. Schwartz have written about the positive aspects of meditation. They point out that mindfulness is about how one pays attention. In addition to the seven attitudinal qualities identified by Kabat-Zinn, Shapiro and Schwartz suggest that an additional five qualities be incorporated to address the affective (or “heart”) dimension of mindfulness. The five “heart” qualities they name are: gratitude, gentleness, generosity, empathy, and loving-kindness (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000, pp. 253–273).

Loving-kindness deserves special mention. It has been popularized by the meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg (1995; 1997; 2005). As health-care professionals learn more about loving-kindness, this form of meditation is gaining popularity in a variety of health-care settings as a meditation practice that supports mindfulness and also carries healing potential of its own. Loving-kindness is variously described as deep friendliness and welcoming or as a quality embodying compassion and cherishing, filled with forgiveness and unconditional love. It is a deep human capacity, always present, at least potentially. It can be seen when one observes a mother tenderly caring for her child.

Loving-kindness can be a powerful aid to your mindfulness practice. All you need to do is to admit and allow feelings of kindness and compassion into your way of paying attention mindfully. Resting in kindness this way, with compassion and affection embedded in your attention, can protect you from the deep habits of judging and criticism and support you in the “how” dialectical behavior therapy skill of being truly nonjudgmental.

## **EXERCISE: MEDITATION PRACTICE FOR THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS** <sup>17</sup>

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The following is a brief meditation practice to cultivate loving-kindness for yourself and for others. Practice it whenever and for as long as you like. Try it as a “lead-in” to any of your formal mindfulness practices.

### **Instructions**

*Take a comfortable position. Bring your focus mindfully to your breath or body for a few breaths. Open and soften as much as feels safe to you as you allow yourself to connect with your natural inner feelings of kindness and compassion for others.*

*Now shift your attention to yourself. It could be a sense of your whole self or some part that needs care and attention, such as a physical injury or the site of an illness or a feeling of emotional pain.*

*Imagine speaking gently and quietly to yourself, as a mother speaks to her frightened or injured child. Use a phrase like “May I be safe and protected” or “May I be happy” or “May I be healthy and well” or “May I live with ease” or make up one of your own. Let the phrase you pick be something anyone would want (safety, ease, joy, and so on). Pick one that works for you. It can be a single phrase. Then put all your heart into it each time you speak to yourself. Let kindness and compassion come through you.*

*Practice by repeating your phrase to yourself silently as if singing a lullaby to a baby. Practice for as long as you like. It may help to practice for just a few minutes at a time at first and later build up to a longer practice.*

*When you like, you can shift your attention and focus to a friend or someone you know who is troubled. You can also focus on groups of people, such as “all my friends” or “all my sisters and brothers.”*

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<sup>17</sup> McKay, Matthew; Brantley, Jeffrey; Wood, Jeffrey (2007-07-01).

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