

Core Skills of Mindfulness

1. Clarifying, Setting and Reaffirming Intention

- ~ For an event, a quality, a relationship, etc.
- ~ Answering the question: “What am I practicing?”

2. Cultivating a Witnessing Awareness

- ~ Developing meta-cognition: awareness of the state of your awareness
- ~ Practicing outer non-reactivity: witnessing your inner landscape without autopilot reactions

3. Stabilizing Attention

- ~ Strengthening the ability to hold your focus
- ~ Nurturing the **harmony of intention and attention**
“What is it I want to remember in this moment?”

4. Strengthening Self-Regulation

- ~ Settling negative energies intentionally: shortening the time that difficult emotions keep you “hooked”
- ~ Avoiding (or recovering from) emotional hijackings: bringing your whole brain back on line

5. Practicing Loving-Kindness

- ~ Calming the inner critic and self-judgment
- ~ Practicing non-judgmental awareness leading to kindness and compassion for yourself and others

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Mindfulness in Daily Practice

Mindfulness can be a powerful tool for changing habitual emotional reactions that hijack our ability to think clearly, act skillfully and live meaningfully. Like many other healthy habits, mindfulness becomes stronger and more effective as we repeatedly apply it to our lives. To increase your mindfulness skills, each time you encounter a negative emotion that threatens to dominate your awareness (for example, irritation, impatience, anxiety, anger, etc.), practice applying the four-step model set forth below.

STOP

- Bring your awareness to the negative emotion as soon as possible.
- Begin to recognize the early warning signals of the emotional reaction.
- Remind yourself: "I need to pay attention to this – now."

BREATHE

- Become sensitive to the natural softening quality of breath.
- Use the power of body-mind communication: send a mental message to release and let go.
- Relaxing into the exhale, allow the negative emotion to soften.

REFLECT or **OBSERVE**

- Appraise the situation. What is my old pattern here?
- Is my reaction supported by old myths or messages?
- What part of my reaction is flowing in from past experiences?
- What resources and options do I have right here in the present moment?
- Can I change my mind about how I see myself in this situation?
- What is my best insight about this situation? What do I want to remember?

CHOOSE

- Having become more aware of my reaction, settled myself a bit and tapped into my insight, what is possible here?
- What is effective or skillful?
- Can I shift my old pattern and make a creative choice?
- What is my best choice under all the circumstances?

Mindfulness in Relationships

Mindfulness can be a powerful tool for changing habitual emotional reactions that interrupt our experience of love and undermine our relationships. Like many other healthy habits, mindfulness becomes stronger and more effective as we repeatedly apply it to our lives. To increase your mindfulness skills, each time you encounter a negative emotion in your relationship (for example, irritation, impatience, anger, a feeling of lack of respect, etc.), practice applying the four-step model set forth below.

STOP

- Bring your awareness to the negative emotion as soon as possible.
- Begin to recognize the early warning signals of the emotional reaction.
- Remind yourself: "I need to pay attention to this – now."

BREATHE

- Become sensitive to the natural softening quality of breath.
- Release physical tension and allow the negative emotion to soften.

REFLECT

- Appraise the situation. What is my old pattern here?
- Is my reaction supported by old myths or messages?
- What is my reaction calling me to work on?
- Can I change my mind about how I see myself in this situation?
- Is my loved one intending to hurt me or be disrespectful?
- Even if he/she is, can I be patient or understanding of his/her struggle?
- Can I change my mind about how I see my loved one in this situation?
- What is my best insight about this situation? What do I want to remember?

CHOOSE

- Having become more aware of my reaction, settled myself a bit and tapped into my insight, what is possible here?
- What is effective, skillful, respectful or even loving?
- Can I shift my old pattern and make a creative choice?
- What is my best choice under all the circumstances?