



SESSION 3: GATHERING THE SCATTERED MIND

SUMMARY OF SESSION 3

This week, we continue to cultivate awareness of the breath and the body in movement. The mind is often scattered and lost in thought because it is working away in the background to complete unfinished tasks from the past and strive for goals for the future. We need to find a reliable way intentionally to “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’.

Focusing on the breath:

- Brings you back to this very moment—the here and now.
- Is always available as an anchor and haven, no matter where you are.
- Can actually change your experience by connecting you with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things.

This is an important step towards being able to respond helpfully to painful emotions. Emotions express themselves in the body. So becoming more aware of what is happening in the body fine tunes our sensitivity to subtle shades of mood.

This may not at first be easy. If we have experienced painful feelings in the past, it is understandable that emotions like fear or unhappiness feel like threats to be avoided – by walling them off, suppressing them, numbing out, pretending they are not there. But if we disconnect from painful feelings and body sensations, then we cannot respond to them effectively. And our ability to feel anything at all – positive or negative – may become muted, so that we lose touch with the full experience of being alive.

Attempting to avoid emotions, thoughts and body sensations can become a habit. We may believe it protects us – but research has shown that avoiding unpleasant feelings actually keeps them going. They are still there, even if we are not aware of them. They indirectly influence our attitudes and judgements in ways that can turn passing unpleasant feelings into persistent suffering, unless we are aware. But when ‘tuning out’ has become a habit, how can we learn to tune back in, without being overwhelmed?

Mindful movement allows us to:

- Build on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and “inhabit” body experience/sensation.
- See old habitual patterns of the mind—especially those that emphasize striving.
- Work with physical boundaries and intensity and learn acceptance of our limits.

- Learn new ways of taking care of ourselves.

The movements provide a direct way to connect with awareness of the body. The body is a place where emotions are often expressed, under the surface and without our awareness. So becoming more aware of the body gives us an additional place from which to stand and look at our thoughts

Through mindful movement, we learn to recognise body sensations for what they are – sensations that arise and pass away. To do this, we need to become aware of fearful thoughts that might lead us to pull back from sensation. Let's say, for example, that we choose to deliberately hold a mindful stretch for longer than feels comfortable. Can we welcome and stay in contact with the sensations, even if we find them unpleasant? Can we notice the impulse to label them as 'pain' and just let them be as they are?

By turning towards discomfort and unpleasantness, holding them in awareness as they arise, we are expanding the heart qualities of openness and goodwill in ourselves. Thus we weaken our tendency to avoid internal experiences that we do not like. Physical movement offers many opportunities to bring a spirit of gentleness, kindness and compassion to ourselves – rather than pushing beyond our limits, or being critical of our 'performance'.

MINDFULNESS STANDING POSITIONS (STRETCH AND BREATH)

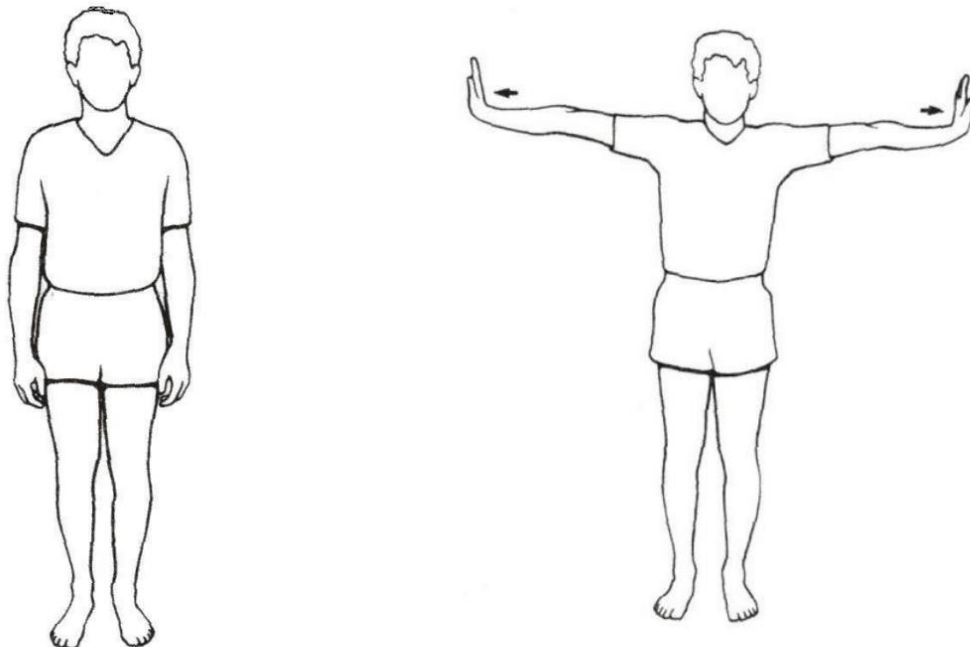


Figure a

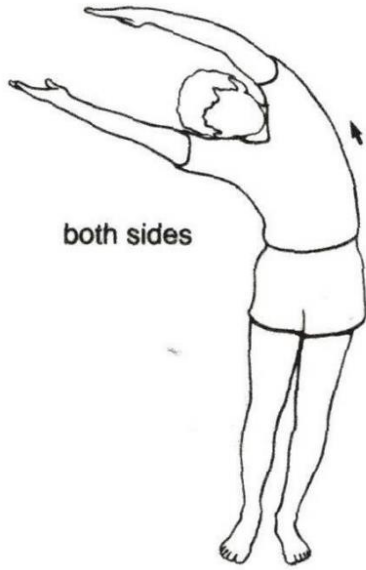


Figure b

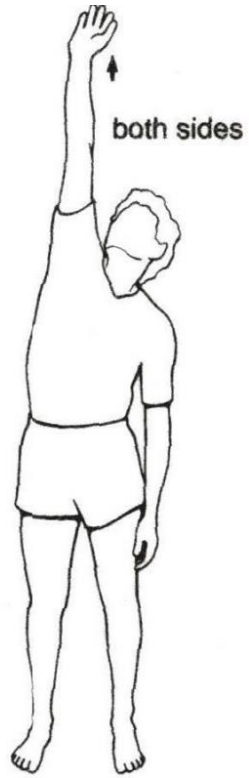


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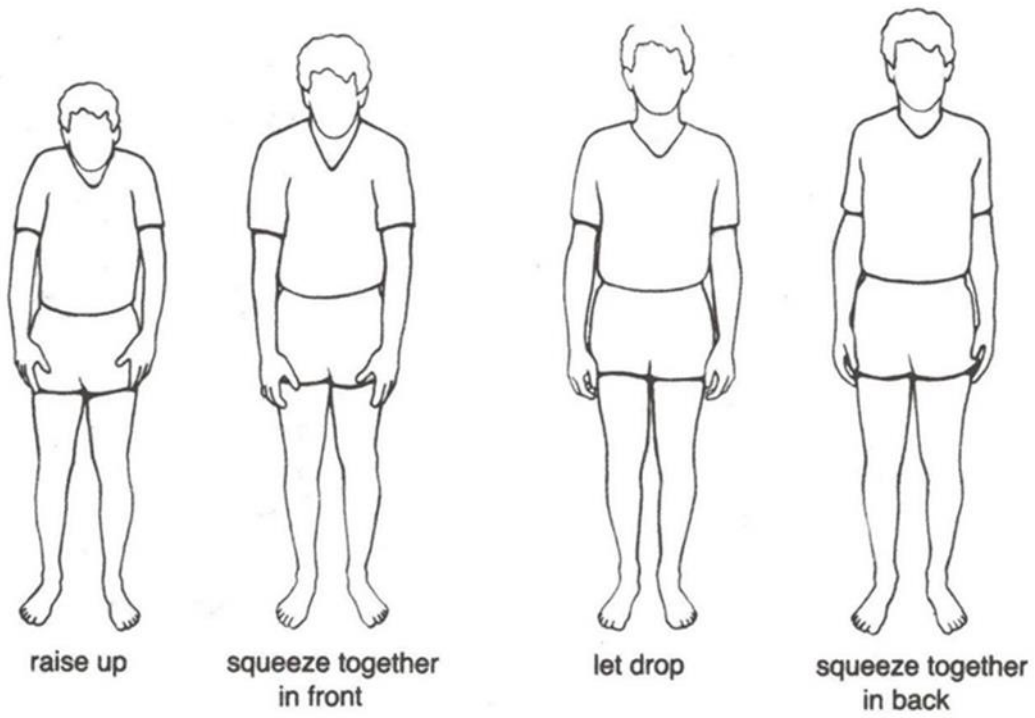


Figure d

SITTING MEDITATION: MINDFULNESS OF BREATH AND BODY

1. Practice mindfulness of the breath, as described in Session 2, for 10-15 minutes.
2. When you feel reasonably settled on awareness of the breath, intentionally allow the awareness to expand around the breath to include, as well, a sense of physical sensations throughout the whole body. While still aware, in the background, of the movements of the breath in the lower abdomen, change your primary focus so that you become aware of a sense of the body as a whole and of the changing patterns of sensation throughout the body. You may find you get a sense of the movements of the breath throughout the body, as if the whole body were breathing.
3. If you choose, include together with this wider sense of the body as a whole, and of the breath moving to and fro, awareness of the more local, particular patterns of physical sensations that arise where the body makes contact with the floor, chair, cushion, or stool - the sensations of touch, pressure, or contact of the feet or knees with the floor, the buttocks with whatever supports them, the hands where they rest on the thighs, or on each other. As best you can, hold all these sensations, together with the sense of the breath and of the body as a whole, in a wider space of awareness of physical sensations.
4. The mind will wander repeatedly away from the breath and body sensations - this is natural, to be expected, and in no way a mistake or a failure. Whenever you notice that your awareness has drifted away from sensations in the body, you might want to congratulate yourself; you have "woken up." Softly note where the mind was ("thinking"), and kindly escort your focus of attention back to the movements of the breath and to a sense of the body as a whole.
5. As best you can, keep things simple, bringing a gentle attending to the actuality of sensations throughout the body from one moment to the next.
6. As you sit, there may be some sensations that are particularly intense, such as pains in the back or knees or shoulders, and you may find that awareness is repeatedly drawn to these sensations, and away from your intended focus on the breath or body as a whole. You may like to use these times to experiment with intentionally bringing the focus of awareness right into the region of intensity and, as best you can, exploring with gentle and wise attention the detailed pattern of sensations there - what, precisely, do the sensations feel like, where, exactly, are they, do they vary over time or from one part of the region of intensity to another? Not so much thinking about it, as just feeling it. You may like to use the breath as a vehicle to carry awareness into such regions of intensity, "breathing in" to them, just as in the body scan.
7. Whenever you find yourself "carried away" from awareness in the moment by the intensity of physical sensations, or in any other way, reconnect with the here-and-now by refocusing awareness on the movements of the breath or on a sense of the body as a whole. Once you have gathered yourself in this way, allow the awareness to expand once more so it includes a sense of sensations throughout the body.

THE 3-MINUTE BREATHING SPACE: BASIC INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1. BECOMING AWARE/OPENING TO YOUR EXPERIENCE

Become more aware of how things are in this moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture, whether sitting or standing. If possible, close your eyes. Then, bringing your awareness to your inner experience and acknowledging it, ask, “What is my experience **right now?**”

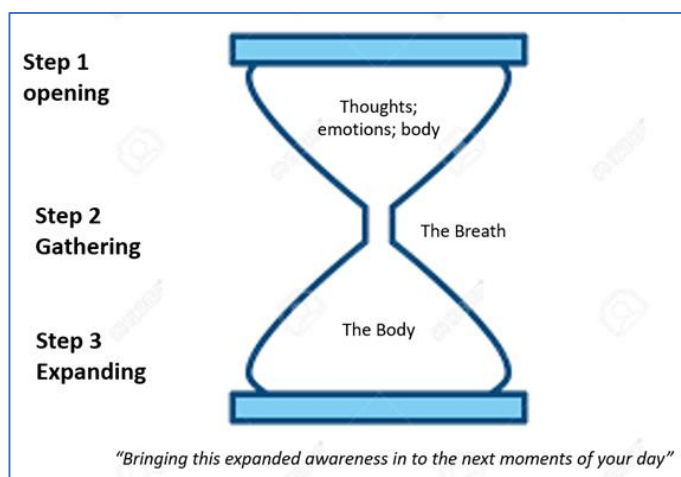
- What **THOUGHTS** are going through the mind? As best you can, acknowledge thoughts as mental events, perhaps putting them into words.
- What **FEELINGS** are here? Turn toward any sense of discomfort or unpleasant feelings, acknowledging them.
- What **BODY SENSATIONS** are here right now? Perhaps quickly scan the body to pick up any sensations of tightness or bracing, acknowledging the sensations.

STEP 2. GATHERING

Then redirect your attention to focus on the physical sensations of the breathing itself. Move in close to the sense of the breath in the abdomen . . . feeling the sensations of the abdomen wall expanding as the breath comes in . . . and falling back as the breath goes out. Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out, using the breathing to anchor yourself into the present.

STEP 3. EXPANDING

- Now expand the field of your awareness around the breathing so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and your facial expression.
- If you become aware of any sensations of discomfort, tension, or resistance, take your awareness there by breathing into them on the inbreath. Then breathe out from those sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath.
- As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.



The breathing space provides a way to step out of Automatic Pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment. The key skill in using Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy is to maintain awareness in the moment. Nothing else.

MINDFULNESS OF THE BODY IN MOVEMENT



Figure 1.

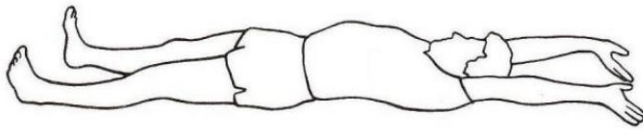


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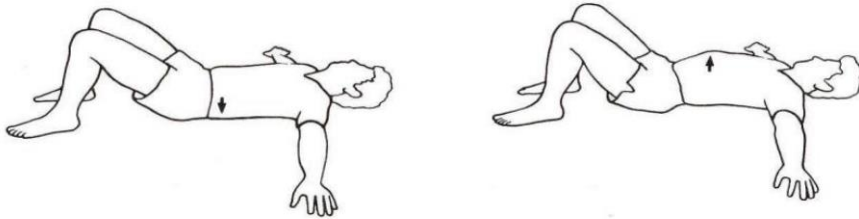


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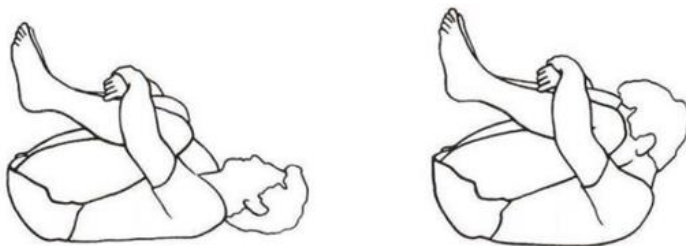


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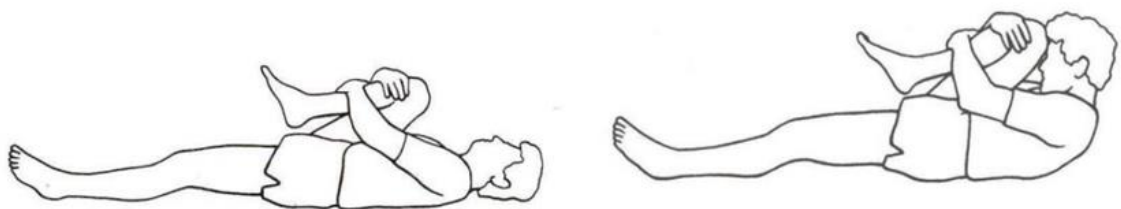


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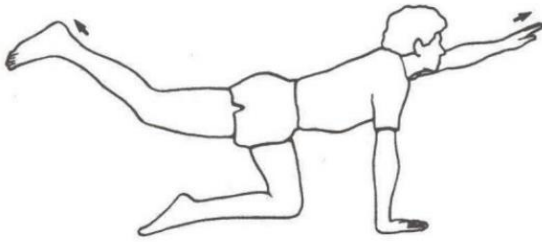


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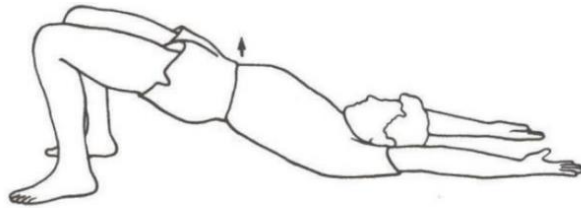


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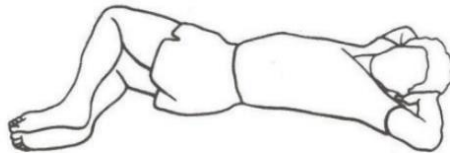


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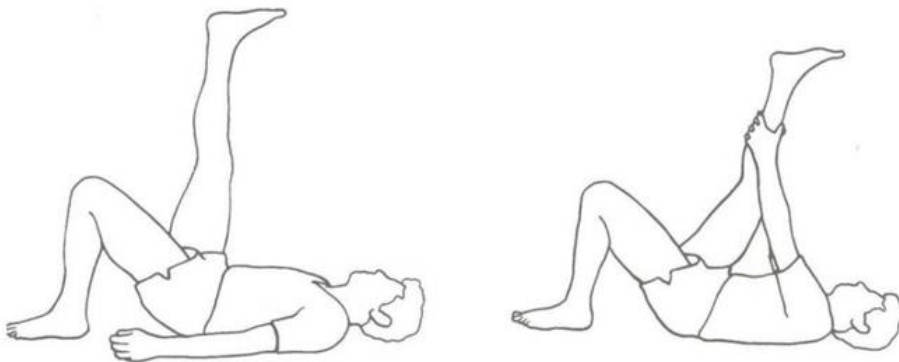


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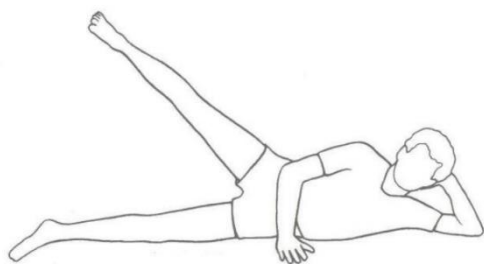


Figure 11.



Figure 14.

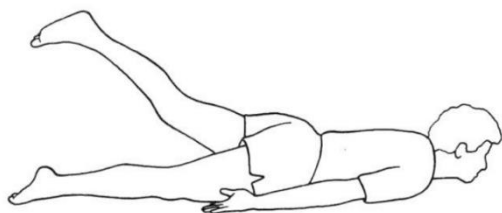


Figure 12.



Figure 15

HOME PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION 3

This week we are going to use three different formal practices:

1. *On Days 1, 3, and 5*, use the combined Stretch and Breath meditation and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form. This meditation combines a few minutes of gentle stretching exercises and instructions for mindfulness of the breath and body.
2. *On Days 2, 4, and 6*, use the Mindful Movement meditation and record your reactions on the Home Practice Record Form. **If you have any back or other health difficulties that may cause problems, make your own decision as to which (if any) of these exercises to do, and consult your physician or physical therapist if you are unsure.**
3. *Every day*: Practice using the 3-Minute Breathing Space three times a day, at set times that you have decided in advance, and record each time by circling a 'BS' on the Home Practice Record Form.
4. *Every day*: Complete the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar (one entry per day). Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in one unpleasant event each day, *at the time that they are occurring*. Notice and record, as soon as you can, in detail (e.g. put the actual words or images in which thoughts came, and the precise nature and location of body sensations). **What are the unpleasant events that “pull you off centre” or “get you down” (no matter how big or small)?**

HOME PRACTICE RECORD FORM

You can record each time you practice on this form or use your own diary/journal. Make a note of anything that comes up in the home practice so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/date	Practice (Yes/No)	Comments: Discoveries, Delights, Difficulties?
Saturday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Sunday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Monday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Tuesday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Wednesday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Thursday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	
Friday	Stretch & Breath: Mindful Movement: BS BS BS	

UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCES CALENDAR

Be aware of an unpleasant event *at the time it is happening*. Use the following questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. Write it down later, using the table provided or in your own journal if you prefer.

What was the experience?

Example: Example: Waiting for the telephone/broadband company to come out and fix our line. Realize that I am missing an important meeting at work.

How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?

Example: Temples throbbing, tightness in my neck and shoulders, pacing back and forth.

What moods and feelings accompanied this event?

Example: Angry, helpless.

What thoughts went through your mind?

Example: "Is this what they mean by service?" "They don't care about service, they have a monopoly around here." "This is one meeting I didn't want to miss."

What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?

Example "I hope I don't have to go through that again!"

We have an automatic tendency to react to unpleasant feelings by wanting to get rid of them or get away from them. This "not wanting" or "aversion" itself feels unpleasant. If we look carefully, over time we may recognize the difference between unpleasant feelings and the reaction of "not wanting" or pushing away. The body can give us clues—you may have noticed tension, contraction, or resistance in the body linked to "not wanting." Each of us has our own pattern of sensations—perhaps in the face, shoulders, belly, hands, or chest—look out for your particular pattern.

Not wanting to experience unpleasant feelings means we try to keep difficult or uncomfortable experiences at a distance—we don't look closely at them. This means they can seem like vaguely threatening "big bad blobs." Notice carefully what happens when you "de-blob" unpleasant experiences by focusing attention closely on them—homing in on their separate components—body sensations, feelings, and thoughts.

Often, it's the stories we tell ourselves about our unpleasant experiences—the thoughts that get triggered by them—that create and sustain the suffering we experience. For example, we might tell ourselves, "I shouldn't be feeling like this. Why am I so stupid and weak?" Or we might ask, "What if this keeps on happening?" And then we just feel even worse. See if it is possible to notice the ways that your thinking can feed the vicious cycles that increase unhappiness.

MBCT Session 3

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Saturday					
Sunday					
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					