



SESSION 2: KEEPING THE BODY IN MIND

<https://www.just-one-thing.co.uk/mbctl-2>

The aim of this course is to become more aware, more often. During your first week, you may have become more aware of just how much thinking the mind does! It is all too easy, especially when we are on automatic pilot, to get lost in our thoughts: planning, problem-solving, remembering, daydreaming, and worrying. Most of us spend much of our lives 'in our heads' and that usually means knowing about our experience through concepts and ideas, in other words, knowing indirectly.

By tuning in to physical sensations, we can 'anchor' ourselves in the present moment and become lost in our thinking less often. By 'keeping the body in mind' in this way, we can use a different kind of knowing, one that involves feeling and sensing - knowing experientially, directly, intuitively.

In the first week of the course, you practised intentionally bringing awareness to physical sensations during the body scan practice and when doing routine practical activities.

The home practice this week includes the body scan again. This meditation provides an opportunity to practise bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in each moment, without needing to change what we find.

Mr Duffy lived a short distance from his body...

From 'The Dubliners' by James Joyce.

'WAITING FOR A MESSAGE': THE POWER OF INTERPRETATIONS

In the '[waiting for a message](#)' exercise, in the class, we looked at the way we interpret events and experiences and how powerfully our thoughts and interpretations can influence our emotional reactions, physical sensations and behaviour. We saw how:

- Different people interpret the same event differently
- Each of us might interpret the same event differently at different times (depending on what mood we're in or what has just happened before, for example)
- Our interpretations are often shaped by old habits of mind and by the views that we have about ourselves and the world

We try to make sense of events and experiences by thinking about them and giving them meaning. We are unaware of many of our thoughts and interpretations but they play a major role in determining our reactions to events, situations and people. We may find ourselves feeling anxious or getting snappy but, because we haven't noticed our thoughts about what was going on, have no idea why! Becoming more aware of our thoughts can help us to make more sense of how we feel, how we behave and how we react to the world around us.

As we become more aware, we may notice some habitual patterns of thinking. One pattern that many of us have is to judge our experience as being not quite right, not good enough, and not what we wanted. It's all too easy to get lost in powerful patterns of judgemental thinking that can take us down well-worn paths which lead to us feeling bad, reacting in unhelpful ways, and losing awareness of the moment.

Becoming more aware of our habitual patterns of thinking is a crucial first step in moving towards freeing ourselves from their powerful grip.

EXPERIENCES CALENDAR: NOTICING EXPERIENCES AND REACTIONS

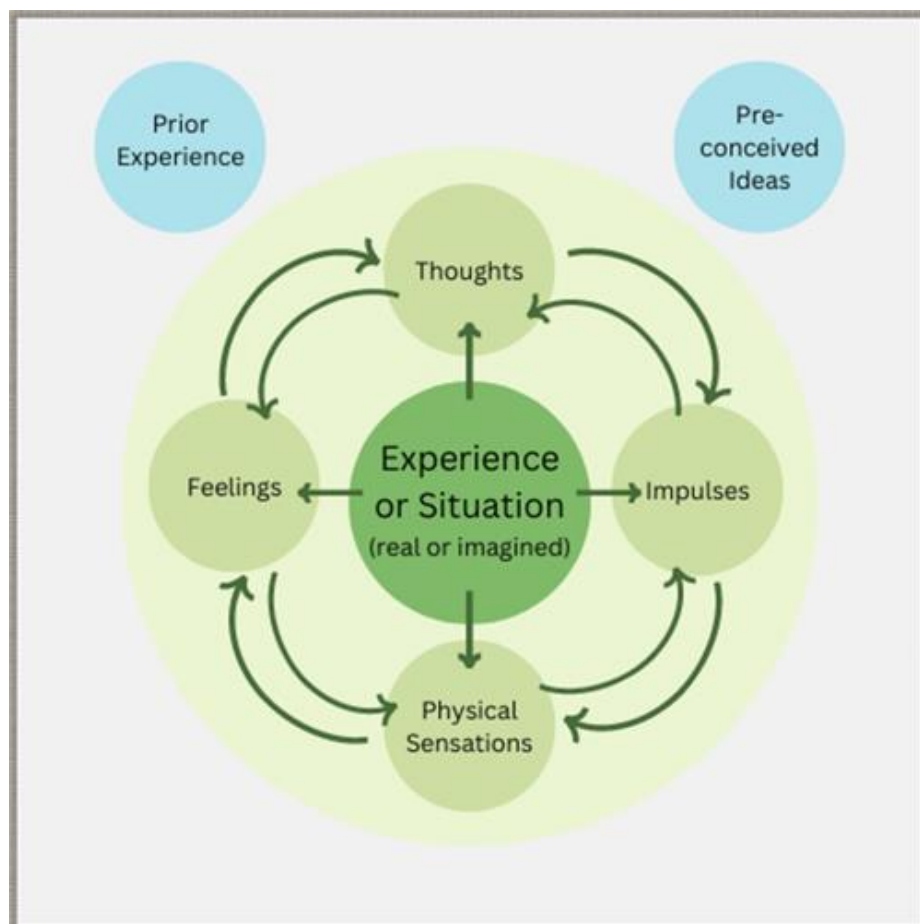
Keeping a diary or calendar of experiences is a useful way to become more aware of the body sensations, feelings, thoughts, and impulses that make up our experience and learn more about our relationship with them.

Quite often, especially when on automatic pilot and when living in our heads, we relate to our experiences in very simple terms, good or bad, wanted or unwanted, okay or not okay. Focusing attention on the separate elements of experiences –sensations, feelings, thoughts, and impulses – allows us to see things more clearly. When we do this we can notice the details of what is here and we can see how the elements of our experience change and unfold from moment to moment.

Over the weeks you will be encouraged to record some pleasant and some unpleasant experiences on the calendar. You may notice that the mind often immediately comes to a sense that an experience is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. A sense of pleasantness or unpleasantness can quickly lead to the mind wanting to hold on to or get rid of. Bringing mindfulness to bear at these moments may allow us simply to experience the moment as it is.

As well as noticing the sensations, feelings, thoughts and impulses that make up our experience, you may also become aware of any reactions to these elements of experience. You might ask yourself the question: “what is the weather pattern in body and mind, and what reactions to this weather do I notice?”

None of this is easy. It takes patience and persistence!



THE BREATH

Breath is life. You could think of the breath as being like a thread or chain that links and connects all the events of your life from birth, the beginning, to death, the end. The breath is always there every moment, moving by itself like a river.

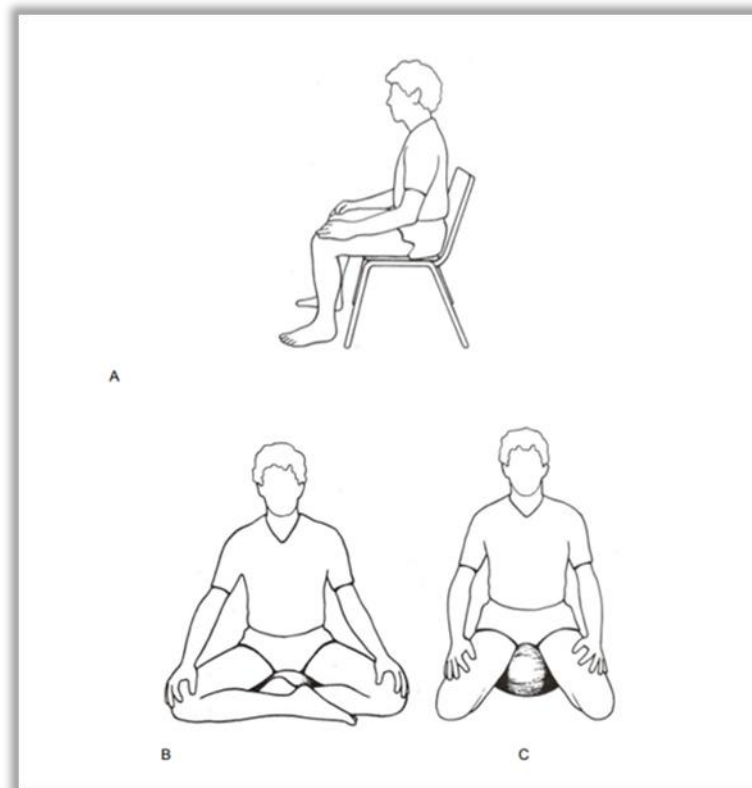
Have you ever noticed how the breath changes with our moods? Short and shallow when we're tense or angry, faster when we're excited, slow and full when we're happy, and almost disappearing when we're afraid. It's there with us all the time. It can be used as a tool, like an anchor, to bring stability to the body and mind when we deliberately choose to become aware of it. We can tune into it at any moment during everyday life.

Mostly, we're not in touch with our breathing it's just there, forgotten. So one of the first things we do in mindfulness is to get in touch with it. We notice how the breath changes with our moods, our thoughts, our body movements. We don't have to control the breath. Just notice it and get to know it, like a friend. All that is necessary is to observe, watch, and feel the breath with a sense of interest in a relaxed manner.

With practice, we become more aware of our breathing. We can use it to direct our awareness to different aspects of our lives. For example, to relax tense muscles, or focus on a situation that requires attention. Breath can also be used to help deal with pain, anger, relationships or the stress of daily life. During this course, we will be exploring this in great detail.

Karen Ryder

POSTURES FOR SITTING MEDITATION



SITTING WITH THE BREATH

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor, with your buttocks supported by cushions or a low stool. If you use a chair, it is very helpful to sit away from the back of the chair, so that your spine is self-supporting. If you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees can actually touch the floor; experiment with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel comfortably and firmly supported. Whatever you sit on, arrange things so that your knees are lower than your hips.
2. Allow your back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, have the feet flat on the floor with the legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes.
3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations, just as in the body scan.
4. Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath moves in and out of your body. (When you first try this practice, it may be helpful to place your hand on your lower abdomen and become aware of the changing pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact with your abdomen. Having “tuned in” to the physical sensations in this area in this way, you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations in the abdominal wall).
5. Focus your awareness on the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each in-breath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each out-breath. As best you can, follow with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen all the way through as the breath enters your body on the in-breath, and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between one in-breath and the following out-breath, and between one out-breath and the following in-breath.
6. There is no need to try to control the breathing in any way - simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.
7. Sooner or later (usually sooner), your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath in the lower abdomen to thoughts, planning, daydreams, drifting along—whatever. This is perfectly OK - it’s simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where the mind has been (“Ah, there’s thinking”). Then, gently escort the awareness back to a focus on the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen, renewing the intention to pay attention to the ongoing in-breath or out-breath, whichever you find.
8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again), as best you can, congratulate yourself each time on reconnecting with your experience in the moment, gently escorting the attention back to the breath, and simply resume following in awareness the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in-breath and out-breath.

9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.
10. Continue with the practice for 10-15 minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time you notice that your mind has wandered and is no longer down in the abdomen, following the breath.

HOME PRACTICE INVITATION

1. FORMAL PRACTICE:

Sitting with the Breath Practice.

Practice for 10 minutes every day this week. See the instructions on page 4 for more information.

If you have time, continue with the Body Scan Practice too. This meditation provides an opportunity to practise bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in each moment, without needing to change what we find.

You can access the meditation recordings via this webpage link: <https://www.just-one-thing.co.uk/mbct-l-2>

2. INFORMAL PRACTICE:

Begin to notice pleasant experiences.

Pause and bring awareness to at least one pleasant experience each day. Use this as an opportunity to become really aware of the sensations, feelings, thoughts and impulses that arise, at the time. Use the record sheet on the next page to make a note of your observations. You will also be invited to continue this practice throughout the rest of the course.

3. NEW HABITS IN EVERYDAY LIFE:

Continue with the Five Finger Gratitude Practice

With the new habits in everyday life set out above, make a commitment at the start of day and each week to when and where you might do this. As with any new habit, this sort of planning helps it become part of your life (rather than something you have to remember to do).

We often spend so much time in our head that we forget we have a body at all.

EXPERIENCES CALENDAR

Bring awareness to the details of a pleasant experience as it is happening. Use these questions to focus your attention on the details. Write the entry later.

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this experience?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What impulses or behaviours accompanied the experience?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

HOME PRACTICE NOTES

Feel free to use this page to make a note of anything that comes up for you, either as a reflection or as a reminder for discussion at our next session.
