



## SESSION 8: MAINTAINING & EXTENDING NEW LEARNING

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### SUMMARY OF SESSION 8

The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully responding to situations rather than immediately running off pre-programmed "automatic" reactions has been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard for some form of skillful action directed at achieving change in the inner or outer world. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that by carrying on trying to solve an insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up "banging one's head on a brick wall", exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one's sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful, decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude both to the situation and to your reactions to it. CHOOSING not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.

The so-called "Serenity Prayer" asks for:

"Grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other".

Where do we find this grace, this courage and this wisdom? At some level, we already have all of these qualities - our task is to realise them (make them real), and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

### The Future

It is not always obvious what regular meditation practice is doing for us. It's like learning a new language: a few phrases each day keeps the learning alive. So a manageable amount each day is better than long gaps. We encourage you to carve out time from your busy lives to do some kind of formal meditation practice every day, even if it is only 5 minutes. It does not matter how long we give to the practice so much as that we make the attempt to pause within all the busyness. However brief these pauses are, if we are really present for them with awareness, in being mode, they can be profoundly transformative.

Regular practice of mindfulness meditation is rather like weaving a parachute. It is better to weave it every day, rather than leaving it to the time you have to jump from the plane!

## Planning for a new way of living.

Maintaining and extending a more mindful and careful way of being requires **clear intention** and **planning**. It is helpful to link intentions for regular mindfulness practice to a personally significant value or positive reason for taking good care of yourself.

What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? How will you respond to this vital question posed by Mary Oliver in her poem, *The Summer Day*? How might the Mindfulness-Based Wellbeing Programme help you realize your heart's deepest wish for greater happiness, wholeness, satisfaction, and well-being?

It's quite possible that much of what you have gained from the time and effort you've invested in your practice may not be obvious to you right now.

### WHY SHOULD WE KEEP PRACTICING?

- All the evidence we have suggests that the people who benefit most from MBCT in the long run are the ones who keep going with some form of mindfulness practice—even if it's for only a few minutes a day. To enjoy the full benefits from the time and effort you've already invested, it's helpful to remember that, just like learning a new language, a little practice keeps a new skill alive and available. Like watering and nurturing a seedling.
- Giving yourself a positive reason to sustain mindfulness practice, linked to something about which you care deeply, can be enormously empowering.

### HOW AND WHAT SHOULD WE PRACTICE?

Here are different ways to deepen your mindful way of living day by day:

1. Some Daily Formal Mindfulness Practice
2. Some Everyday Informal Mindfulness Practice
3. Plus 3-Minute Breathing Spaces—Responsive

#### 1. SOME DAILY FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

- As much as you possibly can, continue with the sustainable pattern of daily formal practice you settled on last week.
- It may well be that you'll find you need to make some changes to that pattern in the light of future experience. That's fine—the important thing is that the pattern be sustainable on a daily basis, long term.

- You may find it helpful to review your pattern of daily practice every 3 months or so, adjusting it as necessary. Entering the intention to review in your diary on a date 3 months from now can be a helpful reminder.

## **2. EVERYDAY INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE**

As best you can, hold the intention to be mindful lightly, rather than as yet another thing you “have” to do. You might find it helpful to put reminder red dots or sticky notes in places where you will notice them (such as on your phone) or to download a mindfulness bell that sounds on your computer or smart phone during the day to invite you to reconnect with the here and now, or take a breathing space.

Meditation teacher Larry Rosenberg offers these Five Reminders for Practicing Mindfulness throughout the Day:

1. When possible, do just one thing at a time.
2. Pay full attention to what you are doing.
3. When your mind wanders from what you are doing, bring it back.
4. Repeat step number three several billion times.
5. Investigate your distractions.

### **DAILY MINDFULNESS**

- When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass by, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing - use any sound like the bell of mindfulness. Really listen, being present and awake.
- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something which nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.

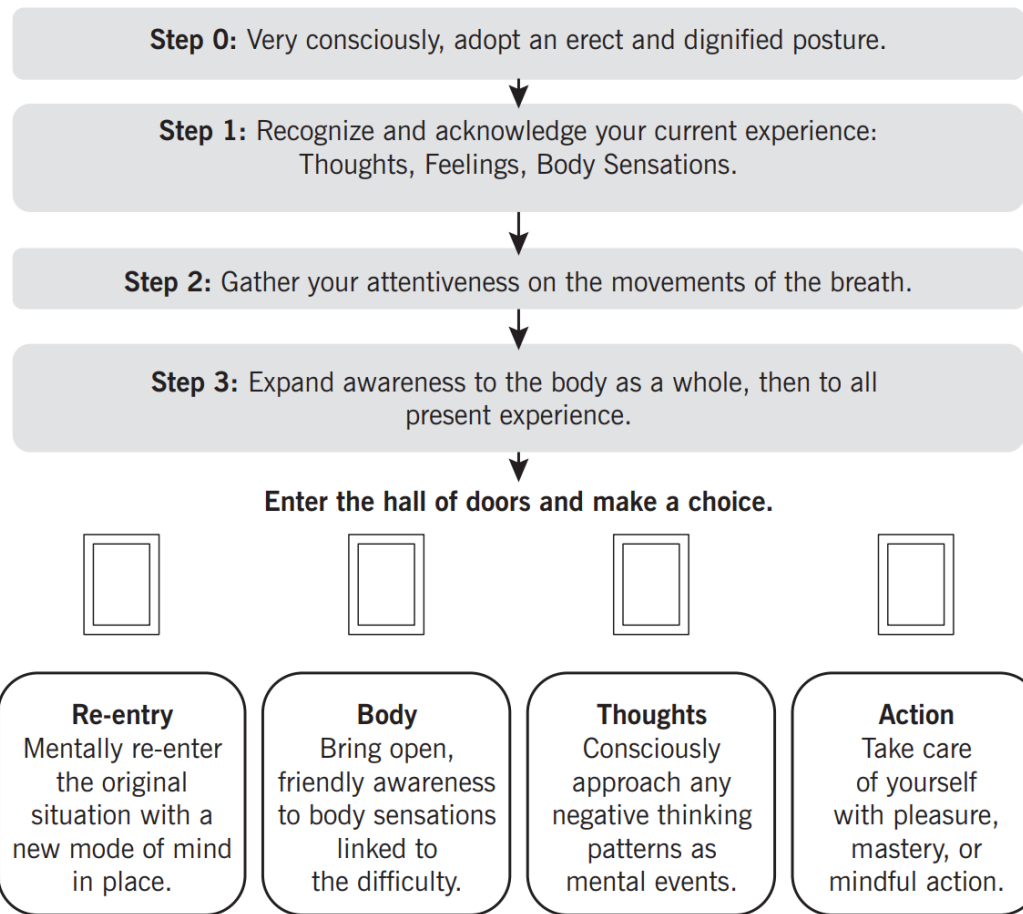
- Notice your body while walking or standing. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. When listening can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?
- Whenever you are waiting in a line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rising and falling of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of excess tension. Is there tension stored anywhere in your body? For example - your neck, shoulders, stomach, jaw, or lower back. If possible stretch or do yoga once a day.
- Focus attention on your daily activities - such as brushing your teeth, brushing your hair, washing up, putting on your shoes, doing your job. Bring mindfulness to each activity.
- Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe 5 mindful breaths.
- Whenever you feel you have 'lost it', when life feels really hard, or when your practice has been hard to sustain; remember that you can always come back to the breath. No matter how long you've been away, you can always start over again, in this moment, right here, right now.

*Adapted from: Madeline Klyne, Instructor, Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts Center (personal communication). Copyright Madeline Klyne. Adapted by permission.*

### **3. THE 3-STEP BREATHING SPACE—RESPONSIVE**

The breathing space is the single most important practice in the whole MBCT program: It's your way to switch into being mode when you most need to do so. Let it be your first response whenever you become aware that you are becoming entangled in unpleasant feelings, confused, unbalanced, or preoccupied. To keep this vital practice fully alive and available, we suggest you take at least one responsive breathing space every day—life being as it is, you will probably not be short of opportunities for practice!

## The Responsive Breathing Space



## 5 TIPS FOR SUSTAINING A DAILY MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

1) Do some practice, no matter how brief, every day. The "everydayness" of practice is hugely important as a way to keep mindfulness fresh, available, ready for you whenever you need it most— because you never know when that will be! Internationally respected meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein recommends that his students sit down to meditate every day—even if only for ten seconds. Experience suggests that, most often, those ten seconds will be enough to encourage you to sit longer.

2) If at all possible, do the practice at the same time, in the same place, each day. That way mindfulness gets built into the very fabric of your daily routine. Then, just as with brushing your teeth, you don't have to ponder whether to do it or not—you do it because that's what you always do at that point in your routine.

3) See practice as a way to nourish yourself, rather than another thing on your "to do" list. Remember that the practice won't always feel nourishing—as much as you can, let the practice be

as it is, letting go of your ideas of how it should be or of regarding it as part of a "project" of self-improvement.

4) Explore ways to practice with other people. Practicing regularly with others—in what is often called a "sitting group"—is one of the most powerful ways to keep your practice vital and alive. If you learned mindfulness through a programme with a group, look out for opportunities for reunions and practice days. Everyone can benefit from finding a mindfulness "buddy" with whom to practice and share experiences from time to time. Even if it's only one person, joining with others to practice and share experiences is hugely, and often surprisingly, supportive.

5) Remember, you can always begin again. The essence of mindfulness practice is letting go of the past and starting afresh in each new moment (as you've already practiced many, many times in coming back to the breath when the mind has wandered). In the same way, if you find that you haven't practiced for a while, rather than criticizing yourself or ruminating about why, just begin again, right there and then, by taking a three-minute breathing space.

## **MINDFULNESS AND MASTERY IN THE WORKPLACE: 21 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS DURING THE WORKING DAY**

The following '21 ways' are simply a road map. I wish you peace and well-being as you explore the territory and discover your 'ways'.

- 1) Take a few minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate - sit or lie down and be with yourself... gaze out of the window, listen to the sounds of nature or take a slow, quiet walk.
- 2) While your car is warming up - take a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.
- 3) While driving, become aware of body tension eg hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel - shoulders raised - stomach tight, etc. Consciously work at releasing, and dissolving that tension. ....does being tense help you to drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?
- 4) Decide not to play the radio and be with yourself, mindfully.
- 5) Stay in the left-hand lane and travel at an easy speed.
- 6) Pay attention to your breathing or to the sky.....trees, etc. when stopped at the traffic lights or in a queue.
- 7) Take a moment to orientate yourself to the day ahead once you have parked your car at your workplace.

- 8) While sitting at your desk, computer etc. monitor bodily sensations - tension levels, again consciously attempting to relax and let go of excess tension.
- 9) Use your breaks to truly relax rather than simply 'pausing' – e.g. instead of having a coffee or a cigarette, take a few minutes to walk or sit at your desk and recuperate.
- 10) At lunch, changing your environment can be helpful.
- 11) Or, try closing your door (if you have one) and take some time to consciously relax.
- 12) Decide to 'stop' for 1-2 minutes every hour during the day. During this time, become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations. Use it as a time to refresh and recuperate.
- 13) Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to 'center' yourself; e.g.: - the telephone ringing - saving your computer file.
- 14) Take some time at lunch or break to chat with close associates. Choose topics that are not necessarily work related.
- 15) Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use it as a time to eat slowly and be with yourself.
- 16) When work finishes, retrace your activities of the day, acknowledge and congratulate yourself for what you have accomplished and make a list of what you intend to do tomorrow.
- 17) Pay attention to the short walk to your car - breathing the crisp air. The feeling of the cold or warmth of your body - try to accept it rather than resist it. Listen to the sounds outside the office. Can you walk without feeling rushed?
- 18) While your car is warming-up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home - take a moment to simply be - enjoy it for a moment. Like most of us, you're heading into the next full-time job - home!
- 19) While driving, notice if you are rushing. What does this feel like? What could you do about it? Remember, you've got more control than you might imagine.
- 20) When you pull into the driveway or park on the street, take a minute to come back to the present. Orientate yourself to being with your family members.
- 21) Change out of work clothes when you get home; it helps you to make a smoother transition into your next 'role' - you can spare the few minutes it takes to do this. Say 'hello' to each of your family members - center yourself at home. If possible, make time to take 5-10 minutes to be quiet and still before starting the evening.

## **SESSIONS 1-8 THEMES**

### **Session 1: Awareness and Automatic Pilot**

On automatic pilot, it is easy to drift unawares into “doing” mode and the ruminative thought patterns that can tip us back into depression. Habitual doing mode also robs us of our potential for living life more fully. We can transform our experience by intentionally paying attention to it in particular ways. We begin to practice stepping out of automatic pilot by paying attention intentionally, mindfully, to eating, to the sensations of the body and to aspects of everyday experience.

Practices: Raisin exercise, Body Scan

### **Session 2: Living in Our Heads**

In doing mode, we “know about” our experience only indirectly, conceptually, through thought. This means we can easily get lost in rumination and worry. Mindfulness of the body provides an opportunity to explore a new way of knowing directly, intuitively – “experientially”. Experiential knowing is a way to be aware of unpleasant experiences without getting lost in ruminative thought. Already, most participants will be experiencing some difficulties in their practice. These difficulties offer precious opportunities to practice letting go of thinking and to connect with direct awareness of the body.

Practices: Body Scan, Breath practice

Cognitive exercise –the power of interpretations (Thoughts & Feelings exercise...’walking down the street...’) (Introducing Pleasant Experiences Calendar)

### **Session 3: Gathering the Scattered Mind**

The mind is often scattered and lost in thought because it is working away in the background to complete unfinished tasks and strive for future goals. Instead, we need to find a way to intentionally “come back” to the here and now. The breath and body offer an ever-present focus on which we can reconnect with mindful presence, gather and settle the mind, and ease ourselves from doing into being.

Practices: Sitting Meditation (breath & body) alt. Mindful Movement (Yoga), 3 Minute Breathing Space (basic instruction), Stretch & Breath

Cognitive exercise: Pleasant Experiences Calendar, (Introducing Unpleasant Experiences calendar)

### **Session 4: Recognising Aversion**

The skill of “coming back” needs to be complemented by seeing more clearly what “takes us away” into doing, rumination, mind wandering and worry. We begin the experiential investigation of “aversion”, the mind’s habitual reaction to unpleasant feelings and sensations, driven by the need not to have to have these experiences, which is at the root of emotional suffering. Mindfulness offers a way of staying present by giving another way to view things: It helps us take a wider perspective and relate differently to experience.



Practices: Sitting meditation, Walking meditation, 3MBS (responsive/coping)  
Cognitive exercises: Unpleasant Experiences Calendar, 'territory' of depression, ATQ

### **Session 5: Allowing/Letting Be**

Relating differently to unpleasant feelings and sensations – allowing things to be as they already are. We can disempower aversion by intentionally bringing to all experience a sense of “allowing” it to be just as it is, without judging it or trying to make it different. Such an attitude of acceptance embodies a basic attitude of kindness to experience. From this clear seeing we can choose what, if anything, needs to change.

Practices: Sitting meditation (introducing difficulty), 3M Extended Breathing Space ('Body door')

### **Session 6: Thoughts Are Not Facts!**

Relating differently to thoughts. We free ourselves from the ruminative doing mode when we clearly see negative moods as passing states of mind, and negative thinking as the distorted products of those mind states. It is enormously liberating to realise that our thoughts are merely thoughts, even the ones that say they are not, and to recognise the contexts in which they are born.

Practices: Sitting meditation, 3MBS ('Thought door')  
Cognitive exercises: How mood influences thinking (office example), Relapse Signatures (Working Wisely with Depression 1), 3MBS as a 'first step'

### **Session 7: “How can I Best Take Care of Myself?”**

Using skillful action to take care of ourselves in the face of lowering mood. We can lift depressed mood by intentional skillful action. We can respond more promptly and effectively to lowering mood by learning to recognise our personal pattern of warning signs. After taking a breathing space, we kindly take care of ourselves by acts that give pleasure or a sense of mastery, or provide a clear focus for mindfulness.

Practices: Sitting meditation, 3MBS (door of Skillful Action)  
Cognitive exercises: Activity and Mood (nourishing & depleting), Exhaustion Funnel, Working Wisely with Depression 2, relapse prevention/actions

### **Session 8 : Maintaining and Extending New Learning**

Planning for a new way of living. Maintaining and extending a more mindful and caring way of being requires clear intention and planning. It is helpful to link intentions for regular mindfulness practice to a personally significant value or positive reason for taking care of oneself.

Practices: Body Scan  
Reviewing the course, Intentions for the future, 'What do I value in my life' (what we value may help give intention to our practice), how best to keep up momentum

## **FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE**

### **Oxford Mindfulness Free Daily Online Practice Sessions.**

As part of Oxford Mindfulness Foundation's mission to increase access to mindfulness and support the community, they now offer free daily practice slots of 30 minutes at 1.00 - 1.30pm and 7.00 - 7.30pm UK time each weekday (Monday to Friday).

This registration also enables you to join the free monthly Keynotes offered on the first Wednesday of each month and the free monthly Social Evenings on the last Friday of each month.

If you are new to mindfulness, these sessions offer a chance to explore some mindfulness practices and learn a little more about what mindfulness involves.

Alternatively, if you are already familiar with mindfulness practice you, might want to keep your practice going by joining this online global community on a regular basis. These are drop-in sessions, you don't have to attend all of them each week, and are completely free.

<https://registrations.oxfordmindfulness.org/?cid=1263>

This registration also enables you to join the free monthly Keynotes offered on the first Wednesday of each month and the free monthly Social Evenings on the last Friday of each month.

Once you have registered you will be sent a link to join the sessions, the same link will work each day. Please do not share the link, these sessions are free however it is important to register at least once so we have contact details for you as part of our safeguarding processes.

### **See what others say about mindfulness**

<http://www.bemindful.co.uk/>

<http://oxfordmindfulness.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Oxfordmindfulness>

[https://twitter.com/omc\\_mindfulness](https://twitter.com/omc_mindfulness)

## **SAMPLE READING LIST**

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living  
1990, Dell Publishing (ISBN 0-385-30312-2)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Wherever You Go, There You Are  
1994, Hyperion (ISBN 0-7868-8070-8)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Coming To Our Senses  
2005, Piatkus (ISBN 0-7499-2588-4)

Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, Everyday Blessings. The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting  
2005, Hyperion (ISBN 0-7868-8314-6)

Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark Williams, John D. Teasdale, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression  
2012, Guildford Press (ISBN 1-4625-0750-6)

Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark Williams, John D. Teasdale, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression  
2002, Guildford Press (ISBN 1-57230-706-4)

J. Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindal V. Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn, The Mindful Way through Depression. Freeing Yourself From Chronic Unhappiness  
2007, Guilford Press (ISBN 1-59385-128-6)

John Teasdale, J. Mark Williams, Zindel Segal, The Mindful Way Workbook  
2014, Guilford Press (ISBN 978-1-4625-0814-3)

Mark Williams and Danny Penman, Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World  
2011, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-5308-9)

J. Mark Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness: Diverse Perspective on its Meaning, Origins and Applications  
2013, Routledge (ISBN 978-0-415-63647-6)

Sarah Silverton and John Kabat-Zinn, The Mindfulness Breakthrough: The Revolutionary Approach to Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression  
2012, Watkins Publishing LTD (ISBN 1-7802-8107-2)

Daniel Siegel, Mindsight: Transform your Brain with the New Science of Kindness  
2010, Oneworld Publications (ISBN 978-1-85168-761-9)

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Mindfulness in Plain English  
2002, Wisdom Publications, U.S. (ISBN 0-8617-1906-9)

Vidyamala Burch, Living Well with Pain & Illness. The Mindful Way to Free yourself from Suffering  
2008, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-2860-5)

Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman, Mindfulness for Health: A Practical Guide to Reliving Pain,  
Reducing Stress and Restoring Wellbeing  
2013, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-5924-1)

Saki Santorelli, Heal Thyself: Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine  
1999, Bell Tower (ISBN 0-609-80504-5)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Arriving at your own Door (108 lessons in Mindfulness)  
2008, Piatkus (ISBN 978-0-7499-2861-2)

Christopher Titmuss, Mindfulness for everyday living  
2003, Barron's Educational Series (ISBN 0-7641-2260-6)

Jack Kornfield, A Path with Heart  
1993, Bantam Books (ISBN 0-7126-5780-0)

Jack Kornfield, After the Ecstasy, the Laundry  
2000, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-0658-0)

Thich Nhat Hanh, The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching  
1999, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-7003-3)

Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness In Everyday Life  
1991, Rider (ISBN 0-7126-7406-3)

Larry Rosenberg, Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation  
2004, Shambhala Publications Inc (ISBN 1-5903-0136-4)

Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield, Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation  
2001, Shambhala Publications Inc (ISBN 1-5706-2805-X)

Sharon Salzberg, The Force of Kindness: Change Your Life With Love & Compassion  
2012, ReadHowYouWant (ISBN 1-4596-1916-1)

Tim Stead, Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality: Making Space for God  
2016, SPCK (ISBN 978-0281-07486-0)

Kate Karne, Seven Secrets of Mindfulness: How to keep your everyday practice Alive.  
2016, Rider (ISBN 978-1-84604-504-2)