

**Final Manuscript**

**Good for Printing**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Justin Wall', written in a cursive style.

Justin Wall 12/27/2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Vanessa Gagliardini', written in a cursive style.

Vanessa Gagliardini 18/01/2021

**Denys Rinpoche**

# **Open Mindfulness**

**Attentive, Open and Altruistic**

# A GUIDE TO OPEN MINDFULNESS TRAINING (OMT)

THIS GUIDE CAN BE USED IN THE FOLLOWING DIFFERENT WAYS:

- **as a presentation of mindfulness**
- **as a handbook for practicing wherever you are, at your own pace**
- **or as an instruction manual for completing the two-month OMT protocol**

An **online learning ecosystem** is available to support you, offering audio, video, and a training notebook.

All of these elements are available on the [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net) website

THE GUIDE HAS FOUR PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:

## **1- A general presentation of mindfulness meditation**

- The introduction lays out an overview of mindfulness in 10 points
- You can then discover the meditative experience of mindfulness in a very basic form through the “basic meditation.”

## **2- A practice and study handbook for personal training, wherever you are, and at your own pace.**

- **The handbook** has been designed to encourage you to practice and integrate the mindfulness training into your daily life (see chapter 2 and 3).
- **In addition**, we have created a learning ecosystem (see chapter 4). The ecosystem will assist and accompany you for proper follow-up and ensure the quality of your practice.

The learning ecosystem consists of complementary tools including audio, video, tutorials, retreats, and group practice circles. You will find these resources on the website:

**[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)**

These resources are freely accessible and are offered in a spirit of generosity to facilitate and encourage training, follow-up, and integration for the benefit of all.

## **3- An instruction manual for study and practice during OMT seminars**

This manual is the main reference for the training protocol called Open Mindfulness Training (OMT): “Training in Open Presence.” The OMT protocol, dedicated to training in full and open presence, is carried out over two months, in self-organized groups or in seminars organized by accredited facilitators. These facilitators present and infuse the eight steps of the mindfulness training to participants in a dynamic and structured way over eight weekly sessions, or in four weekend sessions over a two-month period. For more information, see the site [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

#### 4- Deepening our understanding and vision

Chapter 1 presents an overview of mindfulness in the context of contemplative science and the conclusion develops the vision of mindfulness as a path of natural humanism.

#### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

For ease of use, you will find a full table of contents and glossary at the end of the book with textual correlates.

- **The detailed table of contents**

The detailed table of contents at the end of the book outlines the complete structure of this guide and makes it easy to find what you are looking for.

- **The glossary**

The glossary at the end of the book defines the main terms pertinent to mindfulness. They are followed by references correlated to sections of the text.

- **Correlated references**

For each glossary term, there are correlates or connections citing the sections in the guide where the terms are discussed.

#### ICONS AND CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

##### Conventions

- **Asterisks\***

Asterisks refer to glossary terms at the end of the book. The terms of the glossary are followed with correlated references that make it easy to find the relevant passages in the book.

- **Boxes**

In chapter 3, which presents the OMT protocol, the boxes highlight the recurring points of each step. At the beginning of each step you will see reminders of the general points and tools. At the end of each step the characteristic attitudes, advice, and summary are expressed succinctly.

##### Icons

**E1**

This icon “E” indicates that the particular section is an explanation that introduces a useful point of understanding mindfulness.

There are a total of 73 explanations (listed in appendix 1).

**P1**

This icon “P” indicates that the text in question is an exercise, a practice.

There are a total of 44 practices (listed in appendix 2).



You can find explanations and practices in audio, as well as videos of the physical exercises on the website [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

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5. Detailed Outline

**SEE ALSO THE DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENTS AT THE END OF THE BOOK**

## Foreword

Living open mindfulness, the state of open presence, with its attentiveness and kindness, is the heart of the millennial, timeless wisdom of the awakened-awakeners known as the Buddhas.

The state of open presence, the mindfulness of the Buddha, is not merely a practice of stress reduction or of well-being. It is an art of living, a path of awakening and personal realization. Its natural humanism brings out that which is best in the human being, our fundamental health. The practice of mindfulness is a necessity in this day and age. It is more relevant than ever in our contemporary world as a natural humanistic path, a secular spirituality, and an ethic of kindness.

I was fortunate to receive the teachings of “open and kind presence” from several of the greatest Buddhist masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and practiced under their direction, at first in the Himalayan region, then in years of retreat, and then in daily life. Having inherited the spiritual lineage of one of the most eminent Tibetan Masters, Kalu Rangjung Künychab (1904-1989), for forty years I have dedicated my life to the transmission of his teachings. A community of student-practitioners has gradually formed around this transmission, which was recognized by the French government in 1994. It has now given birth to the organization called The Buddha University.

Having guided to fruition eight consecutive three-year retreats in the traditional training of Buddhist Lamas, and having accompanied many practitioners, it is out of the richness of the teachers of the past and out of my own experience that I have long wanted to offer a meditation guide that responds to the requests and needs of our contemporary context.

After several years of teachings and pedagogical adjustments, it has finally taken the form of this book on mindfulness. Around the guide, an online learning ecosystem makes the heart of the millennial teachings available to everyone everywhere, in a contemporary and non-sectarian presentation.

With friends and colleagues from different schools and lineages of transmission of the teachings of the Buddha, we have created a network of cooperation named the “Altruistic Mindfulness International Network.” Its spirit, inspired by the teaching, operates through a vibrant gift-based economy, solidarity and good-will. Members of the network, holders of a lineage of practice, whether Theravada, Zen, or Vajrayāna, share their intellectual resources and knowledge of their practice. This fraternal collaboration has already given rise to mindfulness training methods in different languages, all presenting the essence of mindfulness, and each maintaining the unique flavor of its lineage of origin. We invite everyone who appreciates the value of such synergy to join us in this collaboration.

I am pleased to be able to offer this book in the hope that it will be useful to some on their journey on the path of mindfulness.

May all be auspicious,

From heart to heart,

Lama Denys Rinpoché  
Tenerife, January 2019

# Introduction

## Mindfulness or Presence in Ten Points and a Basic Meditation

### 1. MINDFULNESS: THE FULLNESS OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

E1

Mindfulness\* is the experience of instant presence\*, being simply present, a sensorial experience that is open, attentive, and altruistic, without judgments or superimposed mental concepts. The present moment is lived “as it is” in freshness and original simplicity. This union with the present moment enables an optimal response to arise for every situation at hand. It is a state of well-being and freedom.

Training in mindfulness, or mindfulness meditation\*, consists in discovering that state and cultivating it, and integrating its qualities into daily life. Training in mindfulness begins by cultivating attentive presence\* and regular reminders\*.

### 2. “OPEN MINDFULNESS” OR “OPEN PRESENCE”

The terms “mindfulness” or “presence” have different connotations that include aspects of attention, presence, and awareness. Open mindfulness or open presence gradually develops through the progressive unfolding of attention, openness, and empathy. That state eventually has qualities of sharpness, precision, and vividness. Ultimate mindfulness is completely nondual and altruistic.

Open mindfulness is also a “fullness of mind,” it is total presence, openness to the wholeness of the present instant, instantaneous presence, and nowness.

### 3. A NATURAL AND UNIVERSAL PRACTICE

Mindfulness, the immediate experience of the present moment, is natural and therefore universal. It is non-sectarian and is a universal heritage of humanity that does not depend on or belong to any religion or philosophy. It is fundamentally a non-conceptual experience. Anyone—whether agnostic, atheist, religious follower, or philosopher—can discover it and derive great benefit.

Mindfulness is not a fabricated state, but a natural experience that is discovered and revealed when the clinging and fixations of habitual consciousness, with its illusions and passions, dissolve and disappear.

The natural and universal experience of mindfulness is also primordial, meaning that it precedes all conceptual distinctions of culture or religion. It is the fundamental human experience of the immediate present moment, the present before mental representations.

This state of presence is the foundation of true spirituality and has inspired all of the various paths leading to realization. The intelligence of the unity of this experience and of the different paths that lead us to realization is reflected in the expression “unity in diversity,” or “out of many, one”, which we will explore more deeply in Step Eight<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4. THE ORIGINS AND SOURCES OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness constitutes an invaluable heritage of humanity, natural and universal, which does not belong to any particular teaching.

The source of mindfulness is the teaching of the Buddha, which we have inherited through a multi millennial lineage. The practice of mindfulness lies at the heart of the teaching of the Buddha, which for more than 2,500 years has handed down from generation to generation the path that leads to the ultimate state of mindfulness: spiritual awakening.

Mindfulness is practiced sitting—this is **sitting meditation**—and it is then cultivated in all of the activities of daily life—this is **meditation in action**.

The most famous among the many treatises teaching mindfulness is “The Sutra on the Establishment of Mindfulness<sup>2</sup>” which presents the foundations of mindfulness of body<sup>3</sup>, mindfulness of sensations<sup>4</sup>, mindfulness of mind<sup>5</sup>, and mindfulness of phenomena of mind<sup>6</sup>. We should also mention the “Sutra of Mindfulness of Breathing<sup>7</sup>” which presents the fundamentals of the attention to the breath.

The teachings of mindfulness are further developed as *Shamatha* and *Vipashyanā*<sup>8\*</sup>, terms that are literally translated as “letting the mind rest” (*Shamatha*), and “seeing the nature clearly” (*Vipashyanā*). These teachings find their most essential expression in the practices called Mahāmudrā\* (The Great Union) and Dzogchen\* (The Great Perfection). These teach the realization of the state of fullness and perfection of presence beyond the limitations of the dualistic mind. All of these teachings have in common the discovery and cultivation of instant presence. The intelligence that understands the unity of the fundamental state of presence within the broad diversity of its expressions and practices is called “Rimay” in Tibetan, or “unity in diversity.”

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 3, step 8, point 6: “6. Unity in Diversity”

<sup>2</sup> *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in Pali; *Smṛiti Upasthāna Sūtra* in Sanskrit

<sup>3</sup> In Sanskrit (sk.): *Kāya*

<sup>4</sup> Sk: *Vedanā*

<sup>5</sup> Sk: *Citta*

<sup>6</sup> Sk: *Dharma*

<sup>7</sup> *Anāpānāsati Sutta* in Pali, *Ānāpānasmṛiti Sūtra*, in Sanskrit

<sup>8</sup> *Shamatha* and *Vipashyana* in Sanskrit; *samatha* and *vipassana* in Pali

## 5. RESEARCH AND MEETINGS BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND CONTEMPLATIVES

Since the 1970's, scientists have become more and more interested in the effects of meditation on the brain and body. In 1987, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and Francisco Varela (1946-2001), one of the world's leading cognitive scientists, along with R. Adam Engle, created the *Mind & Life Institute*. They had the intuition that scientific and contemplative approaches could be complementary for studying mind-body interactions, and that their cooperation would be profoundly beneficial. Since then, this institute regularly brings together scientists and contemplatives from all walks of life to study the mind and the practices of meditation and their application in numerous domains such as ethics, attention, neuroplasticity, emotions, altruism, economics, etc. The institute has thereby become an incubator for research into all fields that are a part of the new domain of the contemplative cognitive sciences.

Today, several major universities in the United States perform contemplative science research and the field is rapidly developing in a number of European institutions. In the West, publications on mindfulness have exploded in the last decade.

## 6. THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

The immense success of mindfulness today stems from the discovery of its benefits, supported by many studies, the findings of which have been the object of many scientific publications<sup>9</sup>.

In short, the results of this research tend to demonstrate that the practice of mindfulness has the effect of reducing the general level of tension and stress, which has a direct positive effect on our state of physical and mental health, and ultimately our overall well-being.

### The benefits confirmed by contemporary scientific research

In the wake of the *Mind & Life Institute*, numerous scientific and academic studies have been carried out in the United States by leading neuroscience researchers on the benefits of the practice of mindfulness.

Here are some of the major health benefits:

- **Stress reduction and anxiety regulation**

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<sup>9</sup> See the bibliography on the benefits of mindfulness in appendix 4

The reduction of stress is one of the major reasons why a large number of people begin to practice mindfulness meditation<sup>10</sup>. It has been demonstrated that mental and physical stress has numerous detrimental effects such as inflammation, sleep disturbance, states of depression and anxiety, increased blood pressure, fatigue, etc. The practice of mindfulness meditation reduces stress<sup>11</sup>, stress-related inflammation<sup>12</sup>, as well as symptoms of stress-related conditions including inflammatory bowel disease, post-traumatic stress disorders, and fibromyalgia<sup>13</sup>.

Mindfulness also reduces anxiety and anxiety disorders such as phobias, social anxieties, paranoid thinking, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and panic attacks<sup>14,15,16</sup>. It also helps to control job-related anxieties related to high-pressure work environments.

- **Developing emotional health**

The practice of mindfulness also facilitates an improvement in self-esteem and a positive vision of life<sup>17</sup>. Several studies suggest that it can reduce depression by reducing the release of cytokines, inflammatory proteins that are produced in response to stress<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being: a systematic review and meta-analysis, Goyal, Singh, Sibinga, Gould, Rowland-Seymour, Sharma, Berger, Sleicher, Maron, Shihab, Ranasinghe, Linn, Saha, Bass, Haythornthwaite, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, Mars 2014, JAMA Intern Med.

<sup>11</sup> Effects of the transcendental meditation technique on trait anxiety: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials, Orme-Johnson, Barnes, Santa Rosa, Floride, Mai 2014, J Altern Med.

<sup>12</sup> A comparison of mindfulness-based stress reduction and an active control in modulation of neurogenic inflammation, M. A. Rosenkranz, J. Davidson, D. G. MacCoon, J. F. Sheridan, N. H. Kalin, A. Lutz, University of Wisconsin-Madison, State University of Ohio, Octobre 2012, Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, Volume 27, January 2013, Pages 174-184.

<sup>13</sup> A review on how meditation could be used to comfort the terminally ill, Ball, Vernon, Durham University, Newcastle University, Octobre 2015, Palliat Support Care.

<sup>14</sup> Relationships between mindfulness practice and levels of mindfulness, medical and psychological symptoms and well-being in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program, J. Carmody, R. A. Baer, 2007, Springer Science+Business Media

<sup>15</sup> Three-year follow-up and clinical implications of a mindfulness meditation-based stress reduction intervention in the treatment of anxiety disorders, J. J. Miller, K. Fletcher, J. Kabat-Zinn, 1999, Department of Psychiatry, University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, the Stress Reduction Clinic, Department of Medicine, Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>16</sup> Meditative therapies for reducing anxiety: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials, K. W. Chen, C. C. Berger, E. Manheimer, D. Forde, J. Magidson, L. Dachman, C. W. Lejuez, 2012, The Official Journal of ADAA

<sup>17</sup> Critical analysis of the efficacy of meditation therapies for acute and subacute phase treatment of depressive disorders: a systematic review, FA Jain, RN Walsh, SJ Eisendrath, S Christensen, B Rael Cahn, 2014-2015, Department of Psychiatry, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, Department of Psychiatry, University of California, Irvine, CA, Department of Psychiatry, University of California, San Francisco, CA, Department of Psychiatry, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, Department of Psychiatry, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA; Brain and Creativity Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>18</sup> Effect of meditation on neurophysiological changes in stress mediated depression, ER Kasala, LN Bodduluru, Y Maneti, R Thipparaboina, 2013, Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology, National Institute of

Finally, the brains of mindfulness meditation practitioners show more activity in areas related to optimism and positive thinking.

- **Increasing attention**

Practicing mindful attentive presence is a little like building the muscle of one's capacity for attention. It helps to increase the strength and endurance of attention<sup>19,20</sup> and stimulates the memory, especially of details<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, one study concluded that mindfulness could even reverse the tendencies in the brain that contribute to mind-wandering, worry, and attention deficits<sup>22</sup>.

- **Developing self-awareness**

Certain mindfulness exercises can help in developing better self-awareness and aid in the development of the best traits of our individual personality through reducing self-destructive thoughts, loneliness<sup>23</sup>, and in creating new cognitive habits and thoughts<sup>24, 25</sup>. Finally, the practice of mindfulness cultivates the capacity for creative problem-solving<sup>26</sup>.

- **Developing kindness**

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Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Bhangagarh, Guwahati 781032, Assam, India, Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Bhangagarh, Guwahati 781032, Assam, India, Department of Pharmaceutics, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Balanagar, Hyderabad 500037, Andhra Pradesh, India.

<sup>19</sup> Mindfulness training modifies subsystems of attention, AP Jha, J Krompinger, MJ Baime, 2007, Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, Department of Psychology University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, United States.

<sup>20</sup> Mindfulness meditation improves cognition: Evidence of brief mental training, Zeidan, SK Johnson, BJ Diamond, Z David, P Goolkasian, 2009, Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, USA, Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, USA, Department of Psychology, William Patterson University, USA.

<sup>21</sup> Initial results from a study of the effects of meditation on multitasking performance, DM Levy, JO Wobbrock, AW Kaszniak, M Ostergren, 2011, University of Washington, Seattle, USA, University of Arizona, Tucson, USA.

<sup>22</sup> On mind wandering, attention, brain networks, and meditation. A Sood, DT Jones, 2013, Complementary and Integrative Medicine Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Maine, United States.

<sup>23</sup> Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction training reduces loneliness and pro-inflammatory gene expression in older adults: A small randomized controlled trial, JD Creswell, MR. Irwin, LJ Burklund, MD Lieberman, JMG Areval, J Ma, E Crabb Breen, Steven W. Cole, 2012, Department of Psychology and Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, United States, Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology, Department of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences, Los Angeles, United States, Departments of Psychology, Psychiatry, & Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, United States.

<sup>24</sup> Reconstructing and deconstructing the self: cognitive mechanisms in meditation practice. CJ Dahl CJ, A Lutz, RJ Davidson, 2015, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI, Lyon Neuroscience Research Center, INSERM, CNRS, Lyon, France; Lyon 1 University, Lyon, France.

<sup>25</sup> Affect and Motivation Are Critical in Constructive Meditation, HG Engen I, T Singer T, 2015, Department of Social Neuroscience, Max Planck Institute of Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig, Germany.

<sup>26</sup> "Mind the Trap": Mindfulness Practice Reduces Cognitive Rigidity, J Greenberg, K Reiner, N Meiran, 2012, Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.



Certain types of mindfulness meditation can particularly aid in increasing positive feelings and actions<sup>27</sup> towards oneself and others. For example, meditations on loving-kindness begin with the development of kind thoughts and feelings toward ourselves<sup>28</sup>. Finally, loving-kindness meditation can reduce social anxiety, reduce marital conflicts, and aid in anger management<sup>29</sup>.

- **Reducing age-related memory loss**

Cultivating attention and clarity of thought can help keep our mind young, developing memory and mental agility<sup>30</sup>, and can at least partially improve the memory of patients with dementia<sup>31, 32</sup>.

- **Reducing addiction**

The mental discipline that can be developed through mindfulness can also aid in warding off dependencies by developing attentional control over objects of addiction<sup>33</sup>. Research has shown that mindfulness can help people to redirect their attention, strengthen their will, control their emotions and impulsiveness, and thereby increase their comprehension of the causes of their addictive behaviors<sup>34, 35, 36</sup>. Similarly, mindfulness is also effective for controlling eating disorders.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program, Jazaieri, H., Jinpa, G., McGonigal, K., Rosenberg, E., Finkelstein, J., Simon-Thomas, E., Cullen, M., Doty, J., Gross, J., & Goldin, P., 2012, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14, 1113-1126.

<sup>28</sup> Effect of kindness-based meditation on health and well-being: a systematic review and meta-analysis, J Galante, I Galante, MJ Bekkers, J Gallacher, 2014, Cochrane Institute of Primary Care and Public Health, School of Medicine, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, TIME Institute, Cardiff University, UK.

<sup>29</sup> Loving-Kindness and Compassion Meditation: Potential for Psychological Interventions SG Hofmann, P Grossman, DE Hinton, 2011, Department of Psychology, Boston University, MA, USA.

<sup>30</sup> The potential effects of meditation on age-related cognitive decline: a systematic review, T Gard, BK Hölzel, SW Lazar, 2014, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts; Bender Institute of Neuroimaging, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Giessen, Germany; Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, Maastricht, the Netherlands.

<sup>31</sup> Stress, Meditation, and Alzheimer's Disease Prevention: Where The Evidence Stands, DS Khalsa, 2015, Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation, Tucson, AZ, USA, Department of Internal/Integrative Medicine, University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Albuquerque, NM, USA.

<sup>32</sup> Meditation-based interventions for family caregivers of people with dementia: a review of the empirical literature, RV Hurley, TG Patterson, SJ Cooley, 2014, School of Psychology, University of Warwick, Coventry, Warwickshire, UK.

<sup>33</sup> Vipassana Meditation as a Treatment for Alcohol and Drug Use Disorders, GA Marlatt, K Witkiewitz, T Dillworth, SW Bowen, GA Parks, LM Macpherson, HS Lonzak, ME Larimer, AW Blume, University of Washington, University of Texas at El Paso, USA.

<sup>34</sup> A translational neuroscience perspective on mindfulness meditation as a prevention strategy, YY Tang, LD Leve, 2016, Department of Psychological Sciences, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, USA, Department of Counseling Psychology and Human Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, USA.

<sup>35</sup> Mindfulness meditation practice and executive functioning: Breaking down the benefit, SN Gallant, 2016, Department of Psychology, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

<sup>36</sup> Mindfulness Meditation for Alcohol Relapse Prevention: A Feasibility Pilot Study, A Zgierska, D Rabago, M Zuelsdorff, C Coe, M Miller, M Fleming, 2014, University of Wisconsin Madison, WI, USA.

<sup>37</sup> Mindfulness meditation as an intervention for binge eating, emotional eating, and weight loss: a systematic review, SN Katterman, BM Kleinman, NM Hood, LM Nackers, JA Corsica, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Rush

- **Improving sleep**

By training in the practice of mindfulness, we can better control and redirect the flow of the thoughts that create insomnia. Moreover, mindfulness brings relaxation to the body by releasing tension and placing one in a state of peace, making it easier to sleep<sup>38</sup>.

- **Pain management**

Our perceptions of pain are intimately connected to our state of mind and can be elevated under stressful conditions. The practice of mindfulness helps us to be less reactive to pain<sup>39</sup>, whether these pains are chronic, intermittent, or the those experienced by patients at the end of their lives<sup>40</sup>.

- **Lowering high blood pressure**

Mindfulness meditation can also improve physical health by reducing arterial blood pressure<sup>41,42</sup>. The practice of mindfulness seems to control blood pressure by relaxing nerve signals that coordinate cardiac function, blood vessel tension, and psychological fight or flight responses that increase levels of alertness in situations of stress<sup>43</sup>.

- **Improving the immune system**

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University Medical Center, Chicago, IL, United States, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, United States, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, IL, United States.

<sup>38</sup> The value of mindfulness meditation in the treatment of insomnia. J Martires, M Zeidler, 2015, Greater Los Angeles VA Healthcare System, Los Angeles, California, USA.

<sup>39</sup> Brain Mechanisms Supporting Modulation of Pain by Mindfulness Meditation, F Zeidan, KT Martucci, RA Kraft, NS Gordon, JG McHaffie, RC Coghill, 2011, Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston Salem, NC, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston Salem, NC, USA, Psychology Department Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA.

<sup>40</sup> A review on how meditation could be used to comfort the terminally ill, MS Ball, B Vernon, 2015, Durham University, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, School of Medical Education, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

<sup>41</sup> Investigating the effect of transcendental meditation on blood pressure: a systematic review and meta-analysis, Z Bai, J Chang, C Chen, P Li, K Yang, I Chi, 2015, Evidence-Based Medicine Centre of Lanzhou University, School of Basic Medicine Sciences of Lanzhou University, Key Laboratory of Evidence-Based Medicine and Knowledge Translation of Gansu Province, Lanzhou City, China, School of Public Health of Lanzhou University, Lanzhou City, China, Golden Age Association Frances Wu Chair for Chinese Elderly, School of Social Work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA.

<sup>42</sup> Meditation can produce beneficial effects to prevent cardiovascular disease, MK Koike, R Cardoso, 2014, Hormone Molecular Biology and Clinical Investigation, Vol. 18, Nb 3, June 2014, pp 137-143.

<sup>43</sup> Meditation: should a cardiologist care? S.Olex, A Newberg, VM Figueredo, Einstein Institute for Heart and Vascular Health, Einstein Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA, United States.

Numerous recent studies have also demonstrated that mindfulness helps to strengthen the immune system, whether through stress-reduction, improving communication between the brain and immune system, or through activating the “second brain” in the gut<sup>44, 45, 46</sup>.

- **Developing neuroplasticity**

Mindfulness not only develops our mind but has a direct impact on the transformation of our brain. Studies have shown that the practice of mindfulness develops the brain’s cortical thickness<sup>47</sup>, develops the gray matter in the brainstem<sup>48</sup>, in the hippocampus and frontal lobe<sup>49</sup>, and improves connections between different regions of the brain<sup>50</sup>.

## **The benefits presented in the classical teachings of the Buddha**

We have seen the qualities of mindfulness that have been studied and confirmed through contemporary scientific tests. These studies and research are in their infancy and it is highly probable that many other qualities of mindfulness will be discovered and confirmed. These qualities have been mentioned since ancient times in the teachings of traditional medicine, as well as in the contemplative cognitive science presented in the teaching of the Buddha and its many classical commentaries.

In these classical treatises of the Buddha’s teaching (see those sources mentioned below), mindfulness plays a central role. The practice of mindfulness contributes fundamentally to spiritual awakening and all of its qualities, which signify liberation from all illusions and afflictive emotions. It is the ground of holistic health—body-mind-spirit— happiness, and finally, harmony. The Buddha,

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<sup>44</sup> Mindfulness meditation and the immune system: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials, DS Black, GM Slavich, 2016, Department of Preventive Medicine, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology and Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>45</sup> Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation, RJ Davidson, J Kabat-Zinn, J Schumacher, M Rosenkranz, D Muller, SF Santorelli, F Urbanowski, A Harrington, K Bonus, JF Sheridan, 2003, Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, USA.

<sup>46</sup> Mindfulness meditation training effects on CD4+ T lymphocytes in HIV-1 infected adults: A small randomized controlled trial, JD Creswell, HF Myers, SW Cole, MR Irwin, 2009, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA.

<sup>47</sup> Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness, SW Lazar, CE Kerr, RH Wasserman, JR Gray, DN Greve, MT Treadway, B Fischl, 2005, Neuroreport, 16(17), 1893-1897.

<sup>48</sup> Long-term meditation is associated with increased gray matter density in the brain stem, P Vestergaard-Poulsen, M van Beek, J Skewes, CR Bjarkam, M Stubberup, J Bertelsen, A Roepstorff, 2009, Neuroreport, 20(2), 170-174.

<sup>49</sup> The underlying anatomical correlates of long-term meditation: larger hippocampal and frontal volumes of gray matter, E Luders, AW Toga, N Lepore, C Gaser, 2009, Neuroimage, 45(3), 672-678.

<sup>50</sup> Mechanisms of white matter changes induced by meditation, YY Tang, Q Lu, M Fan, Y Yang, MI Posner, 2012, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 109(26), 10570-10574

“the awakened-awakener,” taught the practice of mindfulness of the present instant as a path of realization of the nature of the self and reality.

It would not be feasible to go into the details of these qualities in the context of this introduction. We must content ourselves for the purposes here with a passage from one of the greatest classical treatises, an encyclopedia of contemplative science entitled “The Treasury of Knowledge” that has come down to us through our lineage of transmission.

In this Encyclopedia, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé (1813-1900) writes: “All of the qualities of enlightenment mentioned in the approaches of the way of individual liberation or the way of universal enlightenment are the result of the practice of stable mindfulness, within which emerges the clear vision of the nature of reality.” He quotes the Buddha from the sutra “The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Mind<sup>51</sup>”, who responds to Maitreya, the Buddha of the future by saying, “You should know that all positive qualities of the Hearers, the Heroes of Awakening, and of the Buddhas [these are the names of groups of different levels of realization of the path of awakening], whether from this world or transcending it, all these qualities are the fruit of stable mindfulness and the clear vision of reality that is born in it.”

Thus, according to these traditional sources, all positive qualities of our world and those that transcend our world stem from the practice of mindfulness and from the clear vision of reality which gradually awakens in mindfulness. This claim may seem implausible or exaggerated and demands further examination. And this is exactly what the Buddha invites us to do in his teachings: “It is not a matter of belief, but of personally performing the experiment, to commence and to pursue the practice if the results are shown to be true.”

In brief, the positive qualities arising from mindfulness are harmony, health, well-being, happiness, and freedom, or, in two words, wisdom and love.

It should also be noted that in the citation from the Encyclopedia above, mindfulness must be coupled with the understanding of reality that develops through contemplative science and the practice called “clear vision.” The two practices are associated and complimentary: mindfulness is the experience in which the clear vision of insight awakens, and it is the foundation and the indispensable condition for its emergence. Mindfulness on its own realizes the qualities of worldly happiness and freedom, and insight, which is experienced in its openness, is the ultimate clear vision of reality, the experience of liberation.

We can summarize the qualities of mindfulness in the simple mnemonic formula of the “3H’s”: *Harmony, Health, and Happiness*.

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<sup>51</sup> Samadhinirmocana Sûtra, en sanskrit.

## **7. APPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS**

The domains of the application of mindfulness are not limited because whatever we do, we do it better by being fully present in whatever we are doing. Since the emergence of mindfulness in the West, many programs based on mindfulness practice have been widely diffused and carried out in public institutions such as schools and hospitals, but also with veterans, in prisons, or in corporations.

To cite just a few examples:

- **Schools**

Projects to introduce meditation into schools are flourishing in the USA, Canada, and in European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and England. Many institutions view it as a pedagogical tool that promotes attention, cognition, and emotional intelligence. In France too, the usefulness of mindfulness in schools is starting to be recognized and it is beginning to be introduced.

- **Hospitals**

In the 1970's, Jon Kabat-Zinn began to introduce mindfulness practices for patients suffering from chronic pain or as a part of end-of-life care. The protocol he created, "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction," was developed to help patients better cope with pain and stress related to their illness. Another protocol, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy was subsequently developed to help persons suffering from depression to reduce their feeling of unease and to help prevent relapse. These protocols are now widespread in many hospitals and have been introduced in France by Christophe André, most notably in the hospital Saint-Anne in Paris.

- **The political world**

Beginning in 2014, the British Parliament organized mindfulness sessions for its members and the public, and in 2015 published the report "UK Mindful Nation," a proposal to introduce mindfulness into different public spheres such as medicine, education, business, and prisons. In France, initiatives for the practice of mindfulness have recently been made in the National Assembly.

In addition, the armed forces of the US and other countries have used mindfulness for their soldiers, primarily in the context of post-traumatic stress treatment. In this sphere, we can see that mindfulness has a similar role as meditation in traditional martial arts.

- **Prisons**

The introduction of mindfulness in prisons contributes to the reduction of hostile behaviors, mood disorders, and the consumption of pharmaceuticals or other various drugs. It also improves self-esteem. In many countries, notably in India and the United States, spectacular transformations have taken place in prison environments.

- **Business**

The corporate world is also interested in mindfulness with a view to improving work conditions, happiness, creativity, and work ethic. More and more companies are offering their employees access to mindfulness training and the opportunity for “meditation breaks.”

## **8. MINDFULNESS: A QUALITY OF BEING AND WAY OF LIFE**

In contemporary terms, the practice of mindfulness is at once a contemplative science, a meditation, a philosophy, and a transformative and liberating applied phenomenology. The benefits of practice, far from being summed up by stress management, go way beyond simple relaxation. In a global approach that we have called “second generation,” in order to indicate all of the diverse extensions and increases in its applications, and to distinguish it from a reductionist approach, mindfulness is an art of living associated with a quality of being. It is a sort of essential holistic therapy that benefits the whole person, integrating our physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It is also an essential way of living, part of the eternal search for meaning that drives all human beings, a cognitive spirituality and a natural ethic of “instant presence” based on the Golden Rule.

□ See the conclusion of the book.

## **9. A UNIVERSAL HUMANIST ETHICS**

The Golden Rule of universal ethics states, “treat others as you would like to be treated,” or, “do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you,” or again, “do not inflict violence on another that you would not want to be a victim of yourself.” This rule of altruistic kindness is articulated in different formulations in all schools of thought propounding an ethics of non-violence, humanist or religious. It comes from our natural aspiration for well-being and happiness, and it does not depend on beliefs or arguments from authority. This Golden Rule constitutes the foundation of a natural, universal ethics.

In the practice of open mindfulness, the symbiosis of the two qualities of attention and openness leads to the experience of empathic and altruistic mindfulness. In this state of empathic participation, we naturally accomplish that which is good for others as if it were done for ourselves. This respect for others-as-ourselves is simply a matter of empathic participation and natural altruism arising in the state of open presence.

Whoever we are, we all aspire for harmony and happiness, and we all wish to avoid suffering. In this way, “you are like me and I am like you.” The Golden Rule is practiced in recognition of this similarity and in the experience of communion that comes alive in mindfulness. This applies at all levels: personal, marital, familial, professional, social, economic, political, geopolitical, and ecological.

It is the foundation of a global humanist ethic, natural and universal. It is independent of any arguments based on authority and develops naturally in the experience of being in mindfulness.

□ See the conclusion of the book.

## 10. A UNIVERSAL HUMANIST\* SPIRITUALITY

We have mentioned above that the practice of mindfulness is an “art of living and way of being,” and we have talked about it as a natural humanism. The profound practice of mindfulness is also the foundation of a spirituality of immediate, non-conceptual presence, or of instantaneity, which we will consider further in the conclusion. The experience of the timeless present moment that is introduced in the practice of mindfulness is the ground and heart of all true wisdom-based spiritualities, those that overcome the illusions of mental concepts and the conflicting passions that arise from them.

In the teaching of the Buddha, as with others, presence in instantaneity is the locus of the perfection of wisdom that is the experimental response to the injunction arising in both the West and the East, “Know your mind, know thyself.”

□ See the conclusion of the book.

## 11. A VERY BASIC MEDITATION IN THREE POINTS

### Description

P1

At the outset of this guide, we propose beginning with this basic meditation. It can be practiced at any time—it doesn’t matter when, where, for a few seconds or for a long time. Whatever is fine, according to the circumstances and time available.

Simple and essential, it can be practiced as often as possible. It is an excellent way to take a brief pause.

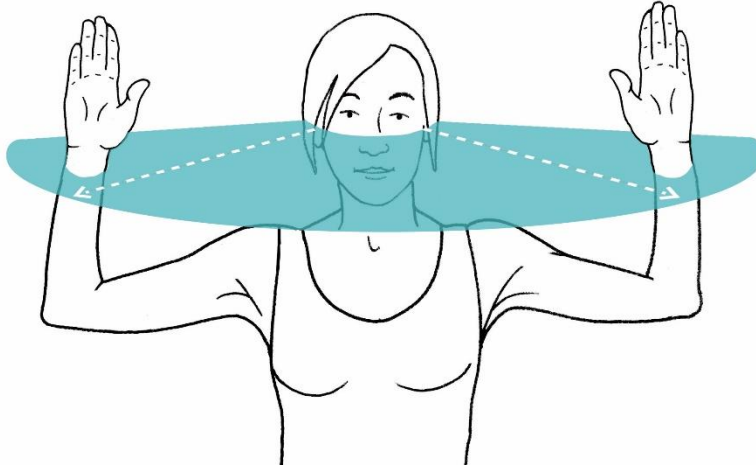
### Practice

- First of all, **get comfortable** and sit down: the body balanced, preferably straight but without tension.

.....

- Then, **let the gaze relax in what is called “panoramic vision”**: your eyes are open, the eyeballs completely relaxed in a field of vision that is thereby naturally very wide: the “panoramic gaze.”

.....



- Finally, **stay in the continuous sensation of the breath**: in the relaxation of the body and the openness of the gaze, remain with attentive presence to the continuous sensation of the breath. The breath is the support of attention par excellence, it is always present. Come back each time that you become distracted from the sensation.

.....



# Chapter 1

## A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science

Before presenting the eight steps of the training, let us introduce ourselves to a few basic concepts in contemplative science\*. These concepts will help us understand the cognitive process behind the practice, as well as the experience and method of training.

□ This theoretical chapter is not essential for practice—if you find it overly complicated you can go directly to the following chapter, “The Practice in General.” The theory will gradually gain clarity through experience.

Contemplative science is a field of scientific research that was launched in the 1970’s by the *Mind and Life Institute*, as mentioned briefly in point five of the introduction, “Research and Meetings between Scientists and Contemplatives.”

Contemplative science was born from the convergence of a) the Buddha’s teachings on the mind—phenomena and their nature (phenomenology), derived from the *Abhidharma*—and b) modern neuroscience that examines the effects of meditative practices on the brain and nervous system. Contemplative science is an emerging multidisciplinary field, currently studied in many North American, European, and Asian universities.

In the context of this book, the term “contemplative science” is also used as a translation of the Sanskrit terms *Dharma* and *Abhidharma*. *Dharma* refers at once to phenomena, their nature, and the teaching about their nature; *Abhidharma* is the science of phenomena, phenomenology. Contemplative science is the scientific basis of mindfulness teachings, which can also be called an “applied phenomenology,” or “the science of cognitive experience.”

E2

### MINDFULNESS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCE

The unique approach of contemplative science is to implement a “first-person” perspective, which means the subject is an integral part of the experiment. We therefore understand contemplative science as the science of “mind-consciousness” (the two terms can be used here as synonyms), and its liberative transformation through the practice of mindfulness meditation. Contemplative science is, in a sense, a scientific approach to meditative experience, its phenomenology, and philosophy.

Contemplative science covers many aspects. We will start by modeling in a simple way the working of our habitual consciousness. This model will help us understand how our “mind-consciousness” will evolve and transform itself in the practice of meditation, and how the practice of mindfulness is able to liberate mind-consciousness from its illusions and conflicting

emotions. This type of contemplative science is called *Dharma* in Sanskrit, the “science of reality,” a term that traditionally designates the teaching of the Buddha, while the term “Buddhism” spread as a neologism invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Western Indologists.

This modeling of our consciousness and its experiences is a phenomenology, and in the conclusion of this book we will expound its humanist character. Indeed, it is not only an intellectual phenomenology leading to an understanding of consciousness and mind, but an applied phenomenology, active and transformative. It transforms and awakens the person.

In the model that follows, we will use various examples to try to understand the functioning of consciousness. The understanding we develop will be applied to and guide the practice. This is how we learn to “understand through experience.” We will not tackle the vast theoretical field of the interaction of mind-experience with the brain, a field that has recently given birth to neuro-phenomenology. Interested readers should refer to the work of the *Mind and Life Institute* previously mentioned in the Introduction.

## ● Three Situations

In terms of practice, we will consider three situations:

- At the beginning of the journey;
- In the middle, the path;
- At the end, the ultimate fruit of practice.

### **AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PATH: A COGNITIVE MODEL OF HABITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

We will begin by proposing a model of habitual consciousness that will help us understand how it works.

How can we represent in a simple way the state of our habitual consciousness, the state in which we habitually live our daily life, the state we are in all the time?

Let us first remark that consciousness\* is not a thing, an entity, but a cognitive process in which an “I-subject” is aware of “something other.” We can represent this cognitive process with a “center-periphery” model, in which the “me-subject” is in the middle, and all around, on the periphery, “all things,” all of the experiences that the “me-subject” encounters. We thus have two poles of subject-object, or center-periphery. The subject is in the center, and that which I experience, that which experiences the subject that I am, is the periphery. Various relationships are established between the two poles of subject and object. We will speak of these relationships as polarizations\* by considering the subject and its objects as two poles. These two poles, just like magnetic poles, using the analogy of electromagnetism, exist relative to each other, the plus (+) charge exists relative to the minus (-) one. The relationships arising between the two poles

can be classified as positive, negative, or neutral, which are analogous to attraction, repulsion, and indifference. This “center-periphery” model and the concept of the polarization of habitual consciousness may help us understand the practice in our discussion. We will illustrate this by the figure below:

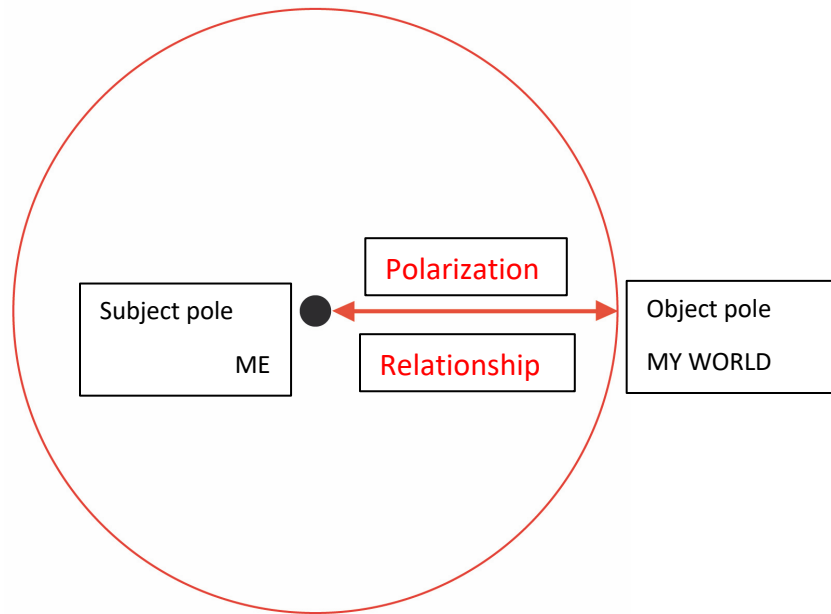


FIGURE 1

THE CENTER-PERIPHERY MODEL, THE POLARIZATION OF HABITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It is important to bear in mind that the center and periphery, “Me” and “My World,” are not two entities, not separate or independent. The “center and periphery” of consciousness, “me and my world,” “me and what is other than me,” depend on each other. They are situated relative to each other, and through their relation, they determine each other. In other words, the feeling of “me” arises in the experience of a surrounding world that is “other.” The experience of “me” and “my world” are interdependent, they arise through their interrelationship. In phenomenology, we speak of this relation in terms of intersubjectivity or interdependence.

- **The interdependence of self and world**

When we talk about the interdependence\* of me and my world, we are not saying that it is me and my mind that produce “the world,” which would be very narcissistic and presumptuous, but we are saying that my mind produces my version of the world, my experience of the world,

my representation\* of it. A key point is that “me” and “my representation of the world” are interdependent. In other words, my perception of the world depends on me. This personal perception of the world is what we call “my virtual world.”

- **The metaphor of the map and the terrain**

We will illustrate the process of representation\* of the world and of the projection of “my world” with the example of digital cartography. On the basis of photographs of the terrain (such as Google Earth), these tools superimpose different layers, which interpret the natural terrain represented by the photos. The layers provide information about the features of the terrain, adding information such as shapes and names that delineate the spaces around them such as cities, roads, or streams. In this way, a map interprets the terrain, creating a conceptual representation of it. In the final state of the map, the virgin terrain has completely disappeared. All that remains is its interpretation, its representation.

Each day, in the same way, our concepts—the names and forms that we project onto the ground of reality—create our representation, our version of it. Our conceptual experience of the world tends to become our world. Onto the pristine experience of the “terrain” of reality are superimposed our interpretations, the conceptual representations that we project onto it. In reality, our habitual experience is a mixture of the direct perception of the terrain and of representations. The underlying terrain always shows through, more or less, through the map that covers and interprets it. However, the more opaque, dense, and thick the projections and representations, the less the terrain appears. Taken to its end, the mapping process that is habitual consciousness comes to perceive only its interpretation of the world. I no longer perceive the real world, I only perceive my world, that is to say the interpretation that I have. This process of interpretation, conceptualization, and projection onto the pristine ground of experience is the working of consciousness that arises in and through conceptual representation. Consciousness is the “cognitive grasping\*” that projects onto the field of experience the map of forms and names that creates our world of representations, the virtual world in which we usually live.

This system of interpretation is not intrinsically bad, it can be very useful and necessary because it lets us decipher the world and, to a certain extent, master it through interpretation. Nonetheless, it creates problems when we come to take the map for the terrain, when we take our projections and representations for reality in itself. Taking the map for the terrain is an illusion that can lead to very grave psychological, ecological, and ethical consequences.

- **Cognitive grasping\***

As we have just seen, the habitual consciousness that we have of people and things depends on the representations we make of them, on how we conceive of them. We thus tend not to perceive people and things as they are, but as we represent them, through the concepts and preconceived ideas we project onto them. This process forms the superficial aspect of reality, its mask. It is our virtual, habitual reality.

More precisely, cognitive grasping is the creator of subject-object duality. Not only does cognitive grasping determine our perception of the world, but it also structures the dual subject-object experience within which we habitually live. To put it simply, the conceiver and conceived exist in relationship to one another through the process of mental conception. The subject that grasps and the object that is grasped are structured through cognitive grasping that generates the dualistic, habitual, subject-object consciousness.

But, as we will see below, the path leads to an experience without grasping, the primordial experience that was present from the beginning, but which was veiled by representations that are termed “adventitious and superimposed.” These superimposed representations are not integral to the experience, they are adventitious in that they were superposed, and therefore can be removed. We will illustrate this situation later with the metaphor of unveiling an obscured landscape.

- **Cognitive grasping\* structures habitual consciousness**

From the above we can understand that what we mean by consciousness is the dualistic experience of subject-object structured by cognitive grasping. This is how in consciousness we are always conscious *of* something. Consciousness is therefore always “conscious *of*” something, conscious of sense objects in one or another of the six senses\*. In this cognitive process of grasping, cognition\* grasps the things it experiences as objects and, at the same time, situates the observer, the conscious subject that perceives them. Thus, cognitive grasping “pro-jects” to the exterior the observed objects and “intro-jects” to the interior the observing subject.

At this point we can elaborate a little more on the model of “center-periphery” that we used to describe habitual consciousness by transforming it into a three-dimensional model that becomes a sphere, or a bubble. “Me-I” usually lives in a sort of a bubble with “me” at the center and the projections-representations that constitute my “virtual world” all around. This is how a person can say that he or she “lives in a bubble” that is more or less opaque or transparent. We call this bubble, this world, “virtual” because it is not truly real, our reality is relative to our representations.

- **Running on “autopilot\*” in the “virtual world”**

At this point, it is useful to understand that our projections and representations are induced, shaped, and formatted by the information that we have recorded throughout our personal history. We have all inherited a past that has formed and modeled what we are and how we live. This past remains to this day in the form of traces and of memory, imprints inscribed in our genome, our cultural baggage, our language, our education, our personal biography, and our environment.

This information conditions us. It is a sort of “programming” of the self, its behaviors and relationships. Initially it induces a fundamental propensity to experience duality, and then, within this dualistic experience, it induces all of the relationships likely to be lived within the *subject-object* polarity of habitual consciousness. This information “in-forms” consciousness, which is to say it gives it form or predisposes it, formatting it. What I am and how I live is the result of this programming of habitual consciousness. At the superficial level, this programming of our habitual functioning can be described as our “autopilot.” In effect, in this mode of functioning, we are enchainé in a process of chain-reactions, which are in turn conditioned and conditioning the next stage in this process. This is the opposite of freedom. Autopilot is a form of predetermination, determinism. Fortunately, it is never totally complete. There always lies in the present moment, in open mindfulness, in whole presence, a possibility of intervention, a space of freedom that constitutes our free will and sense of responsibility.

We are thus “formatted” by these imprints that come from the information of our past. The imprints manifest in the form of tendencies, impulses, and projections. The grip of being subject to autopilot can be more or less strong depending on the individual and the circumstances, but it is still there. Nevertheless, and fortunately, the programming of this information does not completely cut us off from reality, it only cuts us off from the fullness of direct and immediate primal experience, prior to any representation. Primal experience\* is the place of freedom, whereas being pre-programmed with the information is that of determinism. In the end, our experience is always a mixture of determination and freedom. The map veils the terrain, more or less, the virtual world more or less covers the real, and the information that conditions action is more or less strong and decisive.

- **Information structures cognitive grasping and is also induced by grasping**

The information that programs consciousness on autopilot are the imprints left in consciousness by previous actions. The more intense a past action, the more it leaves a strong and lasting imprint in consciousness. And similarly, the more intense a present action is, the more it impresses in consciousness a strong and lasting imprint. This imprint remains there and will later induce corresponding predispositions which will manifest themselves when circumstances are favorable. This is how the potential of imprints is actualized when the right factors are brought together.

In any action, the subject-actor, the act-action, and the object of the action are interdependent. Moreover, the intensity of their existence and their relationship is proportional. The subject and the object have solidity proportional to the intensity of their relationship, and the intensity of the relationship is proportional to how deeply the information is imprinted.

So there is proportionality between:

- The solidity of the experience of the subject and the object,
- The intensity of the cognitive grasping and the intensity of the polarity between subject and object.

The intensity of the action-relationship is also proportional:

- To the information-imprints and tendencies that induced them,
- To the information-imprints that it induces and which will later arise in the form of predispositions.

This whole process may be illustrated by the metaphor of seed germination and growth: past actions are like sown seeds that remain in the form of potentialities until they meet the right circumstances of good soil, water, and heat that allow them to sprout and grow. These grains are information. In short, as the saying goes: “we harvest what we sow,” which is actually quite deep!

#### ● **The metaphor of radar reading the terrain on autopilot**

The example of autopilot\* has its limits because we are never fully conditioned. Our experience is always a mix of conditioning and freedom, representation and pristine experience. The more we lie under the influence of past impressions, the less freedom we enjoy, and conversely, the less we lie under the influence of these imprints, the more freedom we enjoy. The key point to understand is that the state of open mindfulness, the state of suspension, or the reduction of cognitive grasping, lets us disengage from the conditioned automation of our programming.

In this context we can reconsider the autopilot metaphor and complete it by saying that consciousness functions as a kind of radar that reads the terrain by interpreting it. Consciousness is like a radar system that projects a wave onto the ground and interprets the feedback in turn. The information that is received is analyzed and compared with stored data, the latent imprints related to past experiences and memories, and becomes an interpretation. This interpretation and its representations let us navigate through the representations of the terrain that have been constructed. The representations of the terrain are useful and relevant if they correspond to the terrain itself, but they are not useful if they are not accurate, which can happen if the system of interpretation is dysfunctional or has been subject to interference. In any case, the map is only a conventional representation of the reality of the terrain, and taking the map for the terrain is always an illusion of consciousness that is either useful or alienating.

These dynamics described by the example of being on “autopilot” in a more or less conditioned “virtual world” is analogous to the way habitual consciousness functions through cognitive grasping. This is the initial stage of the path.

- **The analogy of the dream state**

As we have just seen, the habitual consciousness that we experience on a daily basis rests on the illusion of subject-object separation. Subject-object, mind-experience, are not really two separate things, but a single cognitive loop within which the subject-mind is situated in relation to the experience of objects. This situation is analogous to the experience of our dreams, when our mind experiences itself as a dreamer different or separate from the dream world. This is what is called the “illusion of separation,” or duality. In this illusion, the “center” is experienced as separate from the “periphery.”

Imagine that you are in your bedroom at night under the blankets. It is a dark night and your room is in complete darkness. You sleep deeply and at some point, you start to dream. It could be any dream, but we are choosing a vivid dream (you will understand why).

Imagine then that you dream that you are on a beautiful sandy beach with palm trees. The sun is shining, and the sea is blue and calm. You are lying down, resting peacefully. Everything is going well; the situation is perfect.

This beach is actually on a tropical island, bordered by a jungle. Suddenly you hear a strange noise behind you. You turn around to see a huge crocodile coming out of the jungle. Horrified, you get up and start to move into a nearby field. As you turn to look behind you, you see that the crocodile is following you. You start running but he also starts to run. You have the thought that you should run into the water, but you realize that these crocodiles are saltwater crocodiles, and are even faster in the water than on land. You start to run as fast as you can, and the crocodile is chasing you. He is very fast, faster than you, and he catches up to you. It is terrifying. You feel him coming closer, when you look again, he is right behind you, his mouth opened wide. And finally, you hear a great “clack!” It is over, you were devoured.

In short, you had a nightmare.

We will now examine this situation and how it unfolded. We will consider the dream state in general, and then the nightmare in particular, isolating the source of the illusion and its liberation.

First, the dream in general. Notice what happens when we dream: although we are in complete darkness, we dreamed of a sunny beach. The brightness is not external, it comes from our “mind.” The first observation that we can make is that the mind is endowed with a certain clarity that is inherent to it.

Now, let's consider what happened when we started dreaming: there was the appearance of a subject, “me,” on the beach with its dreamlike body, and a dream “world,” the beach



bordered by the jungle. The first thing that might seem odd to us is that our dream mind is split into two: a part of it gave birth to the dream world, and another part of it gave birth to the self that identifies with the dream body that we have in the dream. This is how dream consciousness comes into being. This process of the birth of the dream consciousness is analogous<sup>1</sup> to the emergence of consciousness in the waking state. It is analogous to the polarization of consciousness that we have described above in the "center-periphery" model, "the projection of objects / the introjection of the subject." The birth of duality in dream consciousness is analogous to the birth of duality in waking state consciousness.

In the dream state, the clarity of the dreamer's mind is split in two. This clarity becomes on the one pole a subject endowed with a certain lucidity, a faculty of knowledge which associates with the dream body to give rise to the dream subject. And, on the other pole, it becomes objects, the dream world, endowed with a certain luminosity which is experienced in our example as the sunny beach and the whole situation outside. In sum: the clarity of the dreamlike mind has become the lucidity of the subject and luminosity of its environment. It has split into the two poles of subject-object, giving rise to duality. It should be noted that this duality is quite relative because it exists only in the dreamer's mind. We could even say that it is fictitious, illusory. Or more specifically, it is true only for the dreamer in the illusion of his or her dream.

Moreover, note that the mind is endowed with an inherent clarity that can be described as lucidity and luminosity.

Now consider the dream and its contents, the nightmare in fact. First notice that a relationship has been formed between the two poles of the dream experience, especially between "me" and "the crocodile." From the fear that comes from the crocodile as a negative object that takes us for food is born as an aversion, and the process of trying to avoid it by escaping. This process would be a healthy survival instinct if the crocodile were real, but in a dream, the best avoidance strategy is debatable (hopefully not for too long!).

Consider also the suffering caused by the nightmare. At first it is so real we wake up in a cold sweat, so to speak. But where does this suffering come from? It comes from an illusion, from the illusion of having identified with a dream body that has suffered being devoured by a dream crocodile. The illusion here is that the dreamer's projections and identifications are taken as an objective reality. Suppose that when the crocodile appeared, you recognized the illusion of the situation, namely that a dream crocodile perhaps wanted to devour your dream body. You would have seen the situation with some sense of humor. In any case, there would have been no need to panic. At worst, it would just have been a bad movie. In short, suffering and uneasiness has come from taking something to exist that in fact does not. To take as existing what does not exist

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<sup>1</sup> Note that we say "analogous" because there are of course differences that pertain to the differences in the underlying substrates of these experiences. Not understanding these differences can lead to the error of solipsism.

or, conversely, to take as non-existent what exists is what is called illusion. This is another way of understanding what we explained above: that illusion and the passions that come from it are the source of unhappiness.

This analogy of the dream is very famous and sets the stage for many different considerations. What we have just presented is sufficient to illustrate the making of habitual consciousness and its dual and conflictual working mode. An important aspect that we will not address here for reasons of brevity is to consider the set of imprints in the mind of the dreamer to understand how they shape and condition his or her dream. We could thereby understand the notion of the autopilot and the virtual world ...

### **IN THE MIDDLE: TRAVELLING ON THE PATH**

- **The practice of releasing grasping\***

We will now consider how the practice of mindfulness consists in "releasing cognitive grasping." This corresponds to the process of dis-covering and dissolving the veils that create illusions, which we will illustrate through the metaphor of a landscape emerging from a thick patch of fog (see below towards the end of the chapter). We have understood that cognitive grasping builds and solidifies duality and the veils of representations and projections, with all of the illusions and afflictions that follow. We can easily understand that, conversely, releasing grasping deconstructs and dissolves the veils gradually, thus effecting their dis-covering and dissolution. When the intensity of cognitive grasping is reduced, cognitive veils diminish and experience tends towards what is called naked experience, or "pristine experience."

Note that the dissolution of the veils can be partial or complete: it is proportional to the depth and stability of the process of releasing grasping.

- **Open mindfulness as a fundamental practice of releasing grasping**

The practice of opening consciousness that is the practice of open presence, is the main method. How does a practice of opening consciousness such as open presence cause the release of grasping? Let us first understand that the opening of the field of consciousness is also an opening of the senses. In particular, it is important to understand the link between openness and relaxation: by releasing sensory tension, the sense fields open. Releasing grasping, sensory relaxation, relaxation of consciousness, and openness all occur simultaneously. We will elaborate on this aspect from a practical point of view in the fourth step of the training.

Now, referring to the model of habitual consciousness having the center-periphery structure, with the observer in the center and the things observed at the periphery, in between these two lies the relationship associated with cognitive grasping.

By extrapolating from this model, we may infer that as consciousness opens, it naturally becomes less polarized : the center-periphery relationship is less polarized and less intense than in the context of a closed, polarized relationship. The central subject becomes less dense, and its objects on the periphery become less solid. If we go further, the completely open consciousness could represent itself as a structure without center or periphery. The ultimate experience of open presence, ultimate openness, the complete release of all grasping, is "without center or periphery," it is a non-dualistic space, as we shall see.

- **The benefits of releasing grasping**

From what we have just presented, we can deduce that:

The full potential of experience is revealed through the more or less complete dissolution of the veils of illusory projections. The practice of mindfulness, in its process of releasing grasping, makes our projections more and more transparent. We are less and less taken by the illusion that the map is reality, and we thus perceive the terrain more and more directly, immediately.

The direct, pristine, and immediate reality presents itself as we release grasping, and at the same time we reconnect more and more with pristine experience, naked reality. Our projections and their conditioning become less prominent, more tenuous, and we live closer to fundamental reality.

The release of grasping brings into focus the present moment, the here and now. It draws out mental elaborations, reminiscences of the past, or anticipations of the future. It gives life to the present, original reality, rather than leaving us to permanently remain in imaginary representations, memories coming from past imprints, or projections of a future that we program through our imagination of it.

Through releasing grasping, we realize the instantaneous state of spontaneous and harmonious well-being. As the process of cognitive grasping decreases to the state of non-grasping, we gradually open to the flavor and happiness of the present moment, to the instantaneous state of spontaneous and harmonious well-being.

The release of grasping opens a space of freedom in which our autopilot and its conditioning is reduced or suspended. This space of freedom is the ground of our free will and our sense of responsibility. In the state of full presence, suspended, we do not have to follow whatever tendencies manifest.

In short, the practice of open presence facilitates the release of cognitive grasping that is cultivated until the point of ultimate non-grasping. This path of open presence is that of liberation from cognitive grasping, the path of embodiment, of happiness and freedom.

## AT THE END: THE ULTIMATE FRUIT OF PRACTICE

The path of non-grasping starts from habitual dual consciousness, and leads us to pristine experience: non-dual, immediate and natural. This journey from habitual consciousness to pristine experience sums up the whole path, from duality to non-duality. Ultimate pristine experience is bare, without any veil or conceptual layers. It is not fabricated and subsists in and of itself, before the mind manufactures anything around it, before any conception veils it.

- **An experience of embodying reality**

What we are calling “embodiment\*” is an experience that consists in “becoming one” with the present moment. Embodiment is experienced when, in forgetting ourselves in the process of releasing grasping, we become absorbed in the experience of the present moment, when we are *one* with the naked and bare sensation of the present instant. To fully embody our experience is to *incorporate* the experience of the present moment.

This is not a matter of “I” being present to some “thing” that is the present moment, but rather that the “self-observer” is suspended in non-grasping and thus incorporates, embodies the moment present, forgetting itself in it. Embodiment is realized when the observer is absorbed into the present moment. This experience is the “presence of absence.\*” The present moment is then experienced “in itself,” without separation between the observer and the observed, being one with the experience “one, not two”. This is what is meant by the non-dual embodiment of the experience of reality.

- **Examples of embodiment**

The quality of presence of a great musician or a great dancer are examples of embodiment, at least in a partial and temporary way. An excellent musician is one with the music and an excellent dancer is one with the dance. They do not consciously play music or dance self-consciously. They are the music, they are the dance. We could say that they have forgotten themselves in the moment and the music simply “plays” or the dance “dances”. They must, of course, have long practiced their art before reaching this level of virtuosity, but in achieving excellence, they “embody” the moment, and it plays or it dances perfectly, without self-consciousness playing or dancing. We could also describe the same phenomenon in the perfection of all types of learning.

The expressions embodiment, naked experience, and natural pristine experience all point to the same experience. This is naked and pristine experience in the sense that it is before all representation. The embodiment of the present moment is free of grasping the past, the future or even the present!

- **The ultimate experience of “nondual” mindfulness**

In the process of releasing grasping, the observing subject is incorporated into the objective experience, becoming one with it, which is what we have called embodiment, the heart of mindfulness practice. "Embodiment" or "becoming one with" is used to express the experience of whole presence, empathy, communion, or total union, in which there is not a "me-here" separated from an "other-there," a "me" separated from an "other." This absence of subject-object separation is what is called non-dual experience, transcending the subject-object duality. In it resides the perfection of understanding, the immediate intelligence of reality and the perfection of altruism, transcending illusions and selfishness.

## **The liberating experience**

The liberating experience is a nondual embodiment and natural state.

- **Nondual embodiment**

In a general way, the experience of mindfulness consists in embodying the experience of the moment in all circumstances. In this "incorporation," it is not a question of identifying ourselves with the present moment, but of living it in its fullness, without separation, being one with it.

Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, to live fully and wholly the present moment by being "one, not two" is the best way to live in harmony and respond suitably to all situations.

Once we have discovered the experience of deep mindful presence, the practice is to revert to it each and every time we have been distracted. This natural sensation of recollection is called "the reminder" that gently lets us integrate mindfulness into all of the circumstances of everyday life. This practice requires a rigorous and consistent discipline which grows in the fertile ground of inspiration and motivation<sup>2</sup>.

- **A natural state**

It is very important to understand that mindfulness is a natural experience, a fundamental human experience. It is the present moment, as it is, before the conceptual mind appropriates it by representing it to itself. It is the present before its "re-presentation."

The training does not involve trying to artificially produce the qualities of attention, openness and benevolent empathic sensitivity that arise in open mindfulness. These qualities exist spontaneously in the natural state of presence. It is simply that in our habitual state of consciousness, they are covered by the conceptual, discursive mind. The emergence or revelation of these natural qualities is a journey of dis-covering: it is the removal of the veils that reveals the natural qualities that are fundamentally present. The following classic metaphor illustrates how

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<sup>2</sup> See: "Motivation, the Source of the Training," Chapter 2, "The Nine Remedies and Six Obstacles."

these qualities are immanently present but remain unperceived until the mental veils are transcended.

## **The metaphor of the foggy landscape**

Imagine that we find ourselves in the middle of a natural landscape plunged in a thick fog with heavy clouds that mask the contours and form of the topography. The clouded scenery is dark, closed, and impedes any visibility. None of the qualities of its beauty show through. Then a light wind rises. It gradually disperses the fog and clouds. Little by little, visibility improves, the environment clears and the horizon widens. We begin to see a glimpse of the landscape features. At this point, we might just see a fleeting break in the clouds, a momentary brightening during which the cloudy veil opens before closing again. As the fog slowly dissipates, light and warmth permeate the ground. Finally, when clouds and fog have faded, the landscape is revealed, clear and open, bathed in the soft warmth of the sun. We can then admire the splendor: the clarity and brilliance of its forms, its openness and all of its beautiful and good natural qualities.

The qualities of this landscape were present from the beginning, but we did not see them because they were covered and hidden by the fog. The qualities of the experience of mindfulness are similar to those of this landscape, as they are naturally present since the beginning, but usually masked or veiled. Thus, the natural experience of the state of whole presence is usually masked by the representations or projections produced by the conceptual mind.

This notion is subtle, so initially we should recall that training in open mindfulness consists in uncovering veils rather than "manufacturing" the particular qualities of the state of presence. And when we understand that these veils are made of projections, tensions, or mental fixations, it becomes more and more obvious that the practice centers on relaxation, releasing ourselves, and openness.

## **The importance of training**

However natural it may be, the experience of open mindfulness nevertheless needs to be cultivated by practice, through training. As we have said, this training is not about fabricating an experience, it is a dissolution in which the veil covering direct experience is gradually dissolved.

In general, we are too busy to live in the present moment, and are preoccupied by dwelling on the past or anticipating the future. The training of mindfulness is to return to the instantaneous present, whenever the conceptual mind has distracted us. Direct and immediate sensory experience is always there, though habitually obscured by the cognitive grasping of the conceptual mind. The fabrications of discursive thought continually separate us from the immediacy of instantaneous presence. Training is therefore about letting these fabrications

dissolve, without feeding them, which is what we do when we follow them. The training involves not investing in our thoughts by neither following them, nor seeking to avoid them.

In the example of the enshrouded landscape, mindfulness practice is the breath that bit by bit disperses the veils of the fog and reveals the beauty of the landscape. Training is thus a process of discovering and developing the qualities of our natural state, of our fundamental nature which is endowed with the qualities of our basic goodness, our fundamental health.

Indeed, in consideration of the crucial importance of training, we have designed, developed, and refined over several years a training protocol in open mindfulness, to encourage and facilitate the practice for all, adapted to contemporary life, and supported by a learning ecosystem (see Chapter 4).

## **Integration and reminders**

The veils we have just spoken about begin with the conceptual representations that constitute the illusions from which arise the passions. As we have seen, illusions and passions come from the impressions that shape mental habits. The practice of mindfulness consists in dissolving these habits. This is not easy, because as everyone knows, it is not simple to break a bad habit!

Allowing our habitual tendencies to dissolve is the heart of the training and is carried out through the practice of reminders, which regularly bring us back to mindfulness in which the self-sustaining cycle of habits and their imprints is discharged. Little by little, if we persevere, reminders become more and more natural, and non-grasping replaces cognitive grasping. When the state of non-grasping becomes stable, the discharge of mental habits is continuous and they eventually exhaust themselves.

Reminders therefore consist in cultivating brief and frequent moments of mindfulness. Once we have discovered the state of mindfulness, we practice returning to it as often as possible<sup>3</sup>. By cultivating the state of presence in this way, we integrate it, and it becomes more and more continuous and stable by integrating itself into our life. Stability is the goal of practice.

## **Motivation, the source of the training**

Training and discipline become possible when we are motivated. Motivation arises through understanding the benefits of practice, its relevance, and its usefulness. In the introduction of the handbook, we presented the benefits of mindfulness. Understanding these benefits is a source of motivation to begin practicing. By understanding that the practice of mindfulness is a source of well-being, happiness, and many scientifically confirmed qualities, the aspiration to

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2, “The Practice of Mindfulness in Action.” This practice is the heart of the training, we will develop it in the eight step of the protocol as the training in daily life.

practice arises spontaneously. As we all have a natural aspiration for well-being and happiness, this natural motivation is universal.

This is not a belief but an experience. If we try the experience and it turns out not to be conclusive, it would of course be unnecessary to continue. But the experience is at least worth trying, and so it is important to start it in the first place.

To recall the benefits of the practice, a simple acronym or mnemonic to remember the qualities of open mindfulness is the "3 H's\*." The three H's together are the simultaneity of Harmony, Health, and Happiness. We may say that, from a medical perspective, health is the state of harmony within our physical organism, and that this health is a natural state of well-being or happiness. Thus, very simply: when we are in good health "all is well," this is a state of well-being, happiness.

We can therefore simply say that harmony, health, and well-being are three perspectives of the same state to which we all aspire. If we understand that the practice of mindfulness is, in many ways, the source of inner health and the 3 H's, we will have enthusiasm and energy to practice it!

We will now start with the general practice instructions. These are useful and important in all phases of training. We must regularly return to these essential instructions until they are well integrated. We will also recall them at the beginning of each stage of the training.

\*

\* \*



## Chapter 2

### Mindfulness Practice in General

E3

#### DISCOVERING THE STATE OF MINDFULNESS

The heart of the path is discovering the experience of mindfulness with its qualities of attention, openness and benevolence, and then returning to this natural state again and again, gradually integrating it into our daily lives. We are not producing a particular state through the force of concentration or mental effort, but rather we are discovering the attention that naturally clarifies when the mind rests, open and free from tension.

In short, the path of mindfulness comprises two stages:

1. **Discovering the state of mindfulness:** a few basic meditation exercises will let you discover the experience of mindfulness in the present moment.
2. **Practice and training:** the practice consists of cultivating the state of mindfulness by coming back to it regularly, first training in sitting sessions and then in all circumstances of life.

These two steps will be developed in this chapter.

#### Three meditation exercises for discovering the three dimensions of mindfulness

In the introduction, *Mindfulness in Ten Points* described mindfulness as the state of attentive presence in the present moment. This practice may take different forms and follow different stages of progression. Nevertheless, the most common starts with attention to the breath.

We will discover this attentive presence to the breath in the following short meditation.

P2

#### Discovering attentive presence: five-minute meditation in nine points

##### Description

You will discover attentive presence to the breath in a short meditation in nine points. The aim here is to experience the continuous sensation of the breath, returning to that state of attention to the breath whenever you are distracted by thoughts or other sensations.

##### Practice

1 - Choose a **quiet place**, silent and pleasant where you do not risk being disturbed, and silence your telephone.

.....

2 – Wear **loose clothes**, leaving the body free, or if necessary, loosen your clothing.

.....

3 – **Sit comfortably** on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion, with your back straight, preferably without leaning backward. This comfortable sitting posture can be practiced according to the seven-point posture illustrated in Step 1 of Chapter 3.

.....

4 – Enter into **the sensation of your body**, perceiving it in its totality, and bring balance to your posture by releasing tension.

.....

5 – Enter into **the sensation of your breath**, paying particular attention to the nostrils and the passing of breath.

.....

6 – Note that closing the eyes can facilitate connecting with interior sensations. Nevertheless, you can practice keeping your **eyes open in the panoramic gaze** as we did during “the basic meditation.”

.....

7 – Feel your breath. Remain in the sensation of the coming and going of the air passing through the nostrils. **Rest in the continuous sensation of the breath**, relaxing with the exhalation and letting yourself go in this simple experience.

.....

8 – When you begin to follow your thoughts or are caught by other sensations: **return to the sensation of breathing each time you are distracted**, maintaining the continuity of attention.

.....

9 – Stay in the attentive experience of the continuity of the breath for the duration of the exercise.

.....

## P3

### Discovering open presence: five-minute meditation in eight points

#### Description

The following is a short meditation in eight points to discover open presence. The goal is to experience the sensation of continuous openness, returning to this state of openness whenever you are distracted by other thoughts or sensations.

#### Practice

The first four points are the same as those presented in the previous practice:

1 – Choose a **quiet place**, silent and pleasant where you do not risk being disturbed, and silence your telephone.

.....

2 – Wear **loose clothes**, leaving the body free, or if necessary, loosen your clothing.

.....

3 – **Sit comfortably** on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion, with your back straight, preferably without leaning backward. This comfortable sitting posture can be practiced according to the seven-point posture illustrated in Step 1 of Chapter 3.

.....

4 – Enter into **the sensation of your body**, perceiving it in its totality, and bring balance to your posture by releasing tension.

.....

5 – Open presence is discovered through the opening and relaxation of the eyes. The eyes are open in a normal way, with **the broad field of vision of the panoramic gaze**. Just let your gaze relax into the space in front of you, without any particular focus.

**Optional:** The first time, to help you find this relaxed state of the eyes and the gaze, you can place your hands on both sides of your head, at the height of the ears, and turn them toward each other. You will find that you will see them both move, not clearly, but more in an unfocused way. Then remain in the panoramic gaze (see figure 2 below), a relaxed gaze that is wide and open, more or less 180 degrees.

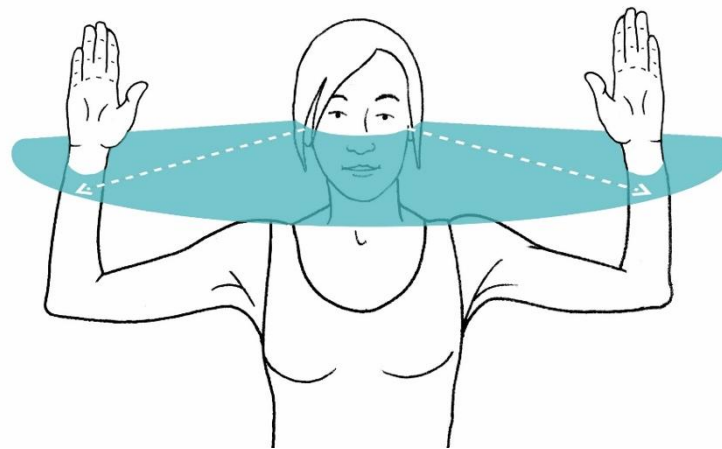


FIGURE 2: THE PANORAMIC GAZE

.....

6 – **Stay relaxed in the panoramic gaze**, letting go into the global experience of openness.

.....

7 – Whenever you get distracted from panoramic openness, **simply come back and relax into openness**, establishing in this way a certain continuity of the experience of openness.

.....

8 – **Stay relaxed in the gaze and the experience of panoramic openness** as long as the exercise lasts.

.....

## P4

### Discovering empathetic and kind presence: five-minute meditation in eleven points

#### Description

Now we will discover an empathic and kind presence with a short meditation in eleven points. The goal is continuously to experience the feeling of benevolent empathy, returning to this kind empathy whenever you are distracted by thoughts or other sensations.

#### Practice

We begin by taking up the first six points of the practice of open presence: the relaxation into panoramic vision is particularly important, and then we will address the specific points of empathetic and kind presence.

1 – Choose **a quiet place**, silent and pleasant where you do not risk being disturbed, and silence your telephone.

.....

2 – Wear **loose clothes**, leaving the body free, or if necessary, loosen your clothing.

.....

3 – **Sit comfortably** on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion, with your back straight, preferably without leaning backward. This comfortable sitting posture can be practiced according to the seven-point posture illustrated in Step 1 of Chapter 3.

.....

4 – Enter into **the sensation of your body**, perceiving it in its totality, and bring balance to your posture by releasing tension.

.....

5 – Open presence is discovered through the opening and relaxation of the eyes. The eyes are open in a normal way, with **the broad field of vision of the panoramic gaze**. Just let your gaze relax into the space in front of you, without any particular focus.

.....

6 – **Stay relaxed in the panoramic gaze**, letting go into the global experience of openness. Observe how it brings a global sense of sensorial opening, and remain absorbed in this.

.....

7 – **Welcome the sensations of the present moment** without reservation or judgment, letting them enter you through the complete opening of the senses, receptive and sensitive.

.....

8 – Simply open to what is present, here and now, relaxing and letting yourself go in **an openly welcoming and kind state**. Notice how, by opening yourself in this way, you naturally participate in the reality of what surrounds you, how you come to embody it. Also notice the special quality of empathy, that is to say the participation or sensitive communion with what is present in this state of openness. This is the state of empathic and kind presence.

.....

9 – **Optional:** You can do this exercise using a **pleasant support for contemplation** such as a flower, a landscape, or the presence of a familiar person.

.....

10 – **Whenever you are distracted from the state of empathetic presence, simply return to it**, establishing in this way a certain continuity of the experience of empathic presence, participation, and union.

.....

11 – **Stay in the experience of empathic** presence for as long as the exercise lasts.

.....

## E4

### The three dimensions of mindfulness\*

At this stage, the three experiences you have just had allow you to begin to feel and understand the three dimensions of mindfulness:

- **The first dimension of mindfulness is attentive presence.**

You tasted this experience in the first meditation with attention to the continuous sensation of the breath. It has the quality of attention and clarity of presence: vivid, clear, lucid, attentive, and alert.

- **The second dimension of mindfulness is open presence.**

You discovered the second dimension of mindfulness in the openness of panoramic vision. This second dimension is the quality of openness and relaxed presence: in an open state, relaxed, spacious, vast, and released.

- **The third dimension of mindfulness is empathic presence\*, sensitive, kind, and in its deepest expression, altruistic compassion\*.**

You discovered this third dimension with the third meditation, in the joining of openness and attention. This third dimension is a sensitive, tender, empathic and kind presence. This

sensitivity is a state of receptive participation and availability, a state of communion, of union. Profound empathy is a receptivity that develops through availability and kindness, which is the nature of compassion and altruism.

This third dimension derives from the first two. When we are both open and attentive to the other, we empathize with him or her. In participating in this empathy, a sensitive communion is nurtured that is the source of kindness and non-egoistic goodness. This goodness does not see the other as different from ourselves. In this, we embody the other, and take him or her as ourselves. This communion is the heart of the benevolent empathy also called compassion.

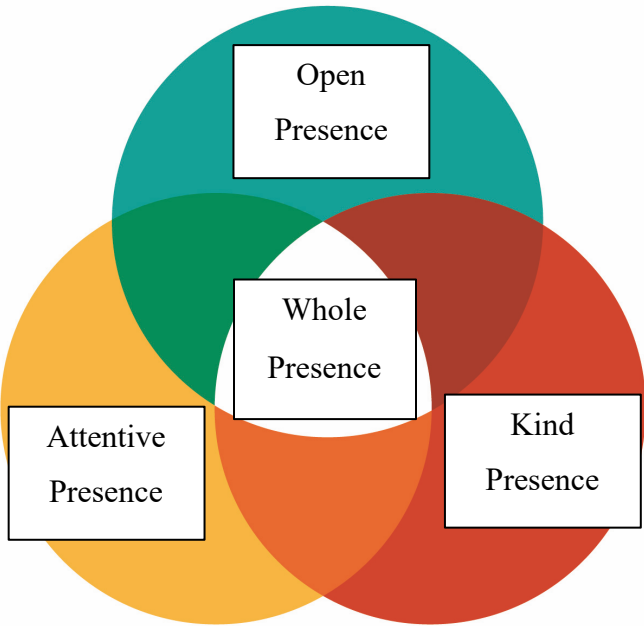


FIGURE 3: THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF MINDFULNESS A.O.K.

E5

- Some synonyms of the three dimensions of mindfulness in terms of experience

In the table below, we have indicated some qualities of the three dimensions of mindfulness to help us get a feel for and understand them.

Attentive Presence	Open Presence	Kind Presence
<p>Clear</p> <p>Lucid</p> <p>Vivid</p> <p>Alert</p>	<p>Panoramic</p> <p>Broad</p> <p>Released</p> <p>Unobstructed</p> <p>Relaxed</p> <p>Spacious</p>	<p>Empathetic</p> <p>Compassionate</p> <p>Altruistic</p> <p>Sensitive</p> <p>Receptive / Available</p>

- **The simultaneity of the three dimensions of mindfulness**

The three dimensions of mindfulness have been presented to you separately and they are generally cultivated successively, but they actually converge and complement one another in the same simultaneous experience.

When deep mindful presence—or some of its aspects—have been discovered, the practice of meditation—the training—consists in cultivating and integrating the state of attentive, open and kind presence into all of the situations of our life, at every moment.

In the eight steps of the training protocol that follow, you will see how to train successively in these three qualities and to integrate them into your daily life.

## E6

### THE TRAINING\*: CULTIVATING THE STATE OF WHOLE PRESENCE

The training in mindfulness includes eight steps that you will see in detail, but the practices of each of the eight steps have two invariable components:

- Mindfulness training in a sitting session
- Mindfulness training in action

A daily sitting session is the basis for progressively integrating mindfulness into the circumstances of daily life.

Quality and consistency are more important than quantity. It is helpful to be guided by following a daily practice program. It is also advisable to attend mindfulness retreat seminars, and to be guided by an experienced facilitator, or to be assisted by a tutor.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4: The Open Mindfulness Learning Ecosystem.

## **The two components of the training: in session and in action**

- **The sitting session of mindfulness practice**

The daily practice session itself has a typical structure of three phases:

- 1- The introduction** always consists in placing ourselves in the state of presence, in confidence and serenity, with a positive and altruistic motivation.
- 2- The main practice** is the training itself. The main practice includes static and movement exercises, and varies according to the steps of the training.
- 3- The conclusion** always consists in ending with a kind and altruistic dedication.

Now let's go through these three phases in detail.

### **The introduction**

#### **"Entering into presence with a kind motivation"**

We always begin a sitting session in a protected environment, entering into presence and practicing with inspiration, confidence, and a positive and altruistic motivation.

Here confidence is not so much a confidence in something or even in ourselves as individuals, it is rather a state of fearlessness in which we feel safe, we let ourselves go and relax. The first condition for starting a session is to feel free from invasion, at ease, and relaxed.

Outwardly, we seat ourselves in a safe place in an environment where you will not be disturbed. The feeling of security and tranquility is very important because it lets us rest and relax. Be sure to isolate yourself, so as not to be disturbed, and turn off the phone...

Inwardly, there is also inner security: the deep feeling that here and now, we are well, just as we are, and that the present situation is fine, just as it is. We place ourselves, dispose ourselves in such a state of confidence in what is, as it is. We settle down without fear, relaxing in the present moment.

We thus start the session in confidence and security, inside and outside, and develop an intention, a positive motivation for practice, with kindness and joy, keeping in mind all the benefits and qualities of practice. We aspire in a kind and altruistic way to practice this session for the good and happiness of all: for ourselves, for others, and for the whole world.

### **The main practice**

The main body of the practice session is to carry out the specific exercises of the relevant step. A practice plan is presented in the appendix, and Step Seven deals in detail with a model plan for a practice session in nine points.



## The conclusion

### "A kind and altruistic dedication"

Since mindfulness is a practice of opening our mind and heart, it is always good to conclude a session with a kind and altruistic attitude that dedicates the benefits of the practice that we have just completed for the well being and happiness of all living beings.

At the end of the session, we return to our daily activities, pursuing our training in mindfulness in action with the various forms of gentle reminders.

- **The practice of mindfulness in action**

The practice of mindfulness in action consists in integrating the experience of mindfulness into everyday life through different types of reminders, continually returning to the experience. Mindfulness in action consists in cultivating the state of presence through these reminders.

## E7

### The method of training in mindfulness

- **The tools of the training\*: presence and reminders**

Practicing mindfulness consists firstly in training attention through attentive presence. This involves discovering the experience of attention, and then cultivating it and returning to it regularly. This return to attention comes via reminders. Reminders are signals that prompt us to return to attentive presence each time that we have become distracted.

Attention is first cultivated by remaining present in relation to a support, by letting our attention rest on a support. This support could be the sensation of the breath or another sensorial, visual, or auditory perception. Initially, our presence to this support is easily lost, as our attention is unstable. We must learn through experience to notice distraction and return to the support of the attention whenever we have become distracted. Applying gentle reminders in this way, we learn to rest attentively without distraction. Gradually this focused attention on a support will become a quality of attentive presence in the present moment.

The practice of reminding ourselves comes from the ability to discern the state in which we are attentive or not, and returning to attentive presence each time that it is lost. The immediate recognition of our state of being and returning to attention when we are distracted operate together and complement each other, together they constitute what we are calling reminders.

Each of the eight steps proposes situations for cultivating reminders in action to continue training at every moment of life. By means of the reminders proposed in each step, we integrate, bit by bit, the state of mindfulness into all situations. The seventh and eight steps provide greater detail about integrating mindfulness into daily life.

### **The first tool: attention or attentive presence**

Attention or attentive presence is a clear, lucid, vivid, precise, and stable experience of what is observed. It should be cultivated with the least possible amount of tension. Regular reminders bring us back to attention, thus establishing stability and continuity.

As we will see in the various steps of the training, attentive presence deepens through relaxation and openness. The state of attention gradually becomes a state of vigilance free of any tension whatsoever. The important point to emphasize here is that the practice does not evolve in the direction of more and more intense concentration, but to the contrary, towards progressively decreasing tension. At the beginning, a certain degree of tension is inevitable and necessary, but as the practice evolves, there is less and less tension. Finally, attentive presence becomes a deep mindful presence: a natural opening, clear, lucid, and relaxed.

While training, we learn to monitor and adjust the degree of tension in the mind according to the present situation, without it being too tense or relaxed. And little by little, we learn to stay relaxed in a state of lucid clarity. As we will see later, too much tension can lead to agitation, and too much relaxation to torpor or drowsiness.

### **The story of Shrona "Adjusting the tension of attention"**

The famous story of Shrona, who was a vina player (a sort of Indian guitar) and disciple of the Buddha, teaches us how to adjust the "tension of attention." One day, while Shrona was practicing mindfulness, he asked the Buddha:

"Master, how should I place my mind with proper attention?"

And the Buddha answered him:

"Shrona, you, who are a great vina player, how do you tune your instrument so that it sounds good?"

Shrona responded:

"Master, the strings must have the proper tension, neither too much nor too little."

"Well, likewise," said the Buddha, "your mind must have the proper tension, neither too tense nor too relaxed."

In this equilibrium of the right amount of tension, training in attentive presence consists in combining relaxation with the sharpness of clear lucidity. The sharpness of the clarity demands a certain tension, a sustained presence, and the relaxation allows one to remain stable in this clarity. During the training, the practice will progress by decreasing tension with fewer and fewer interventions, tending towards a state of natural rest.

**Attention** is the first tool of the training and the basis of practice. It makes it possible to develop attentive presence to a single thing, or to the simple clarity of the present moment.

## **The second tool: reminders**

Reminders prompt us to return to attention, to attentive presence, each time we have become distracted.

Firstly, reminders ask us to monitor our present state, to recognize the state we are in—attentive or not. If we lose contact with the support of attention, we return to it. This returning of attention to the support gradually establishes continuity in the practice. Recognition teaches us to discern the distractions that distance us from attentive presence and then we can return to it without following what distracts us. We thus cultivate reminders in a regular, repetitive, systematic way, more and more frequently, until attentive presence becomes regular and stable.

We will learn to develop as many circumstances of reminders as possible until gradually a spontaneous faculty of reminders appears.

Different types of reminders are cultivated to establish the continuity of attentive presence, and in a general way, of whatever particular quality of mindfulness we practice. Through training and by means of reminders, mindfulness becomes more and more stable and natural.

The three main types of reminders are

- Reminders on the spot
- Brief pause reminders
- Reminders in particular situations

### **Reminders on the spot**

These are brief moments of mindfulness, punctual reminders like “flashes” of presence that for an instant, “unhook” the mind by plunging it into the present moment. The aim is not to try to artificially extend these short moments, which would become counterproductive. Rather, we cultivate frequent, repeated reminders, on the spot. We thereby return to the simplicity of natural presence by “unhooking” or “suspending” ourselves. It is not a question of straining to try artificially to prolong a state of artificial presence. Instead, we discover that it is possible to stay suspended for a short time in a state of simple, non-conceptual presence, and to then continue with what we were doing.

The on-the-spot reminders have the main role, while the other forms are there to prepare and help us. These reminders on the spot are the most important but the most difficult. They only develop gradually through the force of habit.

### **The brief pause reminders**

These are micro-sessions of practice that can be done at any time of the day. We learn to punctuate the day with them. We are offering short periods of mindful rest (a few breaths, a few

minutes). These can last around three minutes and we can do twenty brief pauses per day, or more! We have already practiced “the basic meditation,” which is a great way to take a pause. In the second step of the training we will see different ways of practicing them in more detail.

### **Reminders in particular situations**

In order to cultivate reminders, we choose particular situations in our daily life that will become circumstances of reminders. Each time we encounter one of these situations, we come into presence. Little by little, the training develops by using more and more particular situations and therefore more and more prompts for reminders (like the ring of the phone, a red light, a meeting, the beginning of an activity, an exchange of words, or an interview, etc.) Little by little, these situations automatically become instants of mindfulness.

The three types of reminders and their particularities will be described further in each step. A list of typical situations is proposed in each step, and they are contained in the practice notebook.

#### **IN REVIEW**

**The tools of the training are presence itself and the reminders of presence.**

**We cultivate presence through reminders, returning to the experience whenever we are distracted.**

- **Observation, experience reports, and adjustments**

We train based on observation. By observing our experience, we can progressively adjust our practice by applying the necessary remedies. To develop observation during the training, we are regularly invited to make “experience reports.” These reports let us sharpen our attention and find the right words to describe the experiences we have, which lets us better understand and communicate them.

Deepening our observation and understanding will, in turn, help us deepen our experience. Understanding and experience help one another in a dynamic that lets us understand the experience and experience what has been understood.

## E8

### The Obstacles of the Training and Their Remedies

While training in mindfulness using both tools of **presence** and **reminders**, we encounter various obstacles for which there are appropriate remedies. Both obstacles and remedies are discovered as the journey progresses.

- **The six obstacles to the practice of mindfulness**

#### 1 - Laziness

This is the state in which the practitioner does not even begin to practice. It is clear that without training, there is no progress.

#### 2 - Forgetfulness

If we have overcome the obstacle of laziness, forgetting the instructions of the practice is the second obstacle to overcome. If we are able to devote time to training, but we are unable to be attentive, we will be invaded by distractions, we will not be able to make use of reminders, and we will remain far from the state of mindfulness.

#### 3 - Agitation

Agitation is what distracts us from the different forms of presence. Mental activity captures our attention, taking us into all kinds of thoughts and dreams, and this agitation disrupts the stability of presence in general and attentive presence in particular. In a state of strong agitation, our attention is possessed by thoughts and we become so invested in them that we completely forget the support of attention and any reminders.

#### 4 - Torpor

Torpor is the opposite of agitation; it happens when we are calm and tranquil. The sharp clarity of attention is degraded into a kind of paralysis of the body and numbness of consciousness and we end up drowning in drowsiness. Torpor has more or less subtle forms, ranging from a slight obscuration of attention to the opacity of falling asleep.

#### 5 – The lack of intervention

This fifth obstacle is present when, under the influence of agitation or torpor, we do not intervene to remedy it and do not practice reminding ourselves to return to the state of attention.

#### 6 – Excessive intervention

If intervention is necessary to correct agitation or torpor, it must nevertheless be practiced with gentleness and moderation. The absence of intervention is an obstacle, but the excess of intervention can become another. Too much intervention becomes a source of agitation that prevents us from resting in natural relaxation.

- **The nine remedies to the six obstacles**

## **1- The four remedies to laziness**

### **Motivation**

The first remedy for laziness is the motivation to train. It results from understanding the usefulness and the benefits of training, and it grows as we experience the benefits it generates. Motivation then becomes enthusiastic energy<sup>2</sup>.

### **Effort\***

The second remedy for laziness is enthusiastic effort that comes from motivation. It consists of being diligent, regular and assiduous in the practice. Effort is natural when practice is not perceived as a constraint but is rather approached with enthusiasm and pleasure. As with all learning, practice requires perseverance and diligence. The ability to make these necessary efforts comes from motivation.

### **Confidence**

The third remedy for laziness is confidence that grows within us as the benefits of the practice are discovered. Confidence is born of experience and not of any belief. In other words, the direct experience of training lets us perceive its benefits and encourages us to continue, step by step, strengthening our confidence. Perceiving the benefits of one step enhances the motivation and confidence to take the next step.

### **Good meditative experiences**

The fourth remedy for laziness lies in good meditative experiences: as the practice gradually develops, it can reveal deep and intense experiences that illustrate the qualities and powers of the practice, and these are a source of inspiration and encouragement to continue training diligently.

The application of these four remedies triggers a cycle of virtue: motivation, born from understanding the usefulness of practice generates effort and the desire to practice; effort

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1, "Motivation, source of the training"

ensures the continuity of the training and stimulates confidence through the discovery of the benefits that it generates. Confidence and enthusiastic effort make it possible to progress thanks to the good experiences that they generate, which, in turn, fuel and amplify motivation, effort and confidence, and so on...

## **2 – The remedy for forgetfulness is reminders**

Forgetting the instructions, forgetting the support of attention, losing attentive presence to the support of meditation, or losing instantaneous presence are corrected by reminder, which is the second tool of the training. The regular and systematic return to mindfulness, in all circumstances, is the heart of the training.

## **3 – The remedy for agitation is relaxation**

When we start training in mindfulness, the first obstacle we usually face is mental agitation. When we are in agitation, we relax by letting go of what is disturbing us, letting the mind relax into openness.

Concentration, or a tight focus, cannot find a state of rest, and may even have the opposite effect of maintaining agitation. Relaxation allows the mind to remain peaceful, resting in its natural state. The mind naturally comes to rest, just as the waves that disturb a body of water subside and disappear on their own.

Agitation disappears if it is not maintained by the wind of our mental activity. It's just a matter of staying calm and relaxed. We learn to "let it fall," by unhooking the mind, remaining "suspended" in some way.

In order to relax, we should rest comfortably with the feeling of our body, feeling the weight of the body sitting on the cushion, breathing and being completely present to the breath. It is about feeling rather than thinking: staying calm, relaxed, our senses completely open. It can also be helpful to turn our gaze down and relax our physical posture in the sensation of heaviness, the weight of the body being firmly grounded. This relaxation soothes agitation. The dissolution of tension through exhaling is another remedy for agitation, which will be developed during the third step.

## **4 – The remedy for torpor is stimulation**

When agitation has subsided, the second obstacle usually encountered is torpor. The remedy for torpor is to stimulate the clarity of the mind by opening our experience into a space of clarity. In moments of torpor, it is good to stimulate our mind, and to this end, it is advisable to keep our eyes open, directed slightly upwards in space. A specific remedy is to imagine and feel a bright and intense clarity filling the entire space, as if transported into the open space of a high mountain, and we find ourselves bathed by the intense sunlight reflecting on the snow.

When there is torpor, it is also good to adopt a more tonified physical posture. Another specific remedy is to breathe deeply for a few cycles of breath to get oxygenated and energized.

In case of acute torpor, we can even get up and continue practicing for some time standing. Stretching exercises and physical movements can also be useful for stimulating ourselves and waking up when needed.

## **5 - The remedy for the lack of intervention is appropriate intervention**

In order to be able to intervene correctly, one must first be able to recognize the presence of the obstacle—agitation or torpor—and apply the remedy with the appropriate intensity, adjusted according to the circumstances.

A tense presence generates lucidity but also tends to stimulate agitation. Conversely, a very relaxed presence is favorable to rest but can lead to torpor and lack of lucidity. Also, it is necessary to evaluate and observe the quality of the present experience in order to intervene with the correct measure, finding the right balance between tension and relaxation, intervention and non-intervention. It is about finding the right balance in which we are at once calm and lucid, with enough tone but without being tense, as we have seen with Shrona's story.

## **6 – The remedy for excessive intervention is non-intervention**

Once the proper remedy is applied, when there is no agitation or torpor, the training consists in simply remaining calm, without intervention, without doing anything. As we said before, the practice evolves towards rest in a state of natural equilibrium. So, it is important to know how to gradually reduce our interventions to allow this state of balance to emerge naturally. At some point, continuing to intervene is an obstacle. In short, ultimately it is necessary to remain quiet, simply remaining in a state of equanimous rest, clear and open, relaxed in the openness of the senses.

### **IN REVIEW**

**There are six obstacles to the training: laziness, forgetfulness, agitation, torpor, lack of intervention, and excessive intervention.**

**There are nine remedies for these six obstacles: motivation, effort, confidence, good experiences, reminders, relaxation, stimulation, appropriate intervention, and non-intervention.**

**The first four remedies concern laziness, the others correspond to each of the remaining obstacles.**

**These general instructions apply to all eight steps of the protocol.**





\*  
\*   \*

## Chapter 3

### The Eight Steps of the Open Mindfulness Training

We are now entering the heart of the mindfulness training, which unfolds over eight progressive steps. During the following sessions, we will discover the experience of open mindfulness and integrate this experience into our daily lives.

#### ○ The eight steps

The discovery and integration of open mindfulness takes place stage by stage:

- **Step 1:** Attentive presence to the body
- **Step 2:** Attentive presence to the breath
- **Step 3:** Open presence to our surroundings
- **Step 4:** Open and relaxed presence
- **Step 5:** Integrating thoughts and emotions in open mindfulness
- **Step 6:** Altruistic presence in relationships and communication
- **Step 7:** Mindfulness everyday
- **Step 8:** Mindfulness throughout life

The practice is progressive: it starts with attentive presence, then open presence, and finally benevolent presence.

Now, let us discover the path of the Open Mindfulness training.

#### ○ Each of the eight steps is organized in the same way in four parts:

##### 1 – Recalling the essential tools and points of guidance

The heart of the practice and tools are summed up by recalling presence and the points of guidance in applying the appropriate remedies through observation and adjustments. These remain throughout the training but their specific applications vary according to the steps.

##### 2 – The training for the specific step

Each step presents explanations that aid understanding, and the practices help to discover and integrate the corresponding experience. We recommend that you follow the training program presented at the end of each step to perform the practice in the best possible conditions and integrate it into your daily routine.

**3 – Advice and summary** specific to each step, as well as the characteristic **attitude(s)** of the particular step.

**4 – A model practice sequence specific to each step**

At the end of the presentation of each step, an example or model practice sequence is provided, both for sitting practice and in action. You can practice it daily, adapting its duration according to your availability and your schedule.

**A practice notebook and presentations of all of the practices are available in audio on the site**

**[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)**

## **STEP ONE**

### **ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BODY**

During this first step of training, we begin by coming into contact with our body, awakening to our bodily sensations. We generally tend to ignore our body, to be more or less cut off from it, having only a vague mental representation of it. Most often, we think about our body rather than feeling it. In this first stage, we will learn not to think of our body but simply to feel it. We will train ourselves to get to know and "feel" our body in its fullness and discover, little by little, how it reflects our inner well-being.

If we pay attention, we will see that our body can be a kind of dashboard, or barometer, enabling us to discern our state of being, our mental and emotional states. Attentive observation of the body will gradually help us feel our emotions and improve our understanding of ourselves. Being fully present to the sensations of our body will gradually help us grow and develop what we call emotional intelligence.

## RECALL OF THE POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS

### The tools of mindfulness

We will begin to use the two tools of mindfulness: attentive presence and reminders that were presented in Chapter 2 "The Methods of Training in Mindfulness." The practice consists in becoming familiar with these two tools that will accompany us throughout the training. The only variation will be the quality of the presence: first attentive, then open and attentive, and finally open, attentive, and benevolent.

- **Attentive presence.** In the first step, attention\* consists in being present, attentive to the sensations of the body, being in attentive presence to the body.
- **Reminders.** In the first stage, reminders consist in returning to the attentive presence of the body, the full sensation of the body, whenever we have been distracted, whenever we have lost the bodily sensation of attentive presence of the body. The reminders rely on vigilance, which lets us discern whether we are in attentive presence to the body or distracted from it.

### Points of guidance: observation and report of experience (feedback)

Observation and feedback are very important. Observation refers firstly to vigilance regarding our state of mind and body during the sessions. At the end of a session, noting our reactions and responses to our experience makes us aware of what has happened and teaches us to put it into words. We can thereby adjust our practice and seek advice where necessary. The reports of experiences are done briefly, after each meditation, orally if we are in the context of a mindfulness retreat-seminar, or by regularly writing in the training notebook. This sharpens our discernment and helps develop the capacity and vocabulary necessary to express our experience, which helps us to understand and deepen it. In these reports of experience, we pay special attention as to whether we observed or felt something particular during the session, as well as the quality of attention and reminders that we experienced.

Reports of experience are also made on the experience of the day as a whole. We notice how much attention we paid to our body in our activities—more or less than usual? These observations will be reported, very simply and succinctly, on our training notebook. You will also find at the end of the handbook various tools that help us report them. They can be used as is, or can inspire the creation of your own experience reports in a personal journal.

**The first step comprises eight presentations and exercises:**

1. Learning to sense your body (P 5)
2. Stimulating bodily sensations (P 6)
3. Sitting in simple presence (P 7)
4. Seated stretches (P 8)
5. The seven points of the sitting posture (P 9)
6. Deepening the experience of the body: the *body scan* (P 10)
7. Listening to your body (E 9)
8. The interdependence of body-breath-mind (E 10)

## P5

### 1. Learning to sense the body

#### Description

Sensing your body well takes a bit of learning, which is very simple and fundamental, and lies at the heart of mindfulness training.

To begin, we let friendship grow with our body by considering it with kindness, gentleness, and tenderness. Our body is precious, our dearest good of all. Let's start by appreciating it as it is, without judgment, and relaxing in the warmth of this appreciation.

#### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- In a **calm place**, with **comfortable clothes**, **sit comfortably** on a chair or cross-legged.  
.....
- Begin by **contacting your** body by visiting it: enter into it, feel all of its parts, feel it as it is, live the reality of the moment through the body.  
.....
- **Sense your body relaxing** by immersing yourself in its sensations, absorbing yourself in them.  
.....
- **Feel the texture of your body**, its fleshiness, feel that it breathes, that it is alive, as it is, without bias or judgement.  
.....
- **Become one with this physical experience.**  
.....
- **Live the experience of the body in all of its aspects:** both in its fullness and in the tangible sensation of each of its parts.

- .....
- Learn to **be the sensation**, let yourself completely go, just as it is.

- .....
- Stay as such for the time of the session: the essential point is to **feel your body rather than think about it**.
- .....

## P6

### 2. Stimulating bodily sensations

#### Description

The stretching, twisting, and bouncing exercises revitalize and activate the body and its sensations. They make it easier to observe and sense the body and are therefore a good preparation.

The self-massages have a similar function, they particularly help to untie and release the knots, contortions and tensions of the body. These exercises can be used as regular preliminary gestures for sitting.

It is important to always respect our limits while doing physical practices, without forcing. Particularly in the context of training in mindfulness, it is not about making a physical performance but simply feeling the body and being present to it.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

#### Stretching

- Stand well balanced with your feet apart.
- Stretch in whatever way you can.
- Stretch the limbs, the trunk, the head smoothly and deeply.
- Search for stretches that feel good.
- Stretch freely as you learn to feel and untie areas of tension.
- Enjoy stretching yourself and feeling your body.
- Stretch, untie, loosen, relax, and release tension.
- Relax with the breath.
- Enjoy the experience of well-being that you feel after you stretch.
- Stay awhile, still and relaxed, in the global feeling of your body...

#### Bouncing

- Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, arms hanging, knees slightly bent, mouth and lips relaxed.

- Start bouncing with all the joints loose and free, without taking the soles of the feet off the floor.
- Gradually increase the range of motion of the knees and ankles.
- Then find a state of stillness in the standing position, relaxed in presence, in the whole sensation of your body.

### **Jumping**

- The starting position is the same as with bouncing.
- Jump with the feet off the floor.
- Gradually increase the amplitude of the jumps.
- Bend your knees well when you begin the jumps.
- You can join the sound of OH or AH with the exhalation, vocalizing with greater or lesser intensity.

### **Self-massages**

In the four steps of this exercise described below, do each successive step with the following in mind:

- Pass over the entire body, beginning with the head, face, and neck.
- Continue through the outside of the limbs before doing the inside (from top to bottom, left arm then right, left leg then right).
- Pass over the torso, the buttocks.
- Between each step take a short break in the full sensation of the body.

### **The four steps of self-massage:**

1. Friction: rub and massage the surface of the skin.
2. Kneading: massaging deeply, knead the muscles and tissues.
3. Vibration: with clenched fists, softly knock and vibrate the skeleton.
4. Slapping: with the flat of the hand, slap the body and circulate blood and lymph through the whole body.

This exercise is tonifying and dynamic, especially steps 3 and 4, so you should do it with care, without hurting yourself and avoiding fragile areas of the body.





FIGURE 4: SELF-MASSAGES

P7

### 3. Sitting in simple presence

#### Description

Sitting in simple presence, there is nothing special to do except to be attentive to the state of your body, with gentleness and care.

#### Exercise (Duration: 5-10 min)

- In a good sitting posture, make yourself comfortable.
- .....
- Close your eyes and be attentive to your body.
- .....
- Simply feel your body. Observe what is happening.
- .....
- How do you feel? Can you feel your body? Is it in a state of ease or discomfort?
- .....
- Enter into your body, feeling its different parts.
- .....
- Each time that you are distracted, return to the sensations of your body.
- .....
- Watch, feel...
- .....

- Finally, rest with the simple presence of the sensation of the body as a whole.

.....

## P8

### 4. Seated stretches

#### Description

The various stretching exercises, whether standing, sitting, or lying, aim at untying and loosening the body, undoing the tension and blockages that may have formed. Stretching is a pleasant exercise practiced in a spirit of appreciation and enjoyment of your body. Stretching activates the sensation of the body and puts it in a state of comfort and well-being.

When we stretch, we do so while sensing the body, listening to it, without forcing it. The practice is done with gentleness and kindness to the body. You may find your body a bit "rusty", if so, put some humor into the exercises and approach the body with softness, without judging yourself.

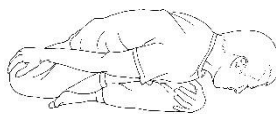
It is important to stretch naturally, as you feel, according to your constitution and age.

Below is a series of eight stretches that bring together the main movements that are useful. They are very helpful and are often practiced as preliminary gestures to a session of sitting practice.

#### The sequence of eight seated stretches (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

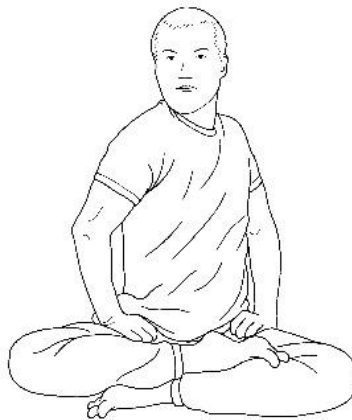
1. Stretching the back
2. Twisting the trunk
3. Lateral stretches of the rib cage
4. Stretching forward and backward
5. Rotating the shoulders
6. Bending, rotating, and shaking the head
7. Rocking and rotating the hips and pelvis
8. Contracting and rotating the thighs and legs

#### 1- Stretching the back



- The seated posture, right leg forward, place the hands on the knees.
- Lower your chest to the right knee as if you were going to kiss it. The left arm remains stretched, as straight as possible.
- Breathe naturally or exhale as you descend.
- Slowly bring the chest to the starting position.
- Make the same movement going towards the left knee.
- Repeat the sequence left-right three times.
- Then, you can descend to the middle one or three times.
- Finally, return to a relaxed sitting posture

## **2- Twisting the trunk**



- Seated with one leg in front of the other, the two fists are placed where thighs meet the hips. Push your fists down and stretch your chest and shoulders up. The head remains straight.
- Then slowly twist the chest to the right, then to the left. The shoulders are projected forward and backward. The breathing is natural.
- Finally relax your arms and return to a relaxed sitting posture.

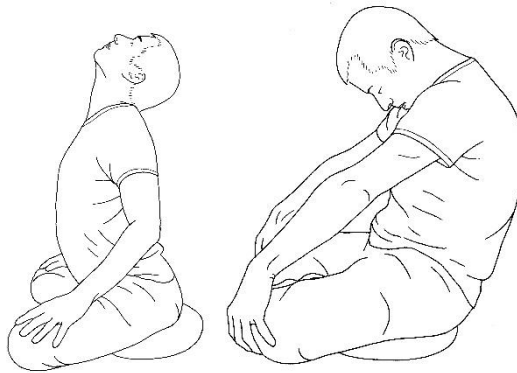
## **3- Lateral stretches of the rib cage**



- Leaning on the top of your right thigh with your right fist, open and bend your rib cage to the left, releasing the weight of your head.
- Return to the starting position and relax.
- Repeat to the right.
- Repeat the whole exercise two more times on each side.
- Finally, return to a relaxed sitting posture.

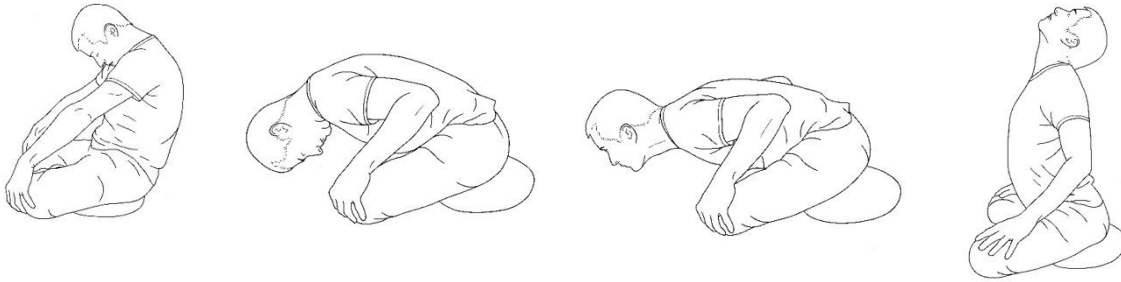
#### **4- Stretching forward and backward**

##### **a- Bend the chest and arch the back**



- With the hands on the hips, pin the shoulders back as if to make the shoulder blades meet, stretching the elbows back to completely open the chest.
- Then bend forward and tuck the shoulders by making the back as round as possible, stretching the back and shoulders.

### **b- The wave**



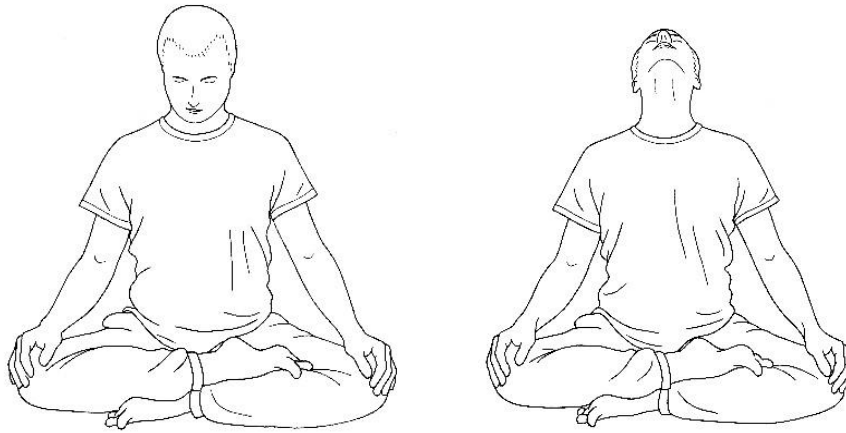
- Round the back by pushing the shoulders forward.
- Lower the head while deeply leaning forward, rounding and opening the back.
- Then straighten the head and arch the back as if you were passing under a wire.
- Come back up, keeping the back straight.
- Return to the starting position.
- Repeat three times.

### **5. Rotating the shoulders**



- Hands on the thighs, start rotating the shoulders.
- Start with the right, three times forward and then backward.
- Then the left, three times forward and then backward.
- Then the two simultaneously, three times forward, then backward.
- Then the two simultaneously in opposite directions.
- Feel the sliding movement of the shoulder blades, letting you do this exercise fluidly and gently while relaxing the trapezius muscles.
- Finally, return to a relaxed sitting posture.

## 6. Bending, rotating, and shaking the head



- Bend your head forward, straighten it, and then let it fall back, stretching the neck without forcing.
- When the head is leaning back, the throat stretches; pay attention to the stretch in the throat.

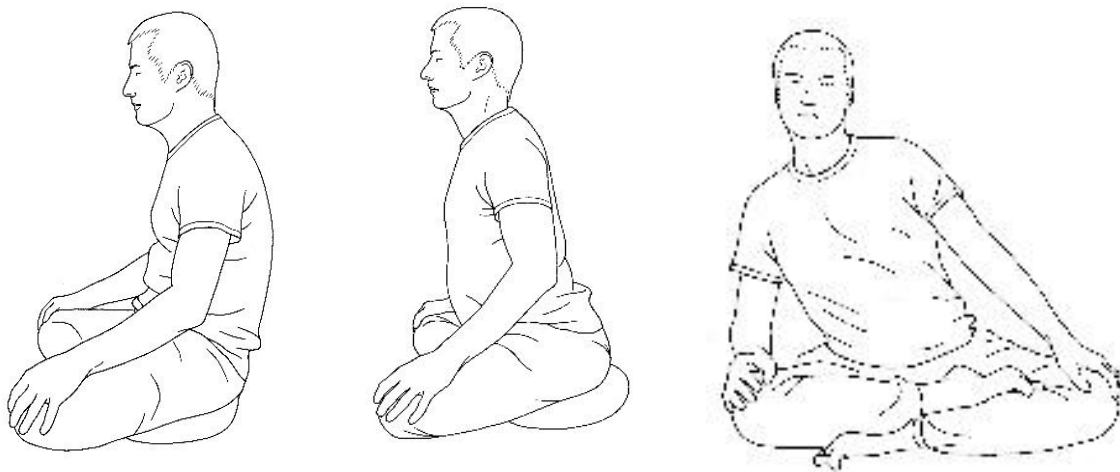


- Leaning the head to the side, slowly bring your right ear to your right shoulder, then your left ear to your left shoulder, breathing naturally.
- Open your neck while bending to the right and left.

- Then turn your head to the left, then to the right, as if to look backward. Do not force, stay in the sweet spot.
- Slowly rotate the head and neck in one direction and then the other, as if the head was spinning freely.
- Finish by swinging your head quickly from right to left without forcing.
- Finally, remain in a relaxed sitting posture.

NB: Head rotation exercises are not recommended if you have cervical problems.

### **7. Rocking and rotating the hips and pelvis**



- Swivel the pelvis forwards and backwards in alternation.
- Then rotate the pelvis in one direction and then the other.
- Finally, remain in a relaxed sitting posture.

### **8. Contracting and rotating the thighs and legs**

- Finally, in a relaxed sitting posture, do some contractions of the thighs and legs and some movements to swivel the legs. These contractions and swiveling movements align your muscles and tendons and promote a comfortable leg posture over time.

As a visual demonstration is always better than a lengthy description, all of the physical practices are illustrated with photos and videos you can download on [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net). You can easily locate them using the numbers given in the circular exercise icons in the margin.

## 5. The seven-point sitting posture

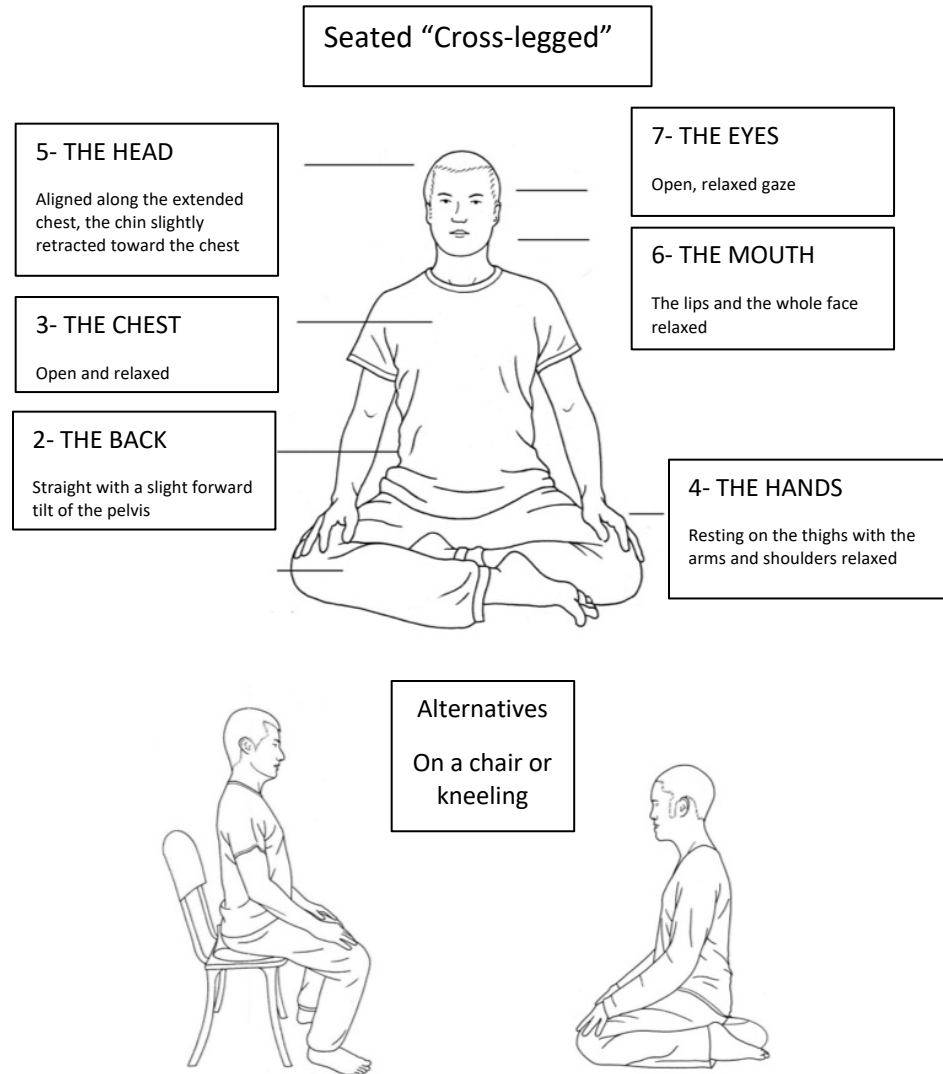
Sitting is an important part of the training. In the three short discovery practices given in Chapter 2, we saw how to begin a practice session: settling calmly, put yourself at ease, loosening the clothes if necessary, sitting comfortably on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion, perceiving the whole body, and balancing the posture by releasing tensions.

Now we will consider the different elements of the sitting posture in more detail. These let us find a comfortable and relaxed position through the balance of the body, adapted to our unique physical form. This posture includes **seven points**:

1. Sitting on a cushion, with the **legs** crossed, or on a chair with the feet flat on the floor.
2. **The back** is straight without being stretched, with the pelvis slightly tilted forward.
3. **The shoulders** are open, unobstructed and relaxed.
4. **The hands** rest on the thighs, with the arms relaxed.
5. **The head is straight**, with the chin slightly tucked in.
6. The **mouth**, the tongue and whole of the **face** are relaxed, the tip of the tongue touches the upper palate behind the teeth.
7. Generally speaking, it is best to keep your eyes open, your gaze relaxed, without focusing on anything in particular. However, for certain practices oriented towards interior sensations, like attentive presence to the body or breath, it may be easier to begin by closing your eyes initially.

FIGURE 5: ILLUSTRATION OF THE 7-POINT POSTURE





### USING A CUSHION

Whether sitting on the floor or in a chair, the use of a thick cushion supports the positioning of the pelvis and back.

## 6. Deepening the experience of the body: the "body scan"

**P10**

The *body scan*\* is a practice of being present and attentive to all the parts of your body in succession. You train to feel them fully, one after the other, in simple sensation, without

judgment or comment. Practicing the body scan regularly will help to deepen and cultivate the experience of the body and its sensations, and a sense of overall embodiment.

As a preliminary to the body scan, you should perform some stretching exercises in an informal way to release tensions in the body, or to practice a sequence of self-massages to revitalize and activate the sensation of the body.

For beginners, listen to the voice of a qualified person, live or recorded (you can download a recording on the site [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)). When you are familiar with the exercises, you will recall the instructions on your own, and eventually, be guided intuitively by simple sensation.

The body scan can be practiced in any position: lying, sitting or even standing.

## The extended body scan

### Description

Start training in the body scan by lying down, which promotes relaxation. You can practice comfortably on a yoga mat, on your bed, or on a folded blanket. In any case, find a position that will be comfortable over time. You can put your hands on the side of the body, palms facing the ceiling.

Make yourself comfortable and connect with the exercise by simply relaxing in presence to sensation.

As you relax, you may tend to doze off. This is normal and if so, you can keep your eyes open in the panoramic gaze. You can also wakefully doze off, as if you are going to sleep while staying awake.

### Practice (Duration: 25 - 30 min)

- Lie comfortably on your back, move a little to find a comfortable position, feel the contact with the ground. Feel your body lying there, feel it breathe. Observe, recognize what is going on there.

.....

- Focus on the different parts of your body, starting with your **right hand**. You can more precisely contact the feeling of your index finger by somehow visiting it from the inside. You may feel heat, heaviness, tingling. Simply observe.... Attentive, you can also feel the middle finger ... the ring finger ... the little finger ... the thumb ... then the palm ... all the hand ... and stay in this feeling for a few moments.... Feel your **wrist** ... your **forearm** ... your **entire right arm** .... Watch the sensations that come.

.....

- Continue with the **left hand**: feel its contact with the ground, the **fingers** in detail: the index ... the middle finger ... the ring finger ... the little finger ... the thumb ... all the fingers of your hand .... The palm of your hand ... the **wrist** ... the **forearm** ... **your whole left arm** in contact with the ground, without tension, released.

.....

- At this point you can feel both arms, both hands, and your awareness will be left within these experiences, inside these sensations.

.....

- Now we'll direct our attention to the sensations of the **right foot**. Feel the **toes**, very slowly, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; as if you were sending out your attention from the inside. Then feel the sole of your right foot, the whole foot, your **heel** and its contact with the ground, the ankle, and then the **calf**... the **knee**... the **thigh**... and the **whole right leg**.

.....

- Then move on to the **left foot**. Direct your attention to your left foot, to all the toes, the sole, the **heel**, the **ankle**, the **calf**, the **knee**, the **thigh**, your **entire left leg**.

.....

- Feel both your legs and your arms, which are naturally heavy, naturally warm, a sensation of soft warmth, a gentle radiance, and remain in this simple sensation for some time.

.....

- Then direct your attention to your belly and **pelvis**, the entire **lower part of the abdomen**, your **buttocks** in contact with the ground, your **hips** and **waist**. Breathe gently and feel the slight movement of your stomach and diaphragm; let yourself go in this experience.

.....

- Feel your torso, chest, ribcage, and your back, the contact of your back with the ground, your whole **trunk** and your whole **abdomen**. Let yourself rest in this experience, the simple sensation of the body; you are this sensation, remain within it.

.....

- Feel **your shoulders, neck, head**, face, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, ears. Your attention visits all the parts of your head, and you remain within that sensation.

.....

- After you have visited and felt all the parts of your body, remain with **the overall sensation of your body**. Stay with a loosely relaxed attention and a relaxed overall experience. The breath breathes, very gently. Let yourself go in this sensation and this breath as it naturally comes, your attention resting openly, with the sensation of space all around. Rest in silence for a few minutes in this presence of the body, of breath, and of open space by surrendering to it and letting it be as it is.

.....

- While remaining in the overall feeling of the body, breathe a little deeper to reactivate yourself. You can open your eyes again, feeling the energy in your body, its soft breathing and the clear space all around. The breath comes gently, as if the whole body was breathing too. Remaining relaxed, letting it all be as it is and as it comes.

.....

- Staying with this body sensation, gently move to the sitting position, taking your time and finding the smoothest way to transition. Stay continually in this feeling of the breathing body. Enjoy this state of an inner smile, the smile of our body of sweetness, appreciation, well-being.

.....

- After a few moments, you can get up quietly.

Review of the progression of the body scan:

1. Right **hand, fingers**, palm, top of hand, **wrist, forearm, elbow, arm**.
2. Left hand, fingers, palm, top of hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, arm.
3. Right **foot, toes**, sole of foot, top of foot, **heel, ankle, calf, knee, thigh**.
4. Left foot, toes, sole of foot, top of foot, heel, ankle, calf, knee, thigh.
5. **Pelvis, belly, lower back, buttocks, torso, ribcage, upper back**.
6. **Shoulders, neck**, back of neck, **head**, face, eyes, nose, nostrils, lips, inside the mouth.
7. Feel the **whole body** in its entirety.

## Seated body scan

### Description

The seated body scan can be performed in a detailed or concise manner. If doing an extended practice, it is good to activate the sensations of the body by first doing the sequence of “seated stretches.” In the concise, or very concise version, the seated body scan will simply be a process of bringing to mind the points of the sitting posture and adjusting the body with balance and equilibrium. We will then review the 7 points of posture and observe the body, feeling its balance and letting it relax into a naturally poised and comfortable posture.

**Exercise: Seated body scan, detailed** (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- Slowly place yourself in a comfortable seated position. Remain in the sensation of the body, comfortable and settled. Observe and feel into the different parts of your body corresponding to the 7 points of posture.

.....

- Feel the **legs**, maybe contracting them slightly to feel them more clearly and enabling the muscles and tendons to fall into place. Feel the contact of your seat with the cushion and position yourself with stability.

.....

- Slightly tilt the pelvis forward. Feel the straightness of your **back**, and open the **chest**. With your **arms** relaxed, rest the **hands** on your lap. Relax the **shoulders**, and with your **head** straight, slightly tuck your chin. With the **mouth** and the jaws relaxed, the **eyes** are relaxed.

.....

- Feel the posture of the body just as it is, feel its poise and rest in this experience, simply.

.....

- Feel the body breathing, noticing the soft and slow movements of the abdomen and the natural flow of air through the nostrils.

.....

- Remain silently in this way for some time with the sensation of the body and breath totally simple, as it comes.

.....

- Observe the nature of the experience, how you feel, what you experience. Observe and notice, very simply.

## The body scan in bed

**Description** (Duration: according to circumstances)

The body scan is also useful to practice in bed, before falling asleep or when waking up. It is similar to the elongated body scan, except that it is simpler and lasts an indeterminate time: it is an excellent introduction to falling asleep in the overall sensation of the body.

- Lie down comfortably in your bed on your back with your head slightly elevated.

.....

- Be mindful of your body and breath before you fall asleep, lightly going over the experience of the different parts of your body, relaxed in the sensation of weight, as if your body were sinking into the cozy bed.

.....

- Breathe with the sensation of your left and right arms, your right and left leg, your two arms and two legs. Feel the abdomen, the torso, the shoulders, the head.

.....

- Stay in the gentle sensation of your breathing body, the coming and going of the breath.

.....

- Let yourself go, dissolve yourself, fall asleep in full presence of the body and breath....

## E9

### 7. Listening to your body

Remain attentive to your body, with kindness, experiencing very simple sensations as a kind of inner smile, sweet and benevolent. In this manner, we gradually learn to feel, observe, and know it better and better.

More specifically, we learn to spot the signs and indications that our body gives us, such as its tensions or contortions... Our body speaks to us, its sensations communicate valuable information; the body tells us about ourselves, so we should learn to listen.

We all have a personal story written in our body. This body inscription is a memory, an imprint, the crystallization of lived situations that are felt with more or less consciousness, are more or less happy or traumatic, more or less recent. We welcome all of these sensations related to our close or distant history with kindness.

We thus gradually discover our body and its sensations. We do not try to change the sensations that appear, nor try to fabricate something. We simply welcome and experience all the sensations that arise, letting ourselves go into them. If the sensation is pleasant, we welcome it and let it be as it is; if the sensation is painful, we welcome it likewise, letting it be, as it is.

It is important to note that fighting an uncomfortable sensation or pain does not make it disappear. On the contrary, stiffening against pain or fighting against it tends to amplify it. So, we do not reject or repress any sensation. If pain manifests itself, we let it be. We let ourselves go into it, letting go, while continuing to breathe naturally.

We relax in the texture of the sensation, whatever it is, and we let its energy radiate and diffuse. By welcoming and thus experiencing the sensation in relaxation, the painful or unpleasant quality of the sensation naturally tends to discharge and dissolve.

We learn to observe completely and "live" our body and all our sensations. These sensations are a physical and emotional dashboard, and develop a form of body intelligence that informs us about our inner well-being.

## E10

## 8. The interdependence of body-breath-mind

By practicing attending to the body, we discover the relationships that exist between the body, the breath\* (with which we will practice in the second step), and the mind.

The breath has an animating, regulating and balancing function between body and mind. We will see in step two that the breath occupies an intermediate position between the body and the mind, participating in both. The breath acts on the body and the mind just as the body and mind act on the breath. Soothing and stabilizing the breath relaxes the body and calms the mind, just as calming the mind and relaxing the body brings ease to the breath. This intermediary function of breath, between the body and mind, is at the center of the different yogic and meditative traditions of both East and West.

The state of the breath, of our respiration, is a major element of the physical dashboard and the development of emotional intelligence.

### ○ Attitudes, advice and summary of the first step

As we go through the different steps, different "characteristic attitudes" of mindfulness will be highlighted. There are 13 attitudes or states of mind that we will discover as we go. They complement each other and are characteristic of each successive step. They are finally brought together in the eighth step in the "poem of mindfulness," which illustrates the connections between them and facilitates recalling them.

These attitudes are ways of practicing and living in open mindfulness. They guide us in the practice, and in integration with daily life.

We will see, step by step, the attitudes that correspond to each step.

#### **The characteristic attitudes of the first step**

- 1- Beginner's mind
- 2- Naked sensation or feeling with "complete simplicity"

#### **First attitude: beginner's mind**

Beginner's mind is characterized by:

- Availability and receptivity without preconception

- Simplicity, stripping away concepts, freshness
- The absence of intellectual complication

We begin by training with a beginner's mind, which is to approach situations as they are, without pre-existing representations. We approach the practice simply, without preconceived judgments, in a kind of simple and initial wonder, without mental complication, in a state of open availability. In the mind of the beginner, experience is approached in a fresh way, with receptivity devoid of bias or prejudice. This beginner's simplicity is very important to be able to discover and understand through experience, to make our own discoveries through personal, direct experience. The beginner's mind involves an approach of direct observation, an experiment without pre-existing representations of interpretation.

The opposite of the beginner's state of mind is that of the expert, or specialist, who knows everything, who has ideas about everything, who has intellectualized everything and understood it all. The expert has adopted so many concepts, he is no longer really available to simple and direct experience.

### **The second attitude: naked sensation \***

The beginner's mind is associated with simple sensation, naked experience. It is a matter of feeling with "complete simplicity," without mental elaboration.

"Naked" here has the sense of stripped bare, without concept, free of conceptualization. Nakedness and simplicity are two ways of saying that the sensation is totally simple, free of judgment and interpretation. Rather than thinking about it, it is about feeling directly and simply.

### **Advice on the first step**

The main advice for this first step is to train in simply feeling the body and using reminders to return to this simple sensation.

### **Summary of the first step**

The first step, "attentive presence to the body," introduces the experience of the simple sensation of the body, both local and global. This sensation is experienced through the body scan and then the sitting posture, balanced and relaxed.



We discover our body and observe its sensations, letting us see the interdependence of the body, breath, and mind. We can then start to feel the connections running between the sensations of the body and the emotions we feel day to day.

## ❖ **A model practice sequence for the first step**

- **Sitting practice: attentive presence to the body (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days per week. Note that the introduction to the session and the conclusion are always the same.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice") **E6**

### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (25-35')**

1. Stimulating physical sensation (bouncing or self-massages) – **P 6 (3')**
2. Seated stretches– **P 8 (3')**
3. The seven-point sitting posture – **P 9 (1')**
4. Learning to “feel the body” – **P 5 (3')**
5. Deepening the experience of the body: the extended body scan– **P 10 (20')**
6. Simple seated presence – **P 7 (5')**

### **CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**NB:** For a 30' practice, it is fine to omit the extended body scan in the main practice.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

- **Reminders: meditation in action, week 1, “Attentive presence to the body”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible:

#### **ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminders of body sensation

#### **BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three-minute body scan at any time of the day.

## **PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

### Ongoing

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep.

### In particular

- Mindfully brushing your teeth

Do not forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website

[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

## **STEP TWO**

### **ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BREATH**

As the experiences and discoveries pertaining to each step build on top of each other, it is recommended to fully assimilate each step before starting the next one.

In the first step, we learned to feel our body rather than thinking about it. We also saw how to use attention and reminders as training tools, and we saw the importance of the sitting posture. These elements provide the groundwork for the second stage, "attentive presence to the breath."

The breath, or respiration, is the preferred support for maintaining attention and coming into contact with the present moment, to "touch" the sensation of the present moment and thus cultivate attentive presence. This support is always with us.

The explanation of the second step, like that of all the steps, has three parts:

- Points of guidance and tools
- Explanations and practices for the step
- Attitudes, advice, and summary

#### **POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS**

##### **The tools of the second step**

The two tools of mindfulness are attention and reminders. Attention applies to the attentive presence of the breath and gentle internal reminders tell us to return to awareness each time we become distracted.

##### **The points of guidance of the second step**

Remember the points of guidance, the act of observation that lets us 1) apply remedies, and 2) make observations and give feedback. We will now use these in the context of feeling our breath.

##### **The nine explanations and practices of the second step:**

1. A preliminary practice: three slow and deep breaths (P 11)
2. Attentive presence the breath (P12)
3. Abdominal breathing (P 13)

4. The sensation of our breath through our nostrils (P 14)
5. Complete breathing (P 15)
6. The continuous sensation of the breath (P 16)
7. A short pause of attentive presence for 21 cycles of breath (P 17)
8. The sensation of the “energy body” (P 18)
9. The breath: between body and mind (E 11)

## P11

### 1. A preliminary practice: three slow and deep breaths

#### Description

It is recommended at the beginning of each session to practice three slow and deep breaths. These breaths help us to relax, revitalize ourselves, and enter into contact with the sensation of our breath. The three breaths let us settle and establish good conditions for beginning a practice session. We can do this simple exercise to relax and enter into the present moment, anytime and anywhere.

#### Practice (Duration: 2 min)

- For these three breaths, inhale and exhale through the nose, with strength but without straining.  
.....
- Inhale slowly, filling the lungs, and exhale gently and completely to expel any air that remains. In exhaling, relax, letting go as in a sigh of relief .  
.....
- Take three deep breaths, and at the end of the third exhalation, remain a few moments at rest, leaving the breath in its natural state.  
.....

## P12

### 2. Attentive presence to the breath

#### Description

Attentive presence to the breath is the foundation for practicing attentive presence. The sensation of the breath is a bodily sensation that we discover and refine more and more throughout the training.

#### Practice (the duration can vary according to circumstances)

- Start by focusing your attention on the respiration; breathe freely, simply being present to the sensation of the breath and its movement without trying to modify it in any way. It is just

a matter of feeling that “it breathes” by itself, and to continuously remain in the simplicity of this sensation.

.....

- Feel the back and forth movement of the breath and let it come and go naturally with an attitude of “naked sensation” and “non-judgement.” Feel the inhalation, feel the exhalation, continuously, without interruption.

.....

- On the inbreath, feel the breath come, and inversely, on the outbreath, feel it go. The inbreath begins from the bottom up, filling first the abdomen and then the chest, and the outbreath goes from top to bottom, the chest emptying first, then the abdomen.

.....

- On the outbreath, let yourself go, as in a sigh, it is a moment of relaxation and surrender.

.....

- Gently welcome the feeling of the breath, in a kind of caring inner smile. Do not try to intentionally change the respiration, the breath breathes on its own, naturally.

.....

- It is possible that, unintentionally, the mere fact that you focus on the breath slightly changes it. It's normal. Let go and breathe naturally.

.....

- By continuing to train, you become accustomed to this state of relaxation. The body learns to recognize this state and remembers it.

.....

- Remain that way, in the continuous presence of the feeling of breath, relaxed, letting be, as it is.

.....

### 3. Abdominal breathing

**P13**

#### Description

After remaining for some time in the continuous sensation of breath of the previous exercise, we will now place our attention on the abdominal region.

This is a simple practice that, performed regularly, helps us to settle and focus.

#### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- First, focus on the abdominal area, feeling your belly gently inflating and deflating. This focus is nothing extraordinary, it is done simply to feel the slight movement of the belly that characterizes the abdominal breathing.

.....

- Whether lying down or seated, you can put your hand on the abdomen to make it easier to perceive the movement, a slight ebb and flow, regular and peaceful.

.....

- At first, you can breathe a little deeper, which helps you to sense the coming and going of the breath, but then it is important that you feel the natural movement of abdominal breathing.

.....

- Remain like that, present and fully attentive to this feeling that lives within you and is the breath of life.

.....

## P14

### 4. The sensation of our breath through the nostrils

#### Description

This practice develops further the simple attentive presence to our breath. It brings our attention to the nostrils and the inside of our nose which become a specific support of attention.

#### Practice (the duration can vary according to circumstances)

- Feel the air coming in and out through your nostrils. Feel whether it's hot, cold, humid, associated with a smell, or nothing in particular.

.....

- Simply perceive the sensation of breath, soft and steady, the fact that "it breathes," quietly.

.....

- Feel the continuous sensation of air in contact with your nostrils. The contact is subtle, and your ability to perceive it will grow little by little...

.....

- Stay in this attentive presence to the sensation of the breath, making it the only object of your attention.

.....

- Be the sensation of the breath, let yourself go in it, become one with the experience of breath.

.....

- Return to the feeling of breath in the nostrils every time you are distracted.

.....

- Continue in this way without distraction for as long as the practice lasts.

.....

The practices that follow, complete breathing and the continuous sensation of breath, will help us to perceive better the breathing in the body and feel it more completely in its continuous movement.

## 5. Complete breathing

### Description

Naturally, we wish to breathe well. Complete breathing helps us breathe fully in a relaxed way. Complete breathing breaks down into three levels: abdominal, thoracic and clavicular.

It can be practiced in all positions but, for reasons of ease we will practice sitting or lying, with legs extended or folded. You can assist yourself by putting your hands on each of the three areas of breathing in succession. The presence of the hands helps us to perceive the small movements of the breath. The exercise consists in breathing completely while remaining fully attentive to the sensation of breathing.

### Practice (Duration: 5 min)

- Sitting or lying down, start by settling yourself in the simple presence of the coming and going of the breath. Let your breath breathe naturally on its own, without interfering with it.

.....

- Breathe deeply and notice that the inbreath normally begins from the bottom up, that it begins at the level of the abdomen with the diaphragm, slightly expanding the belly. The inbreath continues by filling the lungs, the ribcage swells with air, and it finally arrives at the top of the clavicles, causing them to rise very slightly. Observe the inbreath by breathing deeply in this way.

.....

- Observe the inverse of the same process when exhaling, from top to bottom. The clavicles descend, while the rib cage, followed by the abdomen, deflate.

.....

- Now focus on these three parts of the body:

First, pay attention to your belly and abdominal breathing: feel it expand, swell with the inbreath and empty with the outbreath. You can put your hands on your stomach which helps to perceive the movement.

.....

- Then, pay attention to the chest breathing: feel your lungs fill with air on the inbreath and empty on the outbreath. Notice the movement of your ribcage. Here again you can put your hands on your torso to better feel the movement.

.....

- Now, observe what is happening with your clavicles: feel the clavicular breathing that is lighter and subtler than the previous two. To feel it, you can place your fingers in the small hollow located just above the clavicles, breathing a little deeper. In this way you can perceive a slight elevation of the clavicles at the end of a deep inhalation. It is a very light movement that should not be forced so you avoid any unnecessary movement of the shoulders.

.....

- Breathe deeply for a while, feeling the movement of the breath that goes up and down as you inhale and exhale, feeling its gentle and regular movement successively through the abdominal, thoracic and clavicular regions.

.....

- To finish, stay for a moment in the simple continuous feeling of the coming and going of the natural breath, relaxing, letting yourself go.

## P16

### 6. The continuous sensation of the breath

#### Description

In the previous exercises, we experienced attentive presence to our breath under different circumstances. We have become well acquainted with the sensation of the breath, but now we train to experience it continuously.

#### Practice (Duration: 10 min)

- Sit comfortably in a good posture and get into the feeling of the natural cycle of respiration that continues without interruption.

.....

- Abandon yourself completely into this natural pulsation. When the sensation of breath becomes continuous, the present moment pulses with this breath of life.

.....

- It is not about breathing in a particular way, but letting the breath breathe, to feel that "it breathes." "It breathes" is a good way to put this because it is not "I breathe consciously, intentionally," but "I let it breathe, as it comes."

.....

- "It breathes" naturally, continuously. Bringing your attention to the breath always tends to change it slightly. We simply accept that it is so and do not deliberately intervene. We let it go, as it is.

.....

- Stay in this feeling of continuous breathing as long as the practice lasts. If you become distracted, gentle reminders bring you back.

.....

## P17

### 7. A short pause of attentive presence for 21 cycles of breath

#### Description



Counting the cycles of breath is a very good support for attention. Counting helps with not becoming distracted from the sensation of breathing. Regular, continuous, and slow counting keeps the mind focused and avoids mind wandering.

This exercise consists of 21 consecutive cycles of breath, remaining in attentive presence to the continuous sensation of the breath.

21 cycles of breath last more or less 3 minutes; it is an excellent practice for taking a brief pause.

**Practice** (Duration: around 3 min)

- Sit comfortably in a good posture and get into the feeling of the natural and uninterrupted breathing cycle.  
.....
- Abandon yourself completely into this natural pulsation. When the sensation of breath becomes continuous, the present moment pulses with this breath of life.  
.....
- It is not about breathing in a particular way, but to let our respiration breathe, to feel that "it breathes." "It breathes" is a useful expression because it is not, "I breathe consciously, intentionally," but "I let it breathe, as it comes."  
.....
- Follow the advice given above. When breathing in, mentally count a long "1": "Ooonne" for the duration of the inbreath. Then on the exhalation, count the same "1": "Ooonne" for the duration of the outbreath. On the next inhalation, count a new "Ooonne," then, for the duration of the outbreath, a long "2": "Twoooo." On the next inhalation, count a new "Ooonne," then, for the duration of the outbreath, count a long "3": "Threeee," and so on until 21.  
.....
- If you lose count, start again from the beginning and then, with a natural and relaxed breath, progress to 21.  
.....

**P18**

## **8. The sensation of the "energy-body" (optional)**

### **Description**

The practice of the attentive presence to our body and our breath lets us experience the global sensation of the body. This feeling of our body in its entirety constitutes a kind of

"energetic envelope": a sensation of warmth felt as a very slight and subtle vibration, a sensation of subtle radiance. We learn to stay relaxed in the very subtle sensation of this gentle radiance.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 min)

- Settle yourself comfortably, seated with a good posture.  
.....
- Enter the global sensation of the body by relaxing into it. To help with this, you can do a short and quick body scan to properly inhabit and feel the body.  
.....
- By relaxing in this sensation, you may feel the heat of the body, a soft and diffused heat. The more you relax, the more noticeable it is.  
.....
- This soft sensation of warmth is felt, more or less, as a slight radiance. When it pervades the body, it is what we call the sensation of the "energetic envelope." Stay in this feeling, however you perceive it. If you do not perceive anything, it's not important. Simply cultivate relaxation and the sensation of heat will come gradually, and with it, the experience of its energy.  
.....
- Do not try to fabricate the sensation through exerting yourself, it is just counterproductive. Let the sensation of warmth come through relaxation.  
.....

**E11**

## **9. The breath: between body and mind**

In the context of attentive presence to our breath, we keep in mind the interdependence among body-breath-mind. Our state of mind is reflected in our breath and our body, and conversely, the state of our body and our breath influences our state of mind and our experience. Our breath lies between the body and the mind, constituting a kind of interface between them.

We may distinguish different breaths: the breath of respiration, and what is called in yoga or traditional medicine, the "subtle breath." In more contemporary terms, we could speak of subtle breath as the "energies" of the body and mind that animate and govern their different functions. "Breath-energy" animates consciousness, the mind. In the ancient tradition of the West, the mind is said to have a "pneumatic" nature, the "pneuma" being both the breath and the mind. Be that as it may, in our context, we should always recall the connection between the body and the mind, with the central, intermediate position of the breath between them. Body-breath-mind are thus said to be "interdependent," a concept that many ancient teachings share, whether they come from the East or the West. The fundamental principles of yoga and traditional medicine, and of contemporary mind-body medicine all rely on this interdependence.

Let us take a simple example that illustrates this notion of the interdependence of the body, the breath, and the mind.

When we are seized by an intense emotion, like an emotional outburst, our breath accelerates and becomes shorter and erratic, we become tense, the temperature of our body rises, and a certain feverishness can even cause us to tremble. Conversely, when we are in a calm and peaceful state of mind, our body is relaxed and the breath becomes soft and regular. In either instance, body, breath, and mind react together. It is the same in all instances of our life.

## ○ **Attitudes, advice and summary of the second step**

### **The characteristic attitudes of the second step**

- 3- The suspension of judgments
- 4- Neutral and kind acceptance
- 5- Attentive presence to inbreath and outbreath

### **The third attitude: the suspension of judgments**

In a general way, non-judgment is the freshness of the beginner's mind: experience is lived as it is, without conceptions or projections. It is not interpreted, categorized, evaluated—good, bad, or anything else. The sensations, the thoughts, and the emotions are lived as they appear, without any judgment.

However, non-judgment is not indifference. It is rather a simple suspension of judgment and conceptualization. It is the suspension of the categorization and labeling that our mind habitually performs. In non-judgment, we welcome what is presented, "as is". Returning to the simple sensation of inhaling-exhaling, the suspension of judgment allows us to learn to let be. It is enough just to stay quiet, rather than always being ready to assess or judge in our mind.

### **The fourth attitude: neutral and kind acceptance**

Welcoming experiences in a neutral and kind way, or, "welcome-acceptance" is the mental attitude of:

- Welcoming experience by opening up to it as it is.
- Accepting that what is, is as it is.

Non-judgment and acceptance are two attitudes that go hand in hand.

Acceptance consists in accepting reality as it is, seeing it and letting it be, accepting what presents itself without rejecting or modifying anything.

Non-judgment and acceptance are welcoming attitudes. But welcoming does not mean resignation. To accept that things are as they are is a realistic attitude that does not amount to resigning ourselves and passively submitting to situations.

We very often tend to refuse to experience fully the situations that we do not like, and to resist them by refusing the emotions and sensations that they arouse in us. To welcome implies putting an end to this denial by accepting reality. It then becomes possible to adequately live with them and transform them when necessary.

### **The fifth attitude: attentive presence to the inbreath-outbreath \***

The attentive presence to the inbreath and outbreath is fundamental for the training, as it consists in continuously feeling the pulsation of the breath.

We previously saw the close connection that existed between the body, the breath, and the mind. By developing attention to the rhythm and natural sensation of breathing, we develop the emotional intelligence that helps us manage our emotions.

For example, when we feel an emotion rising in us, we can simply direct our attention towards the inbreath-outbreath and thus start to feel a relaxation of the emotion in us (we will develop this notion in step five, "Mindfulness of Emotions").

However, it is not about tensing the mind or concentrating on the breath, which would be totally counterproductive. Moments of reminders and attention let us come back to the natural sensation of the inbreath and outbreath. Little by little, through frequent reminders and brief pauses, we practice remaining in attentive presence to the breath throughout our day.

### **Advice for the second step**

The second step is about experiencing the sensation of the breath, feeling that "it breathes" continuously, and letting the breath be as it is, naturally.

### **Summary of the second step**

The attentive presence to our breath can be performed at any moment of our life, thanks to the support of attention that is always present: the breath.

We learn to feel our breath in all its parts —abdominal, thoracic, and clavicular—and the movement of the breath through the nostrils. We then practice attentive presence to the sensation of breathing, without distraction. Counting our breaths one by one can help. During the day, we learn to make small, short but frequent breaks, our attention always following our breath.



## **A model practice sequence for the second step**

- **Sitting practice: attentive presence to the breath (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days per week. Note that the introduction to the session and the conclusion are always the same.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (25-30')**

- Seated stretches – **P 8** (3')
- The seven points of the sitting posture– **P 9** (1')
- Three slow and deep breaths - **P 11** (1')
- Abdominal breathing - **P 13**  
or complete breathing- **P 15** (5')
- The sensation of the breath at the nostrils - **P 14** (5 ')
- The continuous sensation of the breath- **P 16** (10 - 15')

### **CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

- **Reminders: meditation in action week 2, “Attentive presence to the breath”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

#### **ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of open and relaxed presence

#### **BRIEF PAUSES**

- A short pause of attentive presence for twenty-one cycles of breath

#### **PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

##### Ongoing

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep.

##### In particular

- Mindfully brushing your teeth
- Mindfully taking a shower

Do not forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website

[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

\*

\*      \*

## **STEP THREE**

### **OPEN PRESENCE TO OUR SURROUNDINGS**

The first two steps have been devoted to attentive presence, the third and fourth relate to open presence.

#### **REMINDER OF THE GENERAL POINTS AND TOOLS**

The practices of the first two steps set the stage for starting the third step, "Open Presence," during which we will continue to train with the two tools of attention and reminders. The general points of observation and applying remedies remain the same.

#### **The sixteen practices and explanations of the third step**

1. Open presence (E 12)
2. Open presence to our sensory landscape (E 13)
3. Open presence to the present moment (E 14)
4. Opening with the outbreath and pause (P 19)
5. The six senses (E 15)
6. Our consciousness as cognitive grasping (E 16)
7. Our consciousness opening and our release of grasping happen together (E 17)
8. Opening our senses, sensorial awakening, and "naked sensation" (E 18)
9. Panoramic vision, naked vision, and global sensing (P 20)
10. Naked vision and letting go (E 19)
11. Open presence to sound: naked hearing (P 21)
12. The state of contemplation, meditation without support, and communion (E 20)
13. Contemplating the elements of nature (P 22)
14. Naked open vision of objects near and far (P 23)
15. Attentive and open presence while walking (P 24)
16. Short pauses of attentive and open presence (P 25)

**E12****1. Open presence**

The practice of mindfulness is fundamentally an experience of openness: openness of the senses, the mind, and the heart. The dimension of openness highlights the special quality of Open Mindfulness or "Open Presence."

The third step introduces us to this foundational dimension of opening through practice. Opening is profoundly transformative because of how it facilitates the release of grasping. Simply put, it is open presence that lets us enter the depth of the experience of mindfulness by opening us to the reality of our environment. Open presence is particularly important in everyday life.

**E13****2. Open presence to our sensory landscape**

After developing attentive presence to the body and breath, the training of the third stage now lets us discover what it is like to open ourselves to our environment. The environment is everything around us, from the simple object right in front of us, to the entire room or place in which we find ourselves, to nature as a whole. In general, our environment is the sensory landscape.

Attentive presence, when it stabilizes and relaxes, becomes less focused and more open. It retains its qualities of clarity, precision, and stability as it opens to the sensory environment, evolving naturally towards open presence. Open presence is the opening of our senses to the reality that surrounds us, both around us and in us. It is an experience of sensorial openness, receptivity, and availability; sensitive, lively, and clear. Complete sensory opening brings us to a state of "sensory awakening."

In the sensory experience of open presence, our senses remain alert and relaxed in a natural opening, free of tension or effort. This state is at once clear, lively, and precise, free of tension or fixation. We experience what we call letting go, or release, which is also the state of non-grasping. We learn to feel how openness and cognitive non-grasping go hand in hand, and are in no way opposition with the state of attentive, stable, lucid, and precise presence that we have discovered previously. We also discover that attention and openness not only coexist, but actually complement each other in the natural state of open presence.

**E14****3. Open presence to the present moment**

Through the force of habit, our mental prerogatives exile us from fully sensing the present, transporting us without our even realizing it into the past or the future. The release of grasping that occurs with sensory openness is the method par excellence of embodying the present by letting go of the habitually conditioned mind full of the thoughts that take us away from



presence. When our senses are completely open, we find ourselves immersed in a sensory landscape of unexpected "liveliness," and this experience is none other than that which, quite simply, is the reality of the present moment, here and now.

## P19

### 4. Opening with the outbreath and pause

#### Description

This meditation associates attentive presence with the breath and open presence in our surroundings. It lets us make the transition between the two, starting from attention to the outbreath that is then suspended in the experience of opening. Here lies the central practice of mindfulness meditation. We follow the simple sequence of "opening with the outbreath and pausing during the inbreath."

#### Exercise (Duration: 10 min)

- To begin, as usual: settle into a comfortable posture, relaxed in the panoramic gaze.  
.....
- As a preliminary, as you practiced previously, fully feel the respiration, following it, becoming one with it. Keep your attention present to the continuous sensation of the respiration.  
.....
- Then, feel and follow the exhalation. Each outbreath is a moment of attentive presence to the exhalation. Between each outbreath is a pause. You thus make a succession of short moments of attentive presence to the outbreath, interrupted by a pause during the inbreath. It is a practice of successive moments of attention interspersed with short pauses that last the duration of the inbreath.  
.....
- Continue without distraction. Return to the feeling of breath on each exhalation.  
.....
- Now, particularly focusing on the natural movement of the outbreath, let go into openness. Just as the outbreath diffuses and dissolves into the atmosphere, let your mind open and mix with space. With each outbreath, let yourself merge into space, abandoning yourself completely. Let yourself go with the outbreath into the openness of limitless space, abandoning yourself into it, as in the release of a deep sigh. Continue this way, relaxing and abandoning yourself into openness with each outbreath, letting yourself go into space, in the openness of the panoramic gaze.  
.....

- Between outbreaths and the dissolution in space, the inbreath is a moment of pause in openness, a pause in sensorial openness. Then with each following outbreath, there is again a release, an opening, and then a pause in panoramic vision. The practice is dashed: the opening with the outbreath, and then a pause that hangs in the open during the inbreath. Inbreath, outbreath: open, pause, open, pause.  
.....
- Continue in the sequence without distraction: outbreath opening, inbreath pause in openness. When you are distracted, come back again and again.  
.....
- At the end of this period of meditation on "opening with the outbreath, pausing in openness during the inbreath," stay a moment in simple open contemplation. Stay in the open state like you experienced during the breaks after the exhalations. Stay completely relaxed, completely open in panoramic vision.

## 5. The six senses

**E15**

In the phenomenological context of mindfulness, we consider ourselves to be endowed with six senses.\* We have five "external" senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste; and one "internal" sense: the mind.

With respect to the five external senses:

- Sight and hearing are the so-called far-reaching senses. They allow us to perceive from afar, at a distance. Indeed, these two senses perceive the general peripheral environment, the whole visual and auditory landscape that surrounds us, near and far.

- There are also the senses of proximity: the sense of smell that requires a greater or lesser proximity, touch which implies a direct contact, and taste which requires the absorption of what is tasted.

The objects of the five internal senses are visual forms, sounds, smells, physical sensations, and tastes.

The internal sense, or mind, has thoughts, emotions, and all of the mental phenomena that arise in the mind as its objects.

Thus, all of our lived experiences, and all objects of experience, are included in these six senses.

**E16**

## 6. Our consciousness as cognitive grasping

It is very important to understand our consciousness as a cognitive process that moves through the six senses we have just reviewed. A type of consciousness is associated with each of these six senses, which leads us to consider six types of consciousness: visual, auditory, olfactory,

tactile, gustatory, and mental. Each of these experiences respectively, visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, taste, and mental objects.

This presentation recalls the section on contemplative science in which we explained how cognitive grasping projects a map of representations onto the ground of direct experience, thus crafting the virtual world in which we live. We have also seen how this cognitive grasping makes what we call consciousness. Our consciousness is always being, strictly speaking, conscious of something. This understanding of our consciousness as grasping will enable us to understand the importance of both releasing our grasping and opening.

-> See Chapter 1 "A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science."

## **E 17**

### **7. Our consciousness opening and our release of grasping happen simultaneously**

We have already seen in the overview of contemplative science that the more cognitive grasping there is, the more the subject and the object feel "solid." This solidity of the subject and of the object, of self and other, makes us move through a solid world characterized by a great separation between "me" and "my world." In other words, the stronger the grasping, the more we live an experience of duality.

From this point of view, if grasping reinforces the perception of duality, then releasing our grasping diminishes it. Releasing our grasping transforms consciousness by reducing its dual and conflictual nature. We see a direct relation between dual and conflictual, insofar as it is in the dual polarization of subject-object, "me-other," that conflicting emotions are born and grow. In other words, the dualistic perceptions and the conflicting emotions arising from these perceptions are proportional to the degree of cognitive grasping.

We can therefore easily understand that, on the contrary, releasing our grasping attenuates the experience of duality and the conflicting emotions that develop in it. We should see the natural relationship that exists between releasing cognitive grasping and the opening of consciousness. More specifically, we perceive that the opening of our consciousness and the release of our grasping are occurring in tandem. The opening of our consciousness is a direct result of the process of releasing grasping, which is its source; the process of releasing our grasping naturally produces an opening of consciousness. This correlation is essential because it lies at the heart of the practice of transforming our consciousness.

-> See Chapter 1 "A brief overview of contemplative science."

## **E18**

### **8. Opening our senses, sensorial awakening, and naked sensation**

Sensorial awakening, opening the senses, and naked sensation are three expressions pointing to the same experience of complete sensorial openness.

As we have just seen, all that we are and all that we experience exist in the six senses and their respective consciousnesses. Opening our senses is opening to the experience of what and how we are, an opening through which we enter the fundamental reality of naked experience.

We may begin to experience the openness of the senses with one or another of our far-reaching senses, since sight and hearing can be the easiest to use at the beginning. We also discover that the experience of opening one sense, such as sight, at the same time promotes the experience of opening the other senses, and sensorial openness in general.

Sensorial openness can be experienced in every moment, wherever we are. It consists in feeling the naked sensation of our environment, free from mental interference, without judgment or conceptualization, very simply and fully. Naked sensation is discovered sensation, free from the veil of projections. It can be experienced through all of the various senses: naked vision, naked hearing, naked smelling, naked tasting, naked touching, and naked mentation. Naked experience is simply direct and immediate experience, without the intermediary of mental representation.

This direct experience is a type of communion, an empathetic resonance in which the subject-experiencer is embodied as, is one with what is experienced. This naked sensation leads to the state of non-duality\* of the observer and the observed. It is empty of representation and full of reality.

We should note that the case of the internal sense of mind is unique. Naked mentation is the mind in which thinker and thought cease to be divided, as they usually are in discursive thought. The thought in which thinker and thought are undivided is a non-discursive thought in which the questions and answers of habitual mental discourse do not take place. Habitual thinking is replaced by a thought which thinks "in-itself" and which is understood by itself. In this state of naked mentation, we no longer tell ourselves what we already know! This is called reflexive thinking, that is to say, thought which is understood in and by itself. This is "self-knowing," mentation knowing itself by itself.

**P20**

## **9. Panoramic vision\*, naked vision, and global sensing**

### **Description**

The training continues by cultivating the opening of the senses through the opening of the panoramic gaze. The wide vision of the "panoramic" gaze allows us to see everything in our field of view. This 180-degree visual opening induces or promotes naked vision. Stripping naked our vision is accomplished when we simply see, without dressing things up with representations and concepts.

The important point of this practice is to simply let the gaze relax into the global, total experience of the entire sensory landscape that surrounds us. We thereby enter into an experience of global sensing.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- Choose a place you prefer that is neither too bright nor too dark, so you can see without being dazzled. And, as usual: settle into a comfortable posture, relaxing into panoramic vision, eyes simply open as normal, without looking at anything in particular, everything held in your field of vision.  
.....
- Relax your eyes and vision in the panoramic gaze. When the vision is released in this way, it is naturally broad, and you have a diffuse view of the whole panorama present in front of you. This diffuse vision is global, seeing everything without looking at anything in particular. It is very simple, without judgments, representations, or concepts. It is an aspect of naked, stripped down vision. When we say naked or stripped, it simply means without judgment, without mental evaluation, without representation or conceptualization.  
.....
- Notice that this open and panoramic vision brings a certain ease, a certain relaxation. Remain in it as it is.  
.....
- In this state, it is possible that the vision sometimes becomes a little blurred and that different chromatic or other variations appear in the visual field. These modifications are the effect of relaxation, loosening, and releasing grasping. There is no need to attach particular importance to them. Do not try to influence them. There is no reason to worry or to rejoice. These experiences are neither to be sought nor avoided.  
.....
- Do not intervene, do not interfere, let go and stay relaxed. Remain in that way until the end of the practice period.  
.....

**E19**

**10. Naked vision and letting go**

The visual openness of the panoramic gaze facilitates the experience of letting go, or non-grasping. As such, the observer tends to stop looking: we see without looking. The observer rests with a global view, without any effort or intention to look at something in particular. Not focusing on something, the observer relaxes. By letting go, in a certain way, the observer relaxes and becomes absent: "what is seen is simply seen." The "I" does not look, what appears simply shows up without an "I" being there to regard it. Presence then becomes "naked vision," an open presence that is at once broad, unobstructed, relaxed, and yet precise.

What we are talking about is subtle, but we are discovering it gradually, and this discovery is fundamental to being able to arrive at the state of letting go, of non-grasping.

## P21

### 11. Open presence to sound: naked hearing

#### Description

The discovery and training of sensory openness can be cultivated with both hearing and vision. With hearing, we enter into open and attentive presence to the soundscape, to the ensemble of sounds that present themselves.

#### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual: settle into a comfortable posture and relax by disengaging yourself from any grasping to sound: it is about hearing without listening. Sounds are heard without listening to them, without focusing on them, without any particular intention. Sound is heard, in a neutral type of listening, without judgment.

.....

- In this naked hearing, you are in a completely open, global auditory field. Remain at ease and relaxed, in a state of transparency such that you don't feel assailed or irritated by the noises that emerge from the sound environment.

.....

- Remain in this way, bathed by and absorbed into the omnipresence of the sound environment.

.....

**Note:** There are different variations of the practice of mindfulness of sound: we can either practice by simply "hearing" the sounds present in our environment, or we can create sound ourselves. We can chant the sound "A," for example, which is the most fundamental, simple, and natural sound, or we can make any other sound and relax into it. We chant, we "sound" several times, letting go into the sound. Alternatively, we can use a gong and be permeated by its sound, from its birth to its disappearance.

## E20

### 12. The state of contemplation, meditation without support, and communion

To remain in the opening of the senses in naked experience is what is called the state of contemplation, or meditation without support. We surrender ourselves and allow ourselves to be with what is "as it is," without "grasping" anything, without being fixated on anything. We then tend to become one with what is contemplated. We are in some sense "suspended," living

in the savor, happiness, and freedom of the present moment. In the transparency of this experience of opening, the distinction between the contemplating subject and the contemplated object dissolves, the observer and the observed unite in a kind of communion. We become one with the experience of the moment. This is called the state of embodiment. This state can be characterized by very intense emotions, called emotions of participation, such as empathy or communion. We can be in communion with a landscape, with a tree, with a person, with an insect, or with the sky, and tears can come to our eyes! As said before, there is no need to seek this state intentionally, but it is good to know that it can occur spontaneously, in a moment of forgetting ourselves and natural communion.

## P22

### 13. Contemplating the elements of nature

#### Description

For this exercise, we practice contemplating the elements of nature with a view that is broad, relaxed, panoramic, and open.

We can use the five natural elements of earth, water, fire, air and space as a support for contemplation. It is recommended to do this practice in a natural environment.

#### Practice (Variable duration: 10 - 15 min)

- As usual, settle yourself comfortably in the panoramic gaze, with relaxed and naked vision. Contemplate each element, absorbed in its natural quality.

#### For the element earth

- We can contemplate “the earth” that is present in the place we are sitting—a hill, a mountain, a rock. We don’t need to contemplate the earth in any limited sense, but rather its nature as solidity and stability.

.....

- You do not need to meditate by thinking about the qualities of the earth element, but rather become one with the earth, let yourself "be earth," so to speak.

#### For the element water

- Sit down next to a running river or stream and contemplate the flow of the water, its continuous murmur and bubbling movement.

.....

- Allow yourself to be carried away and absorbed in the flow, how it is both constantly moving and yet motionless in its continuity.

.....

- Don't just contemplate the water, but enter the experience of the nature of the water element, its fluidity and continuity.

.....

- You do not need to meditate by thinking about the qualities of the water element, but rather become one with the water, let yourself "be water," so to speak.

.....

#### **For the element fire**

- Sitting in front of a fire, watch the dance of the crackling flames.

.....

- Let yourself be absorbed in the clarity and heat that it emanates.

.....

- Don't just contemplate the fire, but enter the experience of the nature of the fire element, its heat and clarity.

.....

- You do not need to conceptually meditate on the qualities of the fire element, thinking about it, but rather become one with the fire, let yourself in some way "be fire."

.....

#### **For the element air**

- Feel the wind, even if it is weak, and perceive the movements of the air that moves in the trees, the movement of the leaves.

.....

- Feel the wind caressing your skin, and how it sometimes seems to mingle with your own breath.

.....

- Don't just feel the air, but enter into the experience of the nature of the air element, its mobility and movement.

.....

- You do not need to conceptually meditate on the qualities of the air element, thinking about it, but rather become one with the air, let yourself in some way "be air."

#### **For the element space**

- Outside, in an open space that allows you to contemplate the sky, sit or lie comfortably where you can see open space. You can also be standing. To contemplate space, avoid being dazzled by too much brightness and avoiding facing the sun. Relax in a panoramic gaze, completely open, abandoning yourself in the experience of opening.

.....



- Relax completely, let your mind open, merging with space, as if you are fading into it. Remain as mind-space, indivisible.

.....

- By merging with space, you enter into the experience of the space element, its openness and immensity.

.....

You do not need to conceptually meditate on the qualities of the space element, thinking about it, but rather become one with space, let yourself in some way "be space."

.....

- With your mind open like space, stay relaxed and open for as long as the contemplation of space lasts.

For each element, train in resting for an extended period of contemplation, a brief contemplation is not enough. Do not be distracted and return to the contemplation with diligence.

## P23

### 14. Naked open vision of objects near and far

#### Description

We first cultivated attentive presence with a support such as the body, the breath, or a sensation. After this, we practiced open presence through the opening of all our senses to the surrounding environment. In practices 20 and 21 we experienced naked vision and naked hearing. We will now experience naked vision that is open with a support, practicing both openness and attention.

#### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual, get comfortable and choose a small object of support close to you. If you are outside in nature it can be a flower, a leaf, an insect, a drop of dew; if you are inside it can be a common object such as a pen, a phone...

.....

- Look at the object in contemplation without judgment or evaluation, simply "seeing" as it is. Do not focus on the object, but on the contrary, relax on it, letting yourself become absorbed into the contemplation of the simple, naked vision of this object before you.

.....

- Stay in the "non-effort" of this naked vision, naked contemplation.

.....

- Then, without moving, change the support and choose a large distant object such as a tree or a mountain... or you can choose a table or a piece of furniture on the other side of the room. Contemplate this object as before, in naked vision, relaxing into the view, in the moment, in peace, without chatter or commentary on the experience.

.....

- Stay like that, without becoming distracted from the contemplation, coming back each time you are distracted.

### **OBSERVING YOUR EXPERIENCE**

How did you feel in these two experiences (with close and distant supports)?

Did you find them very different? Or on the contrary, very similar? Was there a continuity between them? Did the transition from one to the other create difficulties? By observing these different situations, you can discover and appreciate the qualities of presence: how attentive presence and open presence are together an experience of attentive opening.

**Note:** It is possible to do the same exercise using any of the other senses: hearing a particular sound such as a gong or a bell from its arising to its disappearance, tasting a particular food, feeling an odor, touching different types of objects. Always remain in the attitude of simplicity and non-grasping, without chatter or mental commentary. Come into direct and very simple contact with the experience of the object, in the non-grasping of openness and the clarity of attention.

## **P24**

### **15. Attentive and open presence while walking**

#### **Description**

We first introduced training exercises in mindfulness in the sitting posture. With the opening of our senses to our environment, we can now consider training ourselves in mindfulness in motion, in action. Thus, mindfulness can be integrated into all the acts and gestures of our daily life. The purpose is to train to integrate mindfulness whether one is at rest or in action, motionless or moving.

Walking is a great occasion for training in movement. Our days are all punctuated by walks of varying lengths, whether to go to our place of work, go shopping, walk around, move from one room to another... All of these trips can be used as mindfulness exercises. Instead of walking automatically, absorbed in more or less pervasive thoughts, let us walk mindfully! At the beginning, walk slowly, with attention. This should not be a big problem, it is good to slow down.

Below are presented various exercises of mindful walking: walking slowly, then at three speeds, and finally in an aimless wander.

**Practice** (Variable duration: 10 - 15 min)

- **Slow meditative walking**

- To begin this walking meditation, stand upright, straight, relaxed, with the chest open, feet flat on the floor. Rather than letting your arms hang alongside your body, bring your forearms up to your stomach. The left hand closes on the thumb and the right covers the left, the last knuckle of the right thumb above the closed left fist. The two hands arranged in this way are placed at the level of the navel, the palms towards oneself. Note that the detail of the position of the hands is not very important, but this position has the advantage of being comfortable and stable.

.....

- Take three deep breaths, this will help you settle into your body while standing.

.....

- Then start walking slowly, in the attentive presence of your body and opening to your environment. You are your body, slowly walking in an open and global experience.

.....

- Feel all that walking involves: the contact of your feet with the floor and the continuous movement of the walk as it unfolds.

.....

- Walk slowly, fully present to the sequence of balance and imbalance that walking entails.

.....

- Be equally open to the overall feeling of your surroundings, but without putting much emphasis on what is happening around you.

.....

- Walk simply in this way, with a panoramic gaze and open presence to what surrounds you, feeling the movements of walking. Feel the wind, the heat, the cold, the position and the movement of your body in space, but stay in the overall global feeling, without interfering.

.....

- Feel your surroundings near and far in the naked contemplation of panoramic vision, as we previously practiced.

.....

- Walk in the present moment, quietly. You are not walking to go somewhere, but just to be here now, with the feeling of having already arrived. The "walking walks," simply. You are simply in motion, you are the movement of the moment.

.....

- Be in open presence to the whole sensory experience. There is no need to think of anything, only to leave be and walk in this global sensing. You simply let yourself be in harmony with what is here in the moment.

Note: the more you practice meditative walking, the easier it will be to remain in this attentive and open presence during any of your daily walks.

- **Meditative walking at three speeds: slow, normal, and fast**

The practice of mindful walking can be done at different speeds: walking slowly as explained above, but also at normal speed and speed walking. The instructions remain the same, only the speed of the walk changes. We can thus experience how attention and openness remain the same at different speeds, and discover that it is not essential to walk slowly to walk in presence. This exercise teaches us to integrate mindfulness into all the movements and transitions of our daily lives.

- **Aimless wandering**

**Description**

Aimless wandering is simply walking in presence, in the full sensation of the moment, without the particular intention of going somewhere, in one direction or another.

**Practice** (Variable duration: 10 - 15 min)

- Choose an open area such as a large promenade and walk at all three speeds, as seen in the previous exercise, but randomly, without a goal or particular destination.  
.....
- The important point of this exercise is that you are not going somewhere. You have already arrived, "here in the moment," wherever you are. You wander in full presence and the simple sensation of movement, at your own pace, as it comes spontaneously.  
.....
- From time to time stop walking, stay still and take a short pause, just contemplating what is there in front of you with simple and global presence to your body and your environment. (The next exercise will develop the practice of the short pause.)  
.....
- Then resume walking and alternate periods of walking and pausing.  
.....
- As long as the practice lasts, alternate moments of walking in mindful movement and moments of mere presence, standing in a global environmental sensorial opening.

## 16. Short pauses of attentive and open presence

### Description

The "brief pause" that we introduced at the beginning of training is a very important practice, the goal being to train us to punctuate our daily life with mindful presence. The short pauses are intended to unhook us for a few moments from our habits and put our frequent automatic pilot on "pause."

These short moments of mindfulness, more or less three minutes long, can be practiced almost anywhere and anytime, considering the circumstances and the environment. Practice doing one whenever the circumstances are right. Gradually, your daily life will become punctuated by short pauses.

The training consists simply in stopping for a few moments to breathe, as in the simplest meditation, being in attentive presence for 21 cycles of breath, or simply remaining in attentive and open presence.

Stimulate yourself by using special circumstances that act as reminders, a bit like how an alarm clock gives you a signal. Choose recurring circumstances in your life that give you the signal, "it's time for a little break." In the present context, these circumstances remind you to regularly come back to attentive and open presence. The phone rings, you take a short pause to breathe and unwind; you turn on the computer, a short pause, a moment of suspension; you stop the car at a traffic light, pause, relax in panoramic vision ... and so on until, little by little, the short pauses punctuate our day like a natural habit. At the end of a short pause, naturally continue your activity in mindfulness.

You can also practice small breaks by walking tranquilly, silently, with a caring and open presence. You can take walks in this way, punctuated by small breaks, a hike, a forest bath.

The more pauses you take, the more you will integrate the practice into your daily life and the more you will establish a continuity of the experience of mindfulness. The benefits that flow from it will quickly appear.

### Exercises

See the different exercises seen previously and mentioned in the above descriptions.

**(P19 to 24)**

## ○ Attitudes, advice and summary of the third step

**The characteristic attitude of the third step**

## 6- Letting go—releasing grasping in openness

### **The sixth attitude: letting go and releasing grasping in openness**

With letting go we take an additional step in surrendering ourselves to the sensation of experience as it is, without resistance.

Letting go means letting things fall, ungrasping, and abandoning ourselves.

We are training ourselves to let go of tensions, fixations, judgments, evaluations, preconceptions, and other fixed ideas. In this way, we learn to release ourselves from mental conceptions, to let our projections dissolve by simply experiencing the direct sensation of the moment. We let go of everything that separates us from the present moment and remain in a state of non-grasping. We welcome our experience, but without grasping, and accept it by being receptive.

Over the first three stages of training, we have seen that there is a transition from attentive presence—which tends to be exclusive—to an open, encompassing presence. Letting go and releasing grasping lead to the experience of opening and bring to life what is natural, what is there before the projections we usually superimpose. The letting go and release of grasping into openness are gateways to immediate instantaneity.

### **Advice of the third step**

The advice of the third step is simply to open our senses in panoramic vision, without interfering with experience as it presents itself.

### **Summary of the third step**

The third step is that of sensory opening or open presence to the environment. It is the awakening of the senses in a wide, panoramic experience that is found through letting go and opening. Open and attentive presence can be experienced sitting, standing, walking, in nature, everywhere and always.



## **A model practice sequence for the third step**

- **Sitting practice: Open presence to the environment (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days per week. Note that the introduction to the session and the conclusion are always the same.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (25-30')**

- Seated stretches – **P 8** (3')
- The seven points of the sitting posture– **P 9** (1')
- Opening with the outbreath and pause – **P 19** (10')
- Panoramic vision, naked vision, and global sensing– **P 20** (5')
- Open presence to sound: naked hearing – **P 21** (5')
- Naked open vision of objects near and far – **P 23** (5')

### **CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

- **Reminders: meditation in action, week 3 “Open presence to the environment”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

#### **ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of open presence to the environment

#### **BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three minutes of practicing opening with the outbreath
- Short pauses of attentive and open presence

#### **PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

Ongoing

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep.

In particular

- Mindfully brushing your teeth
- Mindfully taking a shower
- Contemplating the elements of nature
- Mindful walking in daily movements

Do not forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website

[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

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## **STEP FOUR**

### **OPEN AND RELAXED PRESENCE**

In the first two steps, we were introduced to the experience of attentive presence. The third and fourth steps pertain to open presence, with the fourth being devoted to the most profound dimension of open presence.

#### **REMINDER OF THE POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS**

The experiences and discoveries of each step form a progression and are complementary. Recalling the experiences of the previous steps is recommended prior to moving forward.

At this point, we have already learned to be attentive to our body (step one), to feel our breath (step two), and to open ourselves to our surroundings (step three). The first two steps deal more specifically with attentive presence, while the third and fourth steps expand the training in open presence.

To begin this fourth step, we should remember both presence and reminders, the general training tools practiced also in the context of relaxed openness. We should also keep in mind the main obstacles and remedies (see chapter 2).

With the fourth step, we will deepen the essential practice, with relaxed openness serving as a remedy to cognitive grasping, the source and origin of malaise and disharmony.

#### **The nine presentations and practices of the fourth step**

1. Health is our original natural state (E 21)
2. Disharmony is a sickness (E 22)
3. Cognitive grasping as the source of disharmony (E 23)
4. Openness as a remedy for clinging and the path of non-duality (E 24)
5. Relaxed openness as principle of the training (E 25)
6. Panoramic vision in relaxed openness (P 26)
7. Sky gazing (P 27)
8. The transparent observer and the absent observer (P 28)
9. The presence of absence, instant presence, is embodiment (E 26)

**E21****1. Health is our original natural state**

Perhaps we have noticed over the course of the previous steps that the practice has had a tendency to soothe us, to make us calmer, more relaxed. If that is the case, it is all very well, but what we are actually searching for in the depths of ourselves is true well-being, the liberation of all suffering.

In this aim for happiness, we should recognize that health is the natural state of well-being and is our original state. Health is present, prior to the imbalance and dysfunction that affects us, which we call “sickness.”

In the sections that follow, we will take a medical or therapeutic perspective, and consider one after the other—sickness, its origin, and the treatment that cures us—to return to the original and natural state of health. In short, we have to understand that we are healthy before having become ill.

**E22****2. Disharmony is a sickness**

The point is to simply notice the relationship that exists between sickness, unease, and disharmony. Sickness is an organic or functional impairment, a degradation of the normal state called healthy. Sickness is thus a deterioration from the healthy balance and harmonious functioning of the organism.

Also notice that when we are in good health, we consider that “things are going well,” and this is what we commonly call well-being. Whereas when we are feeling bad or sick, we say that “things are not going well,” this is what we are calling malaise or disharmony.

**E23****3. Cognitive grasping as the source of disharmony**

We have already introduced the notion of grasping and the benefits of letting go in chapter 1, “A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science.”

The phenomenology of contemplative science demonstrates how to free ourselves from the disharmony and dis-ease generated by illusions and passions. This liberation takes place, as we have said, through the practice of letting go of grasping. This letting go or release is the active ingredient of the remedy that heals us by transforming our very being and our relationship to the world. It brings about a healing of what I am and that through which I live, transforming me and my relationship to the world. The fundamental remedy offered by contemplative science is the practice of open mindfulness meditation that is essentially a practice of releasing cognitive grasping, or clinging.

The practice of open mindfulness provides a practical way to attenuate the habit of grasping, clinging, and craving in order to reduce disharmony. It deconstructs the polarization of grasping through the practice of openness.

**E24****4. Openness as a remedy for grasping and the path of nonduality**

Now that we have seen the role of releasing clinging and its importance, it is essential to look more closely at the relationship between letting go and openness.

The model of consciousness as polarization\* that we saw in chapter 1 (“A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science: Habitual Consciousness and its Cognitive Model”) shows that consciousness has two poles: the subject and its objects, the observer and that which is observed, each arising in relation to the other in a polarity. The two poles are interdependent in a relationship that unites them. The intensity of the polarization depends on the “solidity” or density of the two poles and the intensity of the grasper-grasping and what is grasped are proportionate to one another. As a result, a decrease in the intensity of cognitive grasping implies a proportional decrease in the duality or intensity of the polarity; and inversely, an increase in the degree of cognitive grasping intensifies the duality between the two poles. Not only does the intensity of the duality-polarity vary in proportion to the intensity of the grasping, but the density—the solidity, so to speak—of each of the two poles varies as well.

In this context, we have also seen that the opening of consciousness is accomplished through the releasing of grasping. Openness and letting go of our grasping take place simultaneously. The important point is that subject-object grasping and its duality are jointly reduced, they are discharged into openness. Put simply, the release of grasping is cultivated in openness, whereas grasping provokes a closing off. By releasing our cognitive grasping, we are able to reduce and ultimately dissolve duality. Openness and releasing constitute two aspects of the same experience. Openness discharges duality and polarization and leads to non-duality. Openness is the path of non-duality.

**E25****5. Relaxed openness as a principle of the training**

Relaxed openness is the heart of the training: it is its central principle of healing and liberation. Relaxed openness is a direct experience of the release of cognitive grasping. Openness leads to relaxation and reciprocally, relaxation creates openness. In practice, we let go completely into openness and we let ourselves somehow fade away into it, without withholding ourselves in any way. In this state of relaxed openness, this state of relaxation, the “I” is suspended and stays suspended. The suspended “I” is an absent “I”: the state of open and relaxed presence is ultimately a state of total presence in openness. At the same time, it is a state of absence, it is the suspension of “I.” It is therefore a state that can be called “presence of absence.”\*

There are three convergent and more or less simultaneous ways to cultivate this relaxed openness. All are situated in the continuity of the openness of the senses and the practice of letting go that we have just seen.

The three approaches are:

1. Panoramic vision

2. The contemplation of space
3. The transparent observer

We will practice these three approaches to relaxed openness.

## 6. Panoramic vision in relaxed openness

**P26**

### Description

Relaxed openness is embodied and experienced through sensation, within the opening of the six senses. Our senses have a natural tendency to be open, provided we do not close them. When the senses are at rest, they are naturally open and attentive. In this way, we discover this attention without tension, and we relearn a state of essential simplicity.

We are open, and our senses are open when we relax. The absence of tension, the letting go is a sort of release. This sense of abandon feels as if we are “fading away into openness” by surrendering completely.

The panoramic gaze provides an ideal visual experience for experimenting with and cultivating openness.

### Practice (Duration: 5-10 min)

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture with the eyes naturally open and relaxed in panoramic vision.

.....

- As in a deep sigh, surrender yourself, letting go into a total opening of the senses. Practice this several times, eventually coupling it with each expiration as we have practiced previously (see P 19).

.....

- Finally, in this sense of surrender, let be, simply remaining in relaxed openness.

.....

## 7. Sky gazing

**P27**

### Description

This practice should be done in an open place with a clear sky. The contemplation of the sky is easier when the sky is not so bright to be dazzling. Sit with your back towards the sun. If it is not possible to do the exercise outdoors, it is also possible to do it indoors in front of a uniform surface like a white wall.

### Practice (Duration: 10 -15 min)

- Situate yourself in front of an open space in a comfortable posture. Your eyes are relaxed, released into the panoramic gaze. Let the breath breathe. Let it happen.

.....

- Begin by contemplating the sky. In the state of openness of the panoramic gaze, let yourself go, completely relaxed, surrendering yourself to the space of the sky. The mind is completely open beyond any limitation.

.....

- By fainting into the openness, let your mind mix with space. Mind and space become inseparable.

.....

- Finally, wherever there is space, there is mind. Mind-space are nondual. Rest in that state, letting it be as it is.

.....

- Remain in this way as long as the practice lasts.

.....

## 8. The transparent observer and the absent observer\*

### Description

P28

Here we address an essential point of the practice with respect to the notion of the observer. In a general sense we could summarize this notion by saying there are three states of the observer: the stable observer, the transparent observer, and the absent observer.

At first, we have to stabilize that which is unstable. The stable observer is accomplished through the practices which improve our ability to remain attentive to one single thing, one-pointedly, like the practice of attentive presence to our breath.

Then, the training involves softening the solidity of the observer—this is the practice of the transparent observer. The state of the transparent observer, or transparent observation, is simply an observation released in openness. The transparent observer contemplates by seeing simply, without judging, without grasping, and without appropriating. The more the observer loosens and opens, the more he or she enters into communion with that which he or she is contemplating. The transparent observer is a neutral observer, who in naked observation experiences nakedly or in the raw —be it naked vision, naked hearing, or naked mind.

We see an enormous difference between a tense observer, who fixates with a dense and solid sense of observation, and a transparent observer who rests in a light and soft observation, with a simple gaze. Moreover, the transparent observer relaxes into that which is observed,

melting into it and fading away by merging with it. When this fusion occurs, there is no longer an observer and observed, there is only observation that experiences itself.

Transparent observation constitutes a central practice for integrating open mindfulness. In this practice, the practitioner-observer-subject simply rests in a relaxed and open state. Rather than disassociating and differentiating ourselves from what is experienced, the observer lets himself or herself go into what is observed, communing with his or her experience in complete embodiment. The separation between observer-observed diminishes gradually towards the fusion of the observer and that which is observed, which gives rise to the experience of the absent observer. In this way, we ultimately realize the state of the absent observer, or presence of absence. This is non-duality, where the observer is suspended, observation without observer.

**In brief:**

- In the first case the observer is stable in a single experience.
- In the second case, the transparent observer is more or less suspended in an open, unbound, and relaxed contemplation. In our relaxing, there is more and more transparency of the observing subject, more and more openness and embodiment, and less and less grasping. This open and relaxed contemplation dissolves the observer more and more, until the point of total transparency and total embodiment, which is the absent observer.
- In the third case of the absent observer, the observer is completely suspended and vanishes. It is the state of union, of non-duality.

The practice of the transparent observer is the supreme path for training in non-dual mindfulness.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual, comfortably seated, rest in the sensation of the body, the breath, and in panoramic vision, vast, open and relaxed.  
.....
- Let yourself go into openness, surrendering yourself, letting go, letting be.  
.....
- In this relaxed state, contemplate with simplicity, letting the observer melt into its object, merging with its object.  
.....
- Rest in this way as much as you can, coming back to the contemplation each time that you become distracted.  
.....

## 9. The presence of absence, instant presence, is embodiment

Presence of absence\* is observation without an observer, being one with what is arising in the moment. Being one with the moment is also instantaneous presence,\* or immediate presence. In all cases, in this experience we are one and not two, fully embodying the present instant. We are 100% present in the instant. However, this does not mean that the “I” is 100% present. As mentioned earlier in “Training in the Principle of Relaxed Openness,” in such a state, the “I,” “me,” “observer,” is absent, suspended. Total presence arises in the absence of self; this is 100% true mindfulness. Mindfulness equates with mind emptiness. Open mindfulness is an experience of embodiment in which “I,” the observer-subject, is incorporated, absorbed in the situation of the present. Our embodiment entails the three dimensions of open mindfulness simultaneously: attention, openness, and kindness. Or, to put it another way: clarity, openness, and compassion.

Thus, in the practice of openness, the solidity of mind-as-subject ultimately dissolves to leave the simple, direct, and immediate cognitive function which understands itself. The mind of complete openness is a mind where cognitive clarity and lucidity is realized in itself, free of grasping, in open mindfulness.

### ○ ATTITUDES, ADVICE AND SUMMARY OF THE FOURTH STEP

#### The characteristic attitude of the fourth step

7- Non-effort in relaxed openness

#### The seventh attitude: non-effort in relaxed openness

The state of open presence is cultivated in the effortless state of suspension. Effort would be to try to “fabricate” a particular state or experience. Non-effort simply lets be—whatever happens, whatever comes—naturally, without intention or intervention. The best way to do nothing is to not to be there. This is why non-effort finds its perfection in the state of the presence of absence.

The practice of non-effort/non-intervention/non-contrivance consists in simply remaining in the state of the transparent observer in a stable and continuous way. The frequent reminders of the transparent observer then make it possible to maintain the state of open presence in a more and more stable and continuous way. The transparent observer lets everything be in the present moment without grasping, resting in attention without tension.

The essential point of this fundamental attitude is letting be in the state of open presence, without fabrication, contrivance, or intervention. The real effort here consists in remaining in non-effort. Effort in this case is simply that of reminders which bring us back to non-effort. It is about remaining tranquilly in a state of non-intervention. We remain at rest in this way, in non-intervention, in the non-action of relaxed openness.

### **Advice for the fourth step**

The advice for the fourth step is to learn to let go and remain suspended in relaxed openness, fully embodying the experience.

### **Summary of the fourth step**

The fourth step, “open and relaxed presence” is the central and most fundamental practice of open mindfulness. In open and relaxed presence, our fixations are loosened, untied, discharged, dissolved, and naturally exhausted.

In other words, in the open and relaxed presence of the transparent observer, suspended and absent, there is a dissolution of dualistic consciousness and its conflicting emotions.



### **A model practice sequence for the fourth step**

- **Sitting practice: Open and relaxed presence (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this practice sequence every day if possible, at least six days a week. Note that the introduction to the session and the conclusion are always the same.

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

#### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (30')**

- Seated stretches— **P 8** (3')
- The seven points of the sitting posture – **P 9** (1')



- Opening with the outbreath and pause – **P 19** (5')
- Panoramic vision in relaxed openness– **P 26** (10')
- The transparent observer and the absent observer– **P 28** (10')

#### **CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

- **Reminders: meditation in action week 4, “Open and relaxed presence”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

#### **ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of open and relaxed presence

#### **BRIEF PAUSE**

- Three minutes of the practice of panoramic vision
- Three minutes of the practice of the transparent observer and the absent observer

#### **PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

##### **Ongoing**

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep.

##### **In particular**

- Mindfully brushing your teeth
- Mindfully taking a shower
- Contemplating the elements of nature
- Contemplating the sky and space
- Mindfully doing the dishes and cooking

Don't forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website  
[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

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## **STEP FIVE**

### **INTEGRATING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS IN OPEN MINDFULNESS**

In the first two steps we experienced attentive presence, and in the third and fourth, open presence. We will now see how to integrate thoughts and emotions into the practice.

#### **REMINDER OF THE POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS**

As with all steps, the training develops through the practice of presence and reminders, the two tools of open mindfulness meditation.

In the first step we began with attentive presence to the body, then in the second step attentive presence to the breath. In the third step, we trained in open presence of our surroundings by awakening the external senses. The fourth step allows us to expand this opening through releasing grasping in open and relaxed presence. Now in the fifth step, this relaxed openness provides the background in which we integrate our thoughts and emotions.

The instructions on the obstacles and remedies are applied as before.

The fifth step has two sections:

- 1- Integrating thoughts in open mindfulness
- 2- Integrating emotions in open mindfulness

#### **INTEGRATING THOUGHTS IN OPEN MINDFULNESS**

**The integration of our thoughts includes seven presentations and practices**

1. It is not about not having thoughts! (E 27)
2. Changing our relationship to thoughts (E 28)
3. The ego and thought: "I think therefore I am," "I am because I think?" (E 29)
4. Thought is useful, but does it not maintain the ego? (E 30)
5. Boredom as a withdrawal symptom (E 31)
6. The present moment lives in the silence of discursive thinking (E 32)
7. The three main ways of integrating thoughts:
  - in relaxed open presence (P 29)
  - in the state of the transparent observer (P 30)
  - with and without labeling (P 31)

### 1. It is not about not having thoughts!

E27

We should first dispel a fairly widespread misconception among some practitioners who imagine that meditation consists in training ourselves not to have any thoughts, to develop a state without thought. We would then attain perfection in death, with a flat-lined EEG! We have to understand that thoughts are normal and good. Conceptual thinking delivers the precious dexterity that makes us uniquely human. Thoughts are good, useful, and necessary. Our precious human condition depends on it, so it is not a question of wanting to suppress it.

Integrating our thoughts in mindfulness consists in changing our relation to thoughts, of changing our way of thinking.

E28

### 2. Changing our relationship to thoughts

We learn to integrate our thoughts in mindfulness by developing a proper relationship with them. This proper relationship is free of grasping, a relationship of non-grasping. A relationship of non-grasping is ultimately a non-relation. We learn gradually to release our grasping of thoughts.

The practice is not so much interested in the content of thoughts—whether their colors are blue, black, red, or pink, whether they are noble or ignoble—but rather the relationship we have with them. All thoughts, whatever they are, are considered as mere thoughts. We do not judge them, we simply accept them, whatever they are. What is essential in our relationship to thoughts is our degree of investment or disinvestment in them. Our thoughts deceive us when we take them for reality. Thoughts always constitute a mere representation, a perspective, a reading, an interpretation of reality, more or less relevant, they are never reality in itself.

Integrating thoughts consists first of all in treating all thoughts with neutrality. The proper relationship being a relationship of non-judgment, of non-grasping, of non-investment in thoughts. We train ourselves to simply see all thoughts as “mere thoughts,” without attaching ourselves to them. We learn to let them go without following them and thereby leave them without any further action.

### 3. The ego\* and thought: “I think therefore I am,” “I am because I think?”

E29

We all know the famous phrase “*Cogito ergo sum*” by Descartes: “I think therefore I am.” Without entering into a philosophical discussion and without declaring ourselves Cartesian, we would simply like to consider the corollary of this statement: “I am because I think.” This statement is based on a relationship between being, “I am,” and thought. Is it true that I am, that I exist because I think? That the being that I am, “me,” the ego, exists in and through thought? If it were thought, discursive thinking, the inner discourse that we maintain with ourselves that

makes us exist, could we conclude that without discursive thoughts, without this inner discourse, we would no longer exist? If it is thought that makes me exist, would “I” no longer exist in the absence of thinking? And we could also logically ask ourselves, do we exist to the extent that we think? Are the self and thought proportional? And if that were the case, could we say that the less thoughts there are, the less there is of me? Or simply, “the less I think, the less I am?” Experience shows that this is effectively the reality. This is why the ego-self has so much resistance to thinking less. To not think anymore is fatal for the “me”!

The “ego-self” opposes and resists its own diminution, its disappearance. By thinking less, its existence, its feeling of being diminishes. “I” am so dependent on thought that without it, “I” would no longer truly exist; without discursive thought, the “I” would disappear. Thinking is an addiction of the ego-self that enables it to survive. Discursive thinking allows the “I-me” to perpetuate itself, it allows the ego to maintain itself.

In this context, integrating thoughts in open mindfulness is a sort of detox of this dependence of “I-me” on discursive thought.

It is also useful to ask “What am I, when I don’t think?” Or again, “Who am I, how am I, when I don’t think?” These questions bring us insight into what I am and what I am not.

#### 4. Thought is useful, but does it not maintain the ego? \*

E30

We spoke above about how thoughts are good and are not to be suppressed, and we have also said that the ego depends on thought to survive. Does this mean that the ego is good and should not be suppressed? Here we have an important issue, selfishness being the source of much difficulty and disharmony. Let us just say that the ego is good if it's a good ego! And that a good ego is a non-selfish, altruistic ego. We should also add that the ego must not be suppressed, in the sense that it is not a question of attacking it to eliminate it, as such aggression would be counterproductive. It is rather a question of perceiving the unreality of the ego. By experientially understanding the illusion of the ego we release ourselves from its grasp.

Regarding thought, we can distinguish two broad categories of thought, or more exactly that there are two general types of relationships to thought—dual and nondual—that generate two types of thoughts:

- **Habitual thought, that is generally discursive**, that is to say it develops in the relationship of a speaker to an inner listener, often in an inner discourse. We discuss with ourselves by making questions and answers in an internal dialogue. We have a commentator and an internal interlocutor with whom we talk. The “I-ego” discusses or maintains a relationship with its alter-ego, so we are basically talking to ourselves.

- **Thought in itself, nondual**. “Thinking in itself” is a thought without a thinker, a thought that thinks itself without being thought by a thinker. It is non-discursive thought, nondual or reflexive thought. Non-thought thought is not really thinkable, conceivable, in habitual ways of thinking.

Suffice it to say that discursive thought maintains the ego whereas non-thought, non-discursive thought is egoless thinking. This remark raises the logical difficulty which we introduced above, but also introduces the experiential challenge of discovering "unthinkable thinking."

Practically speaking, training in mindfulness transforms dual thought into nondual thought, "thought without a thinker." We will now see how.

## 5. Boredom as a withdrawal symptom

E31

Thinking is somehow an addiction of the ego that enables it to survive. When the observer becomes transparent or is suspended in the state of open presence, we cease to maintain the activity of the discursive mind. The release in openness diminishes the person who grasps, the grasping, and the active relation between them. In such a situation where there is a decrease in mental activity, there is normally a defensive ego reaction. The ego does not want to disappear, it does not want to die or face its insubstantiality. To maintain itself and not disappear or die, it develops defensive survival strategies such as agitation, the production of thoughts, or boredom. Boredom is the reaction of the "I-me" when it is in withdrawal from mental agitation. This reaction is just like addiction withdrawal. Boredom is a withdrawal symptom that manifests when the ego is deprived of its addiction to thought. It is a symptom of its wanting; the ego is in a state of lack. The ego's addiction to discursive thought undergoes this "detox" phenomenon of withdrawal. So, in practice, experiencing boredom is a good sign. Boredom cannot be avoided. Ultimately, beyond boredom, there is peace, true tranquility, deep rest and well-being. We could say then that the detox is over and that the state of health, the depth of mind before thought has been attained.

## 6. The present moment lives in the silence of discursive thinking

E32

The ordinary automatic ego functioning that we have named "autopilot\*" operates through the conceptual representations of our "virtual world.\*" This world of representations masks the fundamental state and constantly exiles us from the state of presence. The state of presence is prior to habitual consciousness with its grasping towards representations, prior to the thoughts that identify and categorize through conceptual labelling.

There is thus the present and the conceptual "re-presentation" of this present. The present is first, while its representation is second. The representation of the present begins with the identification of forms identified as signifying something. Then the identified forms are designated with names. There is thus a process of identifying form and naming, constituting two layers of conceptualization. This conceptualization, or conceptual representation of the present, makes us constantly depart from the pristine natural state of presence.

Conceptual thinking is useful for interpreting the terrain of our present reality, but it constitutes the strata of the layers that cover the present and exile us from its immediacy.

The present moment comes alive when discursive thinking ceases altogether. "Silent mind, healthy mind," as the traditional saying goes.

## **7. The three main ways of integrating thoughts**

There are three main approaches to integrating thoughts. They all have the function of releasing grasping to the point of complete non-grasping. These approaches can be considered as being in a successive progression, but are also complementary. They are useful depending on the receptivity of the practitioners, their progress on the path, and the circumstances at hand. They are most often practiced in alternation.

The three approaches are the integration of thoughts in:

1. Relaxed open presence
2. The state of the transparent observer
3. Recognition, with or without labeling

### **1. Integrating thoughts in relaxed open presence**

This approach suggests being in the naked experience of thought in openness. The integration of thoughts in relaxed open presence consists in simply remaining in relaxed openness, without worrying about thoughts. No specific attention is paid to thoughts—we do not concern ourselves about them but simply remain absent, unhooked, in a completely open and relaxed presence.

This first approach is the most essential. When we begin practicing, it is possible to start with this, discovering the qualities of thought in openness rather than through labeling. But if we find this approach difficult, we can experiment with the other two, and especially practice the verbal and non-verbal recognition of thoughts, ultimately aiming to return to their integration in openness.

### **2. Integrating thoughts in the transparent observer**

This consists in remaining disengaged from thoughts, without pursuing them, letting them pass without following them, remaining relaxed in a position of soft observation which simply sees, without judging or interfering. (We described the transparent observer in P 28.)

### **3. Integrating thoughts through recognition with and without labelling**

Here we learn to recognize thoughts as mere thoughts, which allows us to return to relaxed, unengaged observation. They are then let go without continuing the conversation of discursive thought, without responding to what we say to ourselves. This recognition can be done by labeling the thoughts. Applying the label "thought," and telling ourselves "thought," is verbal recognition. It is also possible to recognize them with non-verbal recognition, a simple immediate recognition.

In these three modes of integration we have to adapt to circumstances, according to our sensitivity and our receptivity, practicing what speaks to us and helps us the most, while also being cognizant of their progression.

We will now consider these three approaches in greater detail.

- **Integrating thoughts in relaxed open presence**

**Description**

**P29**

This approach is based on relaxed open presence and consists in simply remaining open to the sensation of the moment. Having discovered openness, the open state, we realize that in this state our relationship to our thoughts changes. They tend to subside, they are less important or even absent. The important thing is to stay in the simple relaxed openness in which the naked experience of thought is experienced. In this state there is no need to "integrate thoughts" in an active or particular way. Integration is simply staying in the relaxed open state. This state brings with it a process of releasing grasping that enables a natural integration to take place.

There is a particular quality in beginning this practice of integration in the state of openness, of discovering the state of thought in openness. In this state, thoughts are naturally integrated into the practice. You do not even have to talk about thinking or doing anything, you just have to cultivate the state of releasing grasping in openness.

This the primary approach of the practice of open presence, of *Open Mindfulness*. Of all approaches it is the most essential, and it is sufficient if we understand it and are able to practice it with stability. This stability is cultivated through gentle reminders, returning to sensorial opening and relaxed open presence. However, as the habits of distracting thoughts are very compelling, it is generally necessary, at least in the beginning as a preliminary and/or complement, to also use the other two approaches.

**Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)**

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture, breathe naturally, the senses open, the gaze relaxed in panoramic vision.  
.....
- Relax, fully release yourself in the state of surrender, fully present to the experience of the moment, suspended in the unobstructed, open state.  
.....
- In this state, do not be concerned about thoughts, their flow, or their content. Remain in the state of suspension, of contemplation.  
.....



- There is nothing to do, to say, to comment upon, or to judge. Remain naturally relaxed in openness. The simple fact of staying totally open in this way decreases the captivating power of thoughts and transforms both their nature and the relationship you have with them.

.....

- Remain in this way as long as you can, returning to the relaxed open state every time you become distracted.

.....

### • Integrating thoughts in the state of the transparent observer

#### Description

**P30**

We described the practice of the transparent observer in the previous chapter (E 28). The practice of integrating thoughts in the transparent observer is to simply remain in the state of the transparent observer as we experience thoughts, without judgment, without running away from thoughts or following them, letting them pass, letting them be. The transparent observer experiences thoughts very lightly, gently, in a neutral and kind way, without grasping. We experience them while remaining relaxed in openness. If we contemplate in this way, thoughts will tend to dissolve naturally, "like snowflakes on a hot stone," as is said in a traditional metaphor. The image is very evocative: a snowflake twirls and settles gently on a hot stone, and in an instant, it dissolves and disappears.

Through training, we discover how to stay in the naked observation of the transparent observer, experiencing simply, without grasping, remaining in the openness of panoramic vision and deep relaxation. In this experience of the transparent observer, the distance between observer and observed, between the thinker and the thought, diminishes and finally disappears.

This practice is close to the previous one, "Integrating thoughts in relaxed open presence." There is nevertheless a significant difference because the state of the transparent observer maintains a very slight frame of reference that facilitates reminders, a recalled awareness of that state.

#### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual, comfortably seated, in the full sensation of the body and breath, in the wide and open panoramic gaze, relaxed.
- .....
- Let yourself go into openness, surrender yourself, letting go, letting be.
- .....
- In this relaxed state, contemplate simply, allowing the observer to melt into its object, merging with thought.

- .....
- Contemplate in this way as much as you can, returning to this state each time you become distracted.
- .....

- **Integrating thoughts with and without labelling**

The recognition of thoughts can be done with or without labelling.

**P31**

### **Recognition with labelling**

#### **Description**

This is about recognizing thoughts by labeling them mentally by saying "thought" as soon as a thought arises. There is a mental verbalization, "thought," which recognizes thought for what it is: a simple thought. It is a very simple and effective method to discharge the thoughts of their powers of attraction or repulsion in order to not become reactive, to not enter into their reactivity. It's just a matter of not reacting to thoughts, of letting them pass without following them. By saying "thought," we do not judge, react, or follow.

#### **Practice (Duration: 5 min)**

- As usual, settle in a comfortable posture, breathe naturally, the senses open, the gaze relaxed in panoramic vision.
- .....
- In this state, observe your thoughts and learn not to grasp them. It is a matter of not giving them importance, of making them completely ordinary or commonplace. Do not judge them. Without responding or reacting to your thoughts, you free yourself from investing in them.
- .....
- You learn to recognize all thoughts as being simply thoughts, not thoughts that are white, black, red, blue, noble, ignoble, good, bad, or anything, but just thoughts. They lose their captivating power and you can let them go without investing in them, without answering them, without following them. If you do not invest in thoughts, they tend to subside, because it is your investment that nourishes and maintains them.
- .....
- Thus, you learn to recognize your thoughts with verbal recognition: whenever a thought emerges, you recognize it for what it is, mentally saying, "thought." Do not interact with it. Without interference, without implication, see the thought and label it mentally: "thought." This acknowledgement cuts short any other consideration. You see thoughts as a mere production of the mind, no more, no less.

- .....
- Continue in this way as much as you can for the entire duration of the practice.
- .....

**Note:** This labeling or verbal recognition is a form of reminders that avoids getting involved in thoughts. It will only be effective if we use it regularly and with patience. It is counterproductive to create tension by wanting to "succeed" in the exercise. Be persistent, diligent, but tolerant and gentle with yourself. The practice of reminders is always a question of dosage, as we have seen in "The obstacles of the training and their remedies." As the old saying says, "poison or cure, all is a question of dosage." Gradually, the recognition of thoughts will become nonverbal.

## **Non-verbal recognition without labelling**

### **Description**

This is about recognizing thoughts when they arise, but without needing to label them. Non-verbal recognition without labeling is usually preceded by verbal recognition with labeling. When the habit of recognition with labeling has developed, it gradually transforms into nonverbal recognition. To take an example: when we have become accustomed to the name of a person who is familiar to us, we no longer need to tell ourselves "it's Mr. or Ms. so and so." The recognition of the person is done in a non-verbal way, we know who he or she is without needing to affix their name.

### **Practice** (Duration: 5 min)

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture, breathe naturally, the senses open, the gaze relaxed in panoramic vision.
- .....
- In a relaxed and open state, remain in a state of observation, of attention, and simply recognize thoughts as they emerge without the need to name them. Recognize them simply as you would recognize a familiar person.
- .....
- As soon as a thought appears, see it but don't invest in it. Leave it as it is, without running from or after it. Know that it is just a thought.
- .....
- This training in nonverbal recognition gradually leads to the state of the transparent observer.
- .....
- Continue as much as you can, without distraction.
- .....

## ○ Advice and summary of integrating thoughts in mindfulness

### **Advice for integrating thoughts in mindfulness**

The advice for integrating thoughts in mindfulness is to experience them in the state of the transparent observer, or otherwise recognize them and to welcome them without following or avoiding them and, in any case, let them free themselves in openness.

### **The summary of integrating thoughts in mindfulness**

The practice for integrating thoughts is training in the right relationship to thoughts, in releasing grasping, without being caught or deluded by them. The practice uses the methods of relaxed openness, the transparent observer, and recognition with and without labeling.

## **INTEGRATING EMOTIONS IN OPEN MINDFULNESS**

### **The nine presentations and practices for integrating emotions**

1. Emotions: conflicting and participatory (E 33)
2. Conflicting emotions or “passions” (E 34)
3. The two parts of passionate states (E 35)
4. Emotions of participation (E 36)
5. Not struggling and not suppressing (E 37)
6. The three-stage method of integrating emotions (P 32)
7. Practice by testing yourself (E 38)
8. Mindfulness towards a pleasant emotion (P 33)
9. Mindfulness towards an unpleasant emotion (P 34)

### **1. Emotions\*: conflicting and participatory**

**E33**

Emotions shape our life, they form its tone and color. Emotions stir us, move us, mobilize us, set us in motion, and animate us. And often emotions possess us, making us lose control. They can even cause the worst types of behavior—a moment of anger can destroy a life of good deeds, as it is said.

Just like thoughts, emotions are part of our normal way of functioning. We do not seek to get rid of them or reject them by running away. Escaping emotions or repressing them maintains and even tends to amplify them. The key, as for thoughts, is learning how to relate with them. We train ourselves not to let ourselves be possessed by our emotions and learn to free them and transform them so that they become healthy and positive energy.

We have seen in the previous section how thinking is a process of representing our world; we can now consider emotion as an "energized," "dynamized" thought. An emotion begins with a thought that, when invested with an emotional charge, becomes an emotion. It is interesting to note that the word emotion comes from Latin *movere*, which means movement. An emotion makes us move, it is an interior movement likely to mobilize us, to carry us along.

Just as with thoughts, the practice of mindfulness towards emotions, or, the integration of emotions, is a training in non-grasping. The integration of emotions comes through training in letting go, in releasing grasping, which, by surrendering the emotion, lets it discharge and transform. There is thus a release of emotion, an emotional release.

We will consider two overarching types of emotions: dualistic conflicting emotions, and non-dual emotions of participation. The conflicting emotions occur within the state of grasping while those of participation take place in the state of non-grasping. Conflicting emotions are egotistical, uncomfortable, and painful, while emotions of participation can be described as good and positive in the sense that they lead to basic health, and bring a pleasant and happy feeling. Nevertheless, emotions of participation such as empathy and kindness, although positive, can be painful. Empathy can be an experience of sharing the suffering of others.

In the context of the training, practicing with emotions makes it possible to turn conflicting emotions into emotions of participation.

## 2. Conflicting emotions or “passions”

E34

Conflicting emotions, as their name suggests, are experienced in the context of conflict that can also be said to be passionate. These emotions are "passions." Conflictual rhymes with dual, and it is in dual-natured conflicts where conflicting emotions arise.

Conflicting emotions come from the three basic drives: positive, negative, and neutral, which emerge between the two poles of dualistic subject-object grasping. They proceed from the following three forms of impulse or attachment: procuring what is good, avoiding what is bad and not being disturbed by what is neutral.

These three impulses are:

- Desire or attraction of the subject for desired objects, “good things.”
- Aversion or repulsion of the subject, the rejection of undesirable “bad” things.
- Ignorance of what is neutral, “indifferent things.”

Conflict stems from the wanting felt by a subject incapable of satisfying his or her desires, possessing, or enjoying good things. Then, even if his or her desires are satisfied, another suffering comes from loss, from the disappearance of possessed things that are “good.” Conflict can also stem from the discomfort resulting from a confrontation with “bad” things, from not being able to avoid them. Finally, conflict stems from indifference which, although does not seem really confrontational at first glance, is nevertheless marked by a form of violence that refuses to be exposed to a situation that he or she prefers to ignore.

### 3. The two parts of passionate states

E35

The three basic conflicting emotions of attraction, repulsion, and indifference structure all of the different conflicting emotions and passionate states. We will describe them based on their two main components: emotional tone and emotional intensity.

- **Emotional tone** is the emotional coloring of a state, it corresponds to the type of conflicting emotion. It is helpful to consider six main conflicting emotions or passions: anger-hatred, greed, indifference/stupidity, desire/attachment, jealousy/rivalry, and pride/self-satisfaction. These six emotional tones define the six main emotional states of habitual consciousness.

These six conflicting emotions originate from the three basic relationships of attraction, repulsion, and indifference:

- From attraction come desire/attachment and greed.
- From aversion come anger/hatred and jealousy/rivalry.
- From indifference come stupidity and pride/self-satisfaction.

All of the conflicting emotions that we are likely to experience proceed from the elements of these six main tones.

- **Emotional intensity** is the intensity of grasping invested in the emotional tone, it is the force of the polarization of the passion. Thus, each of the six main emotional tones can be experienced with variable intensity, from minimum to maximum.

From the combination of these two components, tone and intensity, all of the multitude of conflictual or passionate states of dualistic consciousness are born.

Whatever the tone and intensity, in every case, practicing with the emotions consists in releasing grasping. This release of grasping reduces the intensity of conflicting emotions, which then lose their conflictual character in equal measure, and they gradually transform into emotions of participation, communion, or union.

#### 4. Emotions of participation

E36

The second major type of emotions are emotions of participation. In contrast to conflicting emotions, they are less dualistic. In the conflictual type, there is a distance, a duality, whereas in participation, there is a form of union, of communion. Emotions of participation are intense experiences of empathy, love, trust, and benevolence.

Keep in mind that the names we use to designate certain emotions that are generally perceived as positive, of participation, such as, for example, "love" or "joy," can nevertheless refer to conflicting emotions. Joy and love can be experienced in situations of conflict ("love" in the case of possessive attachment towards someone, or "joy" in the case of the satisfaction that comes from hurting an enemy).

By participation, we mean that in this type of emotion we participate fully in what is experienced, we become one with what is experienced. The emotions of participation are embodied emotions. This embodiment is an intense presence that can be experienced with great emotional intensity. For example, a deep communion with the beauty of a landscape can move us to have tears in our eyes.

When the emotions of participation are experienced in deep and open presence, we discover the third quality of deep presence: the deep empathic presence of participation, union, or compassion that we will practice in the next step.

#### 5. Not struggling and not suppressing

E37

Before we start training with emotions, it is very important to understand that struggling with emotions is counterproductive. To fight with our thoughts or emotions is like trying to fight with our shadow: the more we move, the more it moves, the more we struggle, the more it fights back.

Wanting to block our thoughts or emotions is not only counterproductive but can even be dangerous. It amounts to a form of denial or repression. The energy we invest in repressing a thought or emotion nourishes it, and it comes back nourished by the energy we have invested to repress it. This return of the repressed emotion could be compared to a balloon that we would like to submerge under water. The deeper we push it down, the stronger will be its rise back to the surface.

The right practice for integrating emotions is the opposite of struggle and repression: we accept that the emotion is there, we leave it alone, and we step away, leaving ourselves in suspension. This will be our training in the following practices.

#### 6. The three-stage method of integrating emotions

P32

The three methods of integrating thoughts (in relaxed openness, in the transparent observer, with and without labeling) can be applied to the integration of emotions, which are, as

we have said, "energized" thoughts, invested with an emotional charge. These three methods can therefore be re-used, and the approach is exactly the same.

We train progressively, beginning with an easy situation and habitual thoughts. Then, when we get used to integrating normal thoughts, it becomes easier to begin integrating small emotions, then gradually strong emotions and finally all emotions.

Now we will consider a specific practice of mindfully integrating and releasing emotions. It has three stages:

1. The first stage is to **recognize** and **welcome** the presence of the emotion.
2. The second stage is to **breathe** with the emotion. By breathing we **embody** the emotion and **let it discharge** into openness.
3. At ease after the discharge of the emotion, the third stage consists in **remaining in the state of the transparent observer**, in harmony with the situation.

We will further develop and practice each of these three stages.

- **First stage: recognition and welcoming**

**Description**

The purpose of this exercise is to recognize the presence of an emotion. Usually, we do not spot the arrival of an emotion. If we could see the emotion as soon as it appears, we might not be carried away by its energy. To do this, the "physical dashboard" presented in step one (P 9) is very useful. What we then called "the body barometer" allows us to detect the emergence of an emotion through our bodily sensations by being attentive to these sensations.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 min)

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture, the senses open, relaxed in the panoramic gaze, breathing naturally.  
.....
- In this state, feel your body, observe it. Watch what is going on in it and detect the signs of the emergence of an emotion.  
.....
- Notice particularly your breathing, how your heart beats, the small sensations in your belly, throat, or elsewhere that reflect the presence of an emotion. This attention to the sensation of the body helps you to recognize the appearance of an emotion.  
.....



- If you have no detectable emotion at the moment, you can evoke a recent emotional situation in your life. It should be easy to find a situation that has provoked an emotion, evoke it and feel the emotion.

.....

- Having recognized the presence of an emotion, now welcome it. Rather than wanting to follow or run away from it, simply welcome and accept its presence without judgment. You feel its energy, its warmth: it can be manifested in different ways depending on the nature of the emotion. It may be "starting to see red," increased adrenaline production, more intense breathing, accelerated heart rate. . . . In any case, simply welcome this emotion and its energy with kindness, with an inner "yes" that is a kind of smile, a nonjudgmental acceptance.

.....

- Do not ask yourself if this emotion is there or not. Just stay in a state of relaxed attention, welcoming the emotion, letting it come.

.....

- If it helps you, as with your thoughts, you can fall back on verbal recognition with labeling: "emotion," or simple nonverbal recognition. This recognition allows a neutral and benevolent acceptance of emotions, it lets you enter into friendship with what is emotional and conflictual in yourself.

.....

- **Second stage:**

**Breathing with the emotion, embodying it and letting it discharge**

**Description**

The second stage consists in breathing with an emotion by embodying it and letting it discharge into openness. Having welcomed and accepted the presence of the emotion we use the alternation of the breath cycle to embody and allow the emotion to be discharged. Especially with the inbreath, we welcome its energy and incorporate it, embodying it. With the outbreath we relax completely and let this energy discharge into the open.

**Practice (Duration: 5 min)**

- As always, sit in a comfortable posture, the senses completely open and relaxed in the panoramic gaze, breathing naturally.

.....

- Now, after welcoming the emotion, familiarize yourself with its presence and enter into its energy without fear or resistance. Stay with the feeling by breathing with its sensation.

.....

- Embody the emotion, let yourself go into the sensation of its energy, embodying it more and more.

.....

- This embodiment of the emotion is associated with breathing, the pulsation of the breath. Let yourself go into the rhythm of the inhalation and exhalation. In particular, associate the inbreath with welcoming and the outbreath with letting go into openness.

.....

- Breathing in this way, relax and surrender yourself into the energy of the emotion. In the coming and going of the breath, you gradually embody the emotion and allow it to discharge.

.....

- Continue in this way, letting the energy of the emotion be as it is. In the relaxation that comes with letting go, the distance between you and the emotion is reduced and finally disappears, leaving simply its energy in openness. The emotion then becomes an energy that is not possessed, a free energy that radiates and discharges itself.

.....

- By practicing for however long is necessary, the emotional intensity decreases, fades and finally dissolves. The remainder of this energy is no longer conflictual and can even become a source of intelligence that will animate the third step.

.....

- **Third stage:**

**Remain at ease in the state of the transparent observer, in harmony with the situation.**

**Description**

In this third stage, once the emotion has been discharged, we remain uncontrived in simple global open presence, in the state of the transparent observer. We are in harmony with the situation and can respond in the right way if the situation demands it.

**Practice** (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As always, sit in a comfortable posture, the senses completely open and relaxed in the panoramic gaze, breathing naturally.  
.....
- For this third stage of integrating emotion, remain at ease in openness, in the state of the transparent observer. During the second stage the emotional charge has been discharged, and the body and mind are now released. Remain at rest, uncontrived, in the simple open presence of the transparent observer.  
.....
- Naturally and quietly, the breath breathes on its own. You are one with it, at ease in the situation.  
.....
- In this state of full, attentive, open and empathic presence, you are in harmony with the situation and its inherent intelligence, and so an adaptive response can emerge, whether to say or do something, or to not say or do anything.  
.....
- Initially, when the emotion was intense, you would have reacted emotionally. But now that the emotion is discharged, you can respond in harmony and empathy, perceiving the situation in a much more open, realistic, and kind way. This harmonious response can take any form. You are free to respond appropriately and intelligently, adapted to the circumstances. In any case, the harmonious response will arise out of empathy and benevolence rather than the aggression of emotional conflict.

## 7. Practice by testing yourself

**E38**

At the beginning of the practice it is important to become familiar with the three-stage method we have just seen. We train ourselves by sitting on a meditation cushion, remembering past situations that have touched us and are still emotionally charged. We bring them up, invite them, and train to integrate them into mindfulness by applying the three stages.

Little by little, we apply the method in our daily life, first in relatively easy situations and gradually with more difficult situations that are more emotionally charged.

As soon as we have the impression of mastering a stage, we can test ourselves by practicing with our big obstacles, our "old demons," and see if we are able to integrate them. It is important to train in particular with the emotions and unpleasant situations that we tend to avoid. Training requires patience and courage, but it will transform our relationship to emotions as well as our lives. Our emotional reactivity will diminish, we will no longer be constantly bothered by our emotions and will become more stable. This does not mean that we will not have emotions anymore, but as we said before, conflicting emotions discharge and gradually turn into emotions of participation. We will become more transparent, receptive, available, and open; while positive

emotions of participation such as tenderness, kindness, goodness, and compassion will grow more and more.

## 8. Mindfulness towards a pleasant emotion

### Description

P33

The exercise is to evoke an emotion of an agreeable and pleasant situation. This evocation invites an agreeable and pleasant sensation of happiness in us. We then remain in this experience, comfortably seated in the posture, and apply the three-stage method (P 32) adapted to the particular circumstance.

### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture, the senses completely open and relaxed in the panoramic gaze, breathing naturally.  
.....
- Now let an emotion related to an agreeable and pleasant situation emerge in you. It can be associated with an image, an atmosphere, a person. Feel it fully, let it be present. Welcome it by letting it penetrate you completely and find out what this pleasant situation arouses in your body.  
.....
- Let yourself go, merging with the sensation of this pleasant emotion. Embody it, incorporate it through the breath: open yourself with the inbreath and surrender yourself with the outbreath. Let the sensation diffuse and radiate, relaxing into openness.  
.....
- Finally, rest relaxed in a simple open presence.  
.....

## 9. Mindfulness towards an unpleasant emotion

### Description

This is the same exercise as the previous one, now applying the three-stage method to an unpleasant emotion or difficult situation.

P34

### Practice (Duration: 5 - 10 min)

- As usual, sit in a comfortable posture, the senses completely open and relaxed in the panoramic gaze, feel your breath breathing naturally.

- .....
- Then, find a situation that awakens annoyance or stress in you, something that awakens an unpleasant conflicting emotion. In general, it is not very difficult to find one from daily life. Feel the effect it produces in your body.
- .....
- As in the previous exercise, apply the three steps:
    1. Recognize the presence of the emotion and welcome it without reservation.
    2. Embody it through the breath, letting it diffuse, radiate, and discharge into openness: welcome with the inbreath, surrender and let go with the outbreath.
    3. Finally, remain tranquil, in peace and harmony, in the state of the transparent observer.

**Note:** In this exercise with a conflicting emotion, your body may contract, due to denial or fear of reliving an unpleasant emotion. If you perceive such tensions, recognize them, welcome them and breathe with relaxation and opening, welcoming with the inbreath, surrendering and letting go with the outbreath.

## ○ Advice and summary for integrating emotions

### **Advice for integrating emotions in mindfulness**

The advice for integrating emotions in mindfulness is to recognize them and then embody them, allowing them to liberate themselves.

### **Summary of the integration of emotions in mindfulness**

The practice of mindfulness of emotions teaches us to integrate them in a three-step method:

- 1- Recognizing the emotion
- 2- Embody them and allow them to discharge by breathing with them
- 3- Harmoniously respond in the state of the transparent observer, with presence free of grasping, in which an adaptive and kind response naturally emerges

○ **Characteristic attitudes, advice, and summary of the fifth step, integrating thoughts and emotions**

**Characteristic attitudes of the fifth step**

8- The state of open clarity without grasping

9- Reminders and non-distraction

**The eighth attitude: the state of open clarity without grasping \***

The present moment is experienced in freedom from grasping, the absence of fixation and projection, without attachment and judgement.

This experience of the present moment is a state of clarity, lucidity, open and free of grasping. It is clarity that lives in itself, which is understood in itself. We remain tranquil in this state, suspended, without interfering with what naturally presents itself, without modifying the reality of the present moment.

Experiencing the state of open presence, of open clarity without grasping, is to be in a state of receptivity and availability, a state of harmony with the moment, free of blockage, without limitation. In the absence of blockages and constraints, action takes place spontaneously in the freedom of the present moment. It is also a state of well-being, the inherent happiness of the present moment. This is how we can talk about the happiness and freedom of the present moment.

**The ninth attitude: reminders and non-distraction**

Reminders bring us back to the state of mindfulness whenever we have become distracted, so that the continuity of the state of presence is established through non-distracted practice. Because of reminders, we do not become distracted from the state of mindfulness, and constantly return to it. We train in this way, whatever the external or internal circumstances. This is how it is gradually cultivated and stabilized.

For a beginner, the external conditions are important. Practicing in a quiet and tranquil place is easier, that's why we practice sitting in a protected environment. However, it is important to gradually train in cultivating reminders in all situations of daily life, up to the most disturbing and difficult.

Inwardly, the activity of the mind tends to constantly distance us from the state of presence. By applying the methods we have seen, we train in non-distraction, and are no longer

carried away by the flow of our thoughts or emotions. By means of reminders, of constantly returning to instant presence, we discover how to integrate agitation, whether it comes from the environment or our own mind. In this way, non-distraction is established, the state of continuous presence from which we are not distracted.

### **Advice of the fifth step**

The advice of the fifth step is to recognize and welcome thoughts and emotions in open presence. And without following or avoiding them, let them pass, dissolve and free themselves without grasping.

### **The summary of the fifth step**

The practice of integrating thoughts and emotions in mindfulness is to leave them as they are in the relaxed openness of non-grasping. We let them pass without being caught in their flow and let them dissolve and free themselves without following them.

We learn to welcome all thoughts and emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, by embodying them and allowing them to discharge and dissolve, without avoiding or following them.



### **A model practice sequence for the fifth step**

- **Sitting practice:**

#### **The integration of thoughts and emotions in mindfulness (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this typical practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days a week. Note that the introduction to the session and its conclusion are always the same.

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

#### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (30')**

- Seated stretches— **P 8** (3')

- The seven points of the sitting posture– **P 9** (1')

**FOR TRAINING IN THE INTEGRATION OF THOUGHTS**

- Integrating thought with and without labeling– **P 31** (10')
- Integrating thought in relaxed and open presence– **P 29** (7')
- Integrating thought in the state of the transparent observer– **P 30** (7')

**FOR TRAINING IN THE INTEGRATION OF EMOTIONS**

- The three-step method of integrating emotions– **P 32** (10')
- Mindfulness towards a pleasant emotion– **P 34** (7')
- Mindfulness towards an unpleasant emotion– **P 33** (7')

**CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

● **Reminders: meditation in action week 5**

**“ Integrating thoughts and emotions in mindfulness”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

**ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder for integrating thoughts and emotions in relaxed and open presence

**BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three minutes of practicing integrating thoughts with one or another of the three methods
- Three minutes of practicing integrating emotions with the three-stage method

**PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

**Ongoing**

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep

**In particular**

- Contemplating the sky and space
- Mindfully doing the dishes and cooking
- Welcoming and offering with the emotions that arise



- Getting dressed in full presence
- Practice mindfulness in public and common places

Don't forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website  
[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

\*

\* \*

## STEP SIX

### ALTRUISTIC PRESENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

The fourth step centered around relaxed openness. In this relaxed openness we began to discover the third dimension of mindfulness: empathy, and within it, altruistic kindness.

We saw in the fifth step how emotions of participation, which convey empathy and benevolence, manifest themselves in open presence, and also how the attitude of the transparent observer, which is both neutral and kind, develops a form of empathic presence.

Now, the sixth step aims at sprouting our empathic and caring presence in relationships and communication. We practice making this presence grow:

- In relationships: with ourselves, with others, and, more generally, in relation to otherness, the world, and the environment.
- In communication: through deep listening and speaking.

#### POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS

In the previous steps we have seen that the practice of mindfulness and its integration into daily life are based on attentive open presence and reminders, the two tools of practice.

In the sixth step, open attention is cultivated with “the other,” and reminders prompt us to return to that open attention towards such other. We experience these in the practice of “giving-receiving \*” which awakens our altruistic kindness.

The sixth step has two sections:

- 1- Mindfulness in our relationships
- 2- Mindfulness in our communication

#### MINDFULNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

##### Fourteen presentations and exercises of open mindfulness in relationships

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- receptivity-availability with the flow of the breath (P 36)
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- 14. Transforming our relationship with the world (E 47)

### 1. Altruistic presence as attentive openness to others

**E39**

We will now explore and practice the dimension of kind and altruistic presence. Kind presence combines attentive presence and open presence, and grows through this combination. Empathy radiates in open attention, which is naturally benevolent and has a profoundly altruistic quality that we call compassion.

To discover altruistic presence, we remain in the experience of attentive, open, and relaxed presence. We become fully embodied with that which is “other,” and we will discover that this attentive and open presence naturally has an empathic and benevolent quality. Openness towards others with genuine attentiveness is the source of empathy and communion. Empathy becomes compassion when, being one with the other, we have a kindness towards the other, akin to that which we would have for ourselves, and when kind receptivity generates in us a caring availability towards the other. Empathic receptivity awakens kindness and altruistic readiness or willingness for benevolent action to take place. From kind and empathic receptivity arises the benevolent readiness of compassion.

Empathy is in the first place a “com-union” with the situation and with others, a quality of participation in the reality of others. Empathy grows profoundly with an altruistic attitude that considers others as myself, in which we apply the same attention and benevolence towards others as we do towards ourselves. The sensitivity, receptivity and availability of this kind presence is the basis of altruism\* or love-compassionate love that accomplishes what is good for others.

An example of embodied altruistic benevolence would be the goodness that our hands show to each other. If our right hand is hurt, the left treats it with care, as if it were the same, with tenderness, gentleness and kindness. One hand considers the other hand as its counterpart, they enjoy great empathy for each other, with each hand providing for the other the same care

as it would for itself. Our two hands express this goodness, one for the other, since they are "embodied," together part of the same body. Our hands are not experienced as separate; their separation is only illusory.

By analogy, we see that the separation between me and others is merely an illusion, and their embodiment reveals to us this same equality between self and other.

We cultivate the practice of deep, benevolent, open mindfulness in relationships through opening our relations to others in all situations of otherness: with the other in ourselves, with other persons, and with the otherness that is the environment. We train ourselves to form an open and welcoming relationship of deep listening, deep speaking, receptivity, and availability with others. This presence of receptivity and availability adapts readily to situations without preconceptions or mental strategies and encourages harmonious relationships.

## **2. Relational training, “giving-receiving:” saying yes to the present moment with a smile of kindness**

**P35**

### **Description**

Relationship training, opening to others, and altruism are mainly cultivated in what we call “giving-receiving.”

We will discover this practice with a simple exercise, and then we will expand the experience and its applications.

Giving-receiving \* is first experienced in the most general and simple way by welcoming the present moment and offering ourselves to it. The present moment is what is here and now, however it is, inside, outside, everywhere. The practice is to open up to the present moment, and to embody it by receiving it unreservedly, and then giving ourselves to it, surrendering to it completely. We accompany this giving-receiving with an unconditional "yes" in which we welcome and surrender without reservation. This yes is like an inner smile, a yes that means a smile of kindness.

### **Practice (Duration: 10 min)**

- As usual, comfortably seated in the posture, the senses completely open, relaxing in the panoramic gaze, feel the breath breathing on its own.

.....

- Begin this exercise by breathing and incorporating the breath.

.....

- Then on the inbreath, welcome what is here, as it is. Welcome yourself as you are, welcome the environment as it is. This welcoming attitude can be experienced in a kind "yes" inside the breath, a "yes" of unconditional acceptance.

.....

- Then, always exhaling with the breath being fully incorporated with the body, surrender yourself, open yourself by relaxing and letting yourself go, associating the outbreath with a "yes" of unconditional surrender. This "yes" is a yes of relaxation and well-being, a kind inner smile that says yes to the moment.

.....

- Finally, simply breathe naturally for a while with the present situation.

.....

### **3. The heart of altruistic presence: the practice of giving-receiving**

**E40**

Giving-receiving or welcoming-offering is the main practice to develop and cultivate altruistic presence. It is a practice that opens up all types of relationships and situations in our lives in a radically different and new way. We learn to accept and welcome what is present in the moment, and to accept and welcome in full what is.

To open ourselves profoundly, we train in opening our heart and mind not only to others in a general way, but also (and particularly) to what is undesirable. In the face of challenging situations, we accept so as to give ourselves, to offer ourselves and to overcome our inner resistance. The establishment of an open relationship, in genuine receptivity and availability, lets a true meeting with others take place. Progressively cultivating giving-receiving makes our kindness, altruistic love, and compassion grow throughout our lives and in all circumstances.

In the heart of giving-receiving lives an exchange that is receptive and available, empathic and loving. It is the ground for open-hearted communication-communion and the space for good communication and understanding. It lets in reconciliation and forgiveness, and has innumerable healing virtues.

The practice of giving-receiving may be performed in any relationship situation in our daily life: marital, family, professional, social and environmental. We change our state of being by changing our relationship to others and situations.

This inner transformation and change of attitude take place simply by training in altruistic presence, by receiving and giving in the alternation of respiration, synchronized with the flow of the breath.

#### 4. The practice of giving-receiving in general: receptivity-availability with the flow of the breath

##### Description

We will now practice giving-receiving in three stages:

1. Receiving, or welcoming on the inbreath
2. Giving, or offering on the outbreath
3. Synchronizing receiving and giving with the alternation of the breath

##### ● 1<sup>st</sup> stage: Receiving on the inbreath, receptivity

##### Description

This first stage is about associating the inbreath with an attitude of total receptivity to the present moment. Breathing in, we receive, we welcome.

##### Practice (Duration: 10 min)

- As usual, sit comfortably in a good posture, present to bodily sensations, in the panoramic gaze and the openness of the senses.  
.....
- The breath flows naturally, feel your breathing as it moves back and forth.  
.....
- Begin by combining the inbreath with a welcoming attitude. By breathing in, you naturally incorporate the air of the atmosphere. Likewise, you welcome, you receive, and incorporate, without reserve and without restraint, the otherness of the whole environment, that which is here and now, the situation of the present moment, in complete and total receptivity.  
.....
- With each successive inbreath, welcome fully, beyond any refusal, beyond the conditioning of “no” and the blockages associated with it. Welcome with a kind unconditional yes. Welcome without limit or restriction, relaxing, letting it come while you open.  
.....
- Instead of donning armor to protect yourself from the outside world, learn to relax and accept being exposed. It takes courage to be exposed, to be naked, vulnerable, and without protection.  
.....
- Train yourself to welcome, receive, and embody even that which you tend to refuse.  
.....

- Breathe in, and with each inbreath, welcome and receive what is here and now. Each inspiration is like the yes of a smile of kindness (P 35).

.....

- Welcoming again and again, you develop a completely open receptivity that brings a type of transparency.

.....

- It is normal to feel resistance to opening up like this, but we discover that if we completely welcome what is present, without refusal or resistance, the fear fades away. If the welcome is total, the conflicting nature of the situation tends to disappear. By accepting all that you feel resistance to, in a total acceptance, everything you resist comes to dissolve deep in your heart, deep inside of you. At the bottom of the bottom, in the heart of the heart, a kind of dissolution takes place and frees us. This complete welcome and receptivity lets our egotistical bubble open so that conflicts and fears dissolve.

.....

- Finally, rest in openness before the second stage.

.....

## ● **2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Giving on the outbreath, availability**

### **Description**

This second stage is about giving, offering on the outbreath. We perform the inverse of the inbreath movement this time by giving, surrendering ourselves to the other in benevolent availability, a willingness to care, beyond resistances and blockages.

### **Practice (Duration: 10 min)**

- Still seated comfortably in a good posture, be present to bodily sensations, in the panoramic gaze and the openness of the senses.

.....

- Feel your breathing, the coming and going of its movement, the breath breathes.

.....

- On the outbreath, the breath dissolves naturally in space, into openness. Likewise, offer, give, surrender into space, into openness. You let yourself go into the sensorial surroundings, into a global, total experience. Surrender yourself into the open as in the surrender of a sigh with each successive breath, breathing naturally.

.....

- Open yourself in a state of complete benevolence. All that you have welcomed with receptivity has dissolved in the depths of your heart, now all that you offer with your

availability, your willingness to care, comes from the bottom of your heart, spreading in a smiling yes of kindness that you offer without restraint.

.....

- Feel and experience this offering of kindness for a while, the opening of goodness with each successive breath.

.....

- Then, take a few breaths in simple open presence before continuing with the third stage of the exercise.

.....

- **3<sup>rd</sup> stage: Synchronizing “giving-receiving” with the breath, in receptivity-availability**

**Description**

After having separately felt and experienced the two movements of receiving and giving, of receptivity and caring availability, we will synchronize them, following the alternation of the inbreath and outbreath.

**Practice** (Duration: 10 min)

- Still seated comfortably in a good posture, be present to bodily sensations, in the panoramic gaze and the openness of the senses. Feel your natural respiration.

.....

- On the inbreath, completely welcome, fully receive. And on the outbreath, give, surrendering, completely available.

.....

- Breathe in this way in a continuous movement: welcoming on the inbreath, offering on the outbreath. On the inbreath, let come. On the outbreath, let go.

.....

- On the inbreath, incorporate the outer sphere, the external world. On the outbreath, let the inner world, your interior, dissolve into the exterior, into space.

.....

- Feel and experience giving-receiving in this way, in benevolent receptivity-availability, as long as the practice lasts.

.....

- End with a moment of complete open presence.

.....



## 5. The stages of relational training in particular

**E41**

We began with experiencing giving-receiving in general, with a simple opening, receptive and available. We will now train relating in more specific ways: with ourselves, with others and with the environment.

We begin practicing with our relationship with ourselves, learning to become friends with ourselves.

Then we practice with others: first the people we love, who are close to us, then the people we know less, who are neutral to us, and finally to the people who irritate us or who we see as our enemies.

We will also look at how we can develop a non-violent relationship with our environment.

Practicing -giving-receiving in these ways is the preferred method for developing a good relationship with others and with our environment in a non-violent, empathic, caring and altruistic way.

We will now discover and practice these successive steps.

## 6. Training begins with giving-receiving with ourselves

**E42**

The relational training of giving-receiving first begins with ourselves. To maintain a good relationship with others, it is necessary first of all to develop a good relationship with ourselves. It is about making peace with ourselves, of being in friendship with ourselves, in peace, healthy esteem and respect. We will learn to practice giving-receiving by accepting ourselves as we are, with our bright sides, but also our dark sides, accepting ourselves completely including the parts of ourselves that we tend to reject and refuse. It is a deep work that requires full attention and openness. Friendship with ourselves grows as we welcome and become familiar with our own sorrows, pains, and sufferings.

This practice is first done on the meditation cushion, but then it develops naturally in everyday situations when they arise. If we have a harmonious, healthy, and open relationship with ourselves and with what we experience, then we can be receptive and available to others. It is then possible to establish an interpersonal relationship with others, from heart to heart, in which the mentally erected dualistic barrier between self and other is gradually reduced, and finally dissolves.

## 7. The practice of giving-receiving with ourselves

**P37**

Description

This exercise is simply a question of welcoming ourselves, of welcoming what we are and especially the sides of ourselves that we reject. It is about becoming friends with ourselves, with what we are as a whole, just as we are.

**Practice** (Duration: 10 min)

- As usual, in a comfortable posture, relax and feel your body with a quick body scan. Get in touch with your body. Notice the most pronounced sensations in your body, without dwelling on them, and note also the state of your breathing, in some way taking stock of the current situation.  
.....
- Then for a moment contemplate in open and relaxed presence.  
.....
- In this state, let whatever is difficult or obscure in you come to the surface. That which you tend to conceal and repress, let it be seen, felt, and experienced.  
.....
- Feel and welcome what is deep inside you, whatever it may be, without running away from what is difficult or painful, without fearing the darkness you carry within you, your obscure and dark sides that tend to disturb you. Welcome without reservation, simply recognizing. There is no need to pursue what you have welcomed, let it come and let it pass. It comes and it goes. It passes and it dissolves, it passes and it is past. Practice like this for a while.  
.....
- Then relaxed, surrendered, let yourself go into the goodness of your heart, to what is good, healthy and positive in you. Open yourself to this goodness, and in letting yourself go, surrender yourself to it. Rest like this for a while.  
.....
- After having felt the two movements of welcome and opening, train yourself by synchronizing both receiving and surrendering with the breath: on the inhale, you welcome, and on the exhale, you give yourself, surrendering.  
.....
- Finally, end with a moment of open presence, rest in a completely untethered and relaxed sensory opening.  
.....

## 8. Open Mindfulness as fundamental therapy

**E43**

The practice of open mindfulness is a fundamental therapy, a liberating therapy. It expresses that which has been suppressed, inhibited, or repressed. It lets blocked energy associated with conflicting emotional tensions and traumas of the past be released. It is in fact a

discharge of their conflictual potentials, a discharge of the energies of afflictive passions, and ultimately, of the polarity of dualistic consciousness itself. In the state of open mindfulness, the knots, tensions, and fixations crystallized in our body-mind are undone and released. That which was repressed—no longer blocked, chased away, denied or hidden—can emerge, discharge itself, and release itself. This is accomplished naturally in the state of open and relaxed presence. It is enough to recognize and welcome that which emerges and rises to the surface of consciousness without running away, and without reactive judgments, refusals, or rejections. With respect for ourselves, we maintain a welcoming attitude, a kind and open neutrality.

Our learning begins by becoming friends with ourselves, by reconciling with ourselves, in an acceptance that will let a gradual and gentle release take place. In this process, emotions emerge and are greeted without fear by letting them pass. Progressively, an emotional discharge occurs which will lead to an exhaustion of the underlying tendency driving the conflictual emotion. The exhaustion does not happen all at once, it requires training with perseverance, again and again, but this exhaustion of habitual emotional tendencies is liberating. In other words, the exhaustion of habitual tendencies is the therapeutic function of mindfulness meditation. This is how mindfulness liberates us and heals us from illusions, passions, and their many associated problems.

## **9. Our “good nature” is our fundamental health**

**E44**

When we talk about our "good nature," we are not referring to something supernatural, but to our basic, natural health. We observed in the overview on contemplative science as well as in step four that, before any sickness sets in, we are healthy, in good health. Disease is a disruption of the state of natural harmony that is health. This dysregulation of harmony implies that harmony prevails prior to its disturbance. It means that we have a healthy foundation, a healthy fundamental nature, even though we may currently be gravely ill. We do not deny the disease, it is very real, as our fundamental nature can be more or less severely altered, veiled, or corrupted by various diseases or neuroses. Our healthy foundation can be altered by various illusions and egotistical passions. But the fact remains that deep down at the root, there is health.

We have a fundamental nature that is primary and healthy, and a superficial nature that is secondary, disturbed, and artificial. Our natural fundamental nature is our basic goodness whereas our superficial or superimposed nature is our egoistic and neurotic nature which masks, veils, and corrupts the fundamental nature.

The state of basic goodness is that in which the ego is “put in parentheses,” in which the self is suspended. In this state, as we have seen, we are one with the other, there is communion beyond the dualistic separation of "me-other." It is in this communion that benevolent compassion is born, the wish that the other be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

This vision and understanding of our basic goodness is very important because it gives us the courage and inspiration we need to let ourselves go into our fundamental nature, showing us how to let go of and surrender to the disturbances of our superficial nature. This vision and understanding is a source of fearlessness and self-confidence. "Self" here does not mean "me" or "ego," it is not a question of trusting our ego, but of developing the confidence "in ourselves," in that which is truly our self, deep down, before and beyond the ego and its passions and illusions. We have confidence in the Self transcending the self, our awakened nature that transcends the ego.

Our good nature is alive in the state of deep presence. Basic goodness is the goodness of the pristine experience, the state of instantaneous presence. This state of pristine presence, as we have seen, is prior to the representations of the conceptual mind. It is natural, free from fabrications and conceptual artifices. Entering into this experience is to discover basic goodness, our state of basic goodness.

## 10. The equality of self and other

E45

Training in deep self-listening allows us to meet each other in a peaceful, open, caring, and confident state. When we have touched the quality of goodness naturally present in the depths of our experience, we develop a form of confidence and fearlessness that allows us to approach situations openly. In these qualities of openness and trust, we will be able to meet each other in a harmonious and kind way. Usually, relationships with others are overtly or subtly based on a form of fear: apprehension, lack, fear of judgment, uncertainty, doubt... Self-confidence, which comes from practicing with ourselves, makes it possible to meet another in confidence, with less fear, or without fear altogether.

In addition, the gentleness and kindness that we cultivated with ourselves, saying "yes" with a welcoming inner smile, as well as the practice of giving-receiving, are also cultivated with others. We offer a welcoming outer smile and practice giving-receiving with the outer world. It is a way to meet the other in open kindness, a way to open our relationships and facilitate meeting in harmony.

To open ourselves to the other is to empathize with him or her in a nonviolent and benevolent attitude, experiencing the other as ourselves. Empathy, without necessarily being love and compassion, constitutes the base or foundation. In empathy, the perception of the other who is like me and is not really separated from me, naturally occurs in a non-conceptual way. This perception is the source of a form of gentleness without violence.

The other is like me, he or she is my counterpart, we have the same aspiration for well-being and to avoid suffering. In this sense, I am like you, you are like me, we are the same. This is how we can speak of equality between self and other. When truly lived, this experience inspires a basic attitude of respect for the other as being no different from ourselves. In the recognition

and perception of our similarity comes a feeling of communion, the goodness and intelligence of the heart, the state of loving kindness.

## P38

### 11. Discovering giving-receiving with others

#### Description

Now we will practice “giving-receiving” with the other, with other people. To do so, we propose two complementary exercises.

#### The first general exercise (Duration: 5 min)

This is practiced in any place where there are several people, in an assembly or a meeting, big or small, in a public place, at work, with one’s family, or in pairs.

- In meeting the presence of others, open with the flow of the breath.  
.....
- Remain in panoramic vision and welcome others and the situation.  
.....
- Practice giving-receiving in this way, coupled with the yes of the smile of the present moment, as you practiced before. Welcome the situation and offer it in an opening of receptivity and availability.  
.....

#### The second particular exercise (Duration: 10 min)

This is practiced in pairs, face to face, or imagining a person in front of you.

- Face to face, look at one another for a few minutes in silence. Practice welcoming, the kind availability that receives the presence of the other, and also give your presence in return.  
.....
- You can keep your eyes closed at first if you feel the need. Then you can open them while remaining in the panoramic gaze, which avoids remaining fixed on the eyes of the other, which can sometimes be embarrassing.  
.....
- Receive without judgment, without thinking, breathing in (receptivity). And give yourself in a smile of caring attention and an inner or outer yes (availability), breathing out.  
.....

- By practicing this way, you experientially discover that giving-receiving opens you in terms of participation with the other, as an opening of the heart and a sense of communion.

.....

- At the end, you can take a few minutes to thank your partner and share what you have experienced.

.....

## 12. Giving-receiving in all situations

### Description

P39

Next, the practice of giving-receiving is cultivated in all situations, and particularly with respect to what we resist, all that is difficult to welcome, to receive, and all that is difficult to offer, to give. We thus learn to go beyond our resistances, to receive as to give. Overcoming resistance does not rely on constraining or forcing ourselves, but on an opening and a release of grasping that invites empathy and kindness. Giving-receiving is opening the bubble of our ego. We learn to go beyond the sense of territoriality in which we would like to bring in everything we consider good and unload everything that displeases us. The tendency of the ego is to build walls, so we should know how to take the first step in de-escalation, disarmament, and opening. A first step is always possible. Nothing is done without a first step! Understanding this, we can initiate an opening.

Practically, we train with the exercise of giving-receiving, first with people with whom we are close, with whom it is easy, then with "neutral" people, with whom we are indifferent, and finally with people with whom we have problems, with whom it is difficult.

It is also particularly beneficial to practice giving-receiving whenever you have difficulties with someone. We can do it on the spot, but if it is not easy then and there, at the moment, it is recommended to practice by imagining the situation and person concerned during a seated practice after the encounter.

### Practice (Duration: 10 min)

- As usual, comfortably seated in the panoramic gaze, present to bodily sensations and your breathing, evoke a difficult situation. Train yourself to welcome it, to receive it, to accept that it is as it is.
- .....
- Accept the reality of the situation, see how this helps you to understand according to the logic and the viewpoint of the other. Develop an understanding of the other. Put yourself

in his place, empathizing with this "difficult other." Welcome him, receive him into the depth of your heart.

.....

- Then, in an attitude of kindness, you can give and receive something good, an opening, something positive that goes beyond your preconceptions, beyond your attachments and what you would tend to want to conserve or preserve. From the bottom of your heart, offer without fear, learning to offer beyond the fear of lack, beyond the feeling of poverty that gives you the impression of having little, and is afraid you would be left with not enough. Give without fear, with all your capacity.

.....

- You then discover that you are naturally rich, that you always have something to give, even just your attention and presence, a kind act of listening, a smile. The more you give, the more you open up and have the capacity to give, and the more you discover your richness and a wealth that is inexhaustible. This is the dimension of the gift or of offering.

.....

- Practicing in this way, the situation and whatever conflictual nature it has is discharged. Its polarity dissolves, the egotistical bubble dissipates and becomes transparent. You become receptive and available. Openness is felt as a source of benefit for yourself and for others. One then realizes its liberating power and a confidence is born which encourages you in your practice, strengthening it and helping you to persevere.

.....

- You learn to live with transparency in all situations. Transparency is the open state without blockage. You learn to become a transparent person, that is to say, living by allowing a fluidity in your relations, a free circulation without obstruction or resistance.

.....

### **13. Our relationship with the environment: interdependence and non-violence**

**E46**

The environment is what surrounds us, the "otherness" of the world outside. The way we relate to this environment is closely connected to our understanding and experience of interdependence. We are interdependent on all levels: physical, cognitive, personal, social, economic, ecological ... We depend on each other, and we depend on our environment and its elements, which constitute us in many ways. Interdependence is also between self and other. "Me" is made of "not-me," of that which is "other," just as what is other is made of "me" on different levels. The more we enter into the intelligence and experience of interdependence, the more our relationship to others evolves and becomes more open and altruistic.

"I" and "my world" evolve together. Inhabitants and habitat, living beings and ecosphere evolve together through their interdependence. The violence that we do to our environment is

indirectly but definitely violence that we do to ourselves, even if the effects are not directly or immediately visible. The ecological disaster we are experiencing comes largely from the loss of our sense of being children of nature. We have cut ourselves off, exiled ourselves from nature, our own nature. Our loss of direct contact with nature leads us to treat it as if it were other than ourselves. This is how we end up regarding it as a product we consume, as if it were inexhaustible. The practice of mindfulness, in its dimensions of openness and empathy, is the way, par excellence, to remedy this break.

The practice of deep, caring, and selfless presence changes our relationship with our environment by making us communicate and commune with it. In empathic presence, we feel part of nature, we feel its ubiquitous presence. We then live as part of this omnipresent nature from which we arise. We feel like children of nature, and develop respect, non-violence, attention and kindness.

Mindfulness reconnects us to nature, to our nature, and it is in this state of being that a deep ecological attitude develops, as we will see in the conclusion.

#### **14. Transforming our relationship with the world**

**E47**

The experience of mindfulness, with its three dimensions of attention, openness, and altruism, transforms our relationships—with ourselves, with others, and with the world. This inner change and relational transformation take place by bringing every relationship in our life into full presence—familial, professional, and social. Every situation is an opportunity to practice mindful reminders until its continuity is established at all times.

This change in our relationships, with its "kind and altruistic" openness, gradually releases stress, conflicts, afflictive passions, and disharmony.

Personal change is likely to make a difference on our surroundings, directly and also by the influence and inspiration of our example, "infecting" others and causing a snowball effect. Affecting inner change by coming into full presence is the source of action in the world. This is indeed living according to the famous saying, "to be the change we would like to see happen."

### **MINDFULNESS IN COMMUNICATION**

#### **The seven exercises and presentations of mindfulness in communication**

1. The importance of good communication (E 48)
2. Deep listening and deep speaking (E 49)
3. Opening the ego with good communication (E 50)
4. Empathy and altruism vs egoism (E 51)
5. Mindfulness summarized by P.A.R.O.L.E.S. (E 52)



## 6. A practice for training in deep listening (P 40)

### 1. The importance of good communication

E48

Humans are social animals and human society, like any society, is based on communication. We are all interdependent and our relationships depend on communication, which connects us.

Relationships and communication are good when they reflect the reality of a situation and are harmonious, empathic, and caring. But often, relationships and communication are polluted by illusions and passions that distort reality and provoke selfish behavior. These distortions and alterations, with their illusions and passions, generate stress and suffering that come not so much from the situation itself but from our relationship with it. Conversely, healthy communication emerges from benevolent openness, and from it comes harmony and well-being.

Simply speaking, communication is hijacked by the ego and its selfish attitudes which tend to reduce all situations to "me." We are structured by our speech; we are loquacious beings. Ego, speech, concepts, and communication are closely interdependent. Our ego is cast, maintained, and amplified through the outer and inner discourse of discursive thought.

In a word, good communication, open and altruistic, beyond grasping and fixation, lets healthy and harmonious exchanges take place.

We will see how good communication finds its source and its resources in the three qualities of mindfulness: attention, openness and benevolence.

### 2. Deep listening and deep speaking

E49

Mindfulness in communication begins with receiving the other in deep listening. This listening is:

- Attentive, without being distracted or absorbed in our thoughts
- Open, receptive and available, welcoming and offering without obstruction
- Without judgment, in a caring neutrality.

Living in the habitual bubble of our world, caught in our illusions and passions, we do not communicate with others as they are, but with our representation of them. We thus communicate with our projections, preconceptions, stereotypes that we have about others. Thereby locked in the bubble of our representations, we cannot really welcome the others as they are, and we are not really available to hear them in their own language. Deep listening requires vigilant attention and the openness of non-grasping that allows true receptivity. Deep listening is a neutral and benevolent listening, without judgment or conditions. It offers the relationship an open space that lets the other freely express himself. The other is given the freedom to be who he truly is. We remain disinvested from our own conceptual or emotional fixations. Our presence, silent and benevolent, offers a space of openness and freedom. Deep listening is a state of unconditional receptivity that is lucid and intelligent.

In this attentive listening, we are in empathic communion with the other. We can then truly understand each other and then, possibly, respond appropriately. An adequate response is a deep word, out of profound kindness. The deep response can take many forms. Simply listening silently with kindness can sometimes be enough. It is not always necessary to answer or to advise. Unconditional listening can contain its own simple answer, space and silence can be an adequate answer that communicates an altruistic kindness beyond words. In other cases, it is good to exchange verbally and actively, through the practice of giving-receiving. We will illustrate this in the exercises below.

### **3. Opening the ego with good communication**

**E50**

Here openness is the space of non-grasping, of non-judgment, of hospitality that we give to the situation. Openness invokes openness; in being open we allow the other to open, which facilitates communication.

It is always the bubble of ego that stands in the way of good communication. Its closure and barriers are a boundary between self and other. Each person is in their own territory with an attitude of territoriality. This territoriality of the ego makes us live in a xenophobic system, with sophisticated defenses to protect us so we are not invaded by intruders. Of course, we need discernment to make the right choices, but the ego's sense of territory feeds selfish types of grasping and attachments that create problems and suffering. Our egoistic habits make us focus on what looks good to us and we continually struggle to avoid what we think is bad. A certain sense of territoriality can be good and necessary to a certain extent when it is motivated by kindness. But when it is exacerbated and bloated, it quickly becomes a source of problems, frustrations, and suffering. It is necessary to have a good ego—that is to say a harmonious ego—balanced, able to communicate and cooperate well with others. A good ego is not a closed ego, but an open ego.

### **4. Empathy and altruism vs egoism**

**E51**

In empathy, there is participation with the reality of the other, the other and ourselves being together, sharing the same experience. This participation facilitates non-violence and kindness. We do not inflict violence on another that we would not want to receive ourselves. Touched by the other, by their difficulties and sufferings, we feel the experience of the other. We understand them, we share their sorrows and aspire to free them from their sufferings as if they were our own. We develop the urge to give, to give ourselves to the other. We discover a sensitivity that might seem fragile, but that is in fact our own good heart. Beyond the fear of being touched is the sensitivity of this good heart. It is the basis of love and compassion, the aspiration that the other be happy and free from suffering. It is not just a passive sensibility; love and compassion are not limited to receptivity, they are also an availability, a wish, an impulse, a

dynamic and active kindness oriented to the well-being of the other. From this point of view, compassion is empathy coupled with active kindness. Thus, empathy would be more of a passive receptivity and compassion would be an active, kind, and altruistic availability, a benevolent willingness.

## 5. Mindfulness summarized by “P.A.R.O.L.E.S.\*”

E52

“P.A.R.O.L.E.S.\*” (meaning “spoken words” in French) is an acronym summarizing the qualities of mindfulness: “**P**resence **A**ttentive **R**elaxed **O**pen **L**ucid **E**mpathic and **S**ensitive.” All these terms define the state of mindfulness which is the space of healthy, kind, and altruistic communication. Remembering the acronym will remind us of these qualities and stimulate our motivation to develop them.

## 6. A practice for training in deep listening

### Description

P40

Deep listening is practiced in pairs, listening to “the other” relating to a difficult situation.

- Work in pairs. One person relates a difficult situation. Both people remain in full presence. One speaks, the other listens deeply with kindness and care, without commenting or saying anything.  
.....
- Then change roles.  
.....
- Finally, share what you experienced in the exercise. Express what you felt in both the role of listener and speaker.

**Note:** This exercise makes you feel the importance of deep listening and the challenge of practicing it completely. Listening raises emotions and thoughts. Our listening is often colored by our experience and it is difficult in the moment to listen deeply to what we are told. We are divided: one part of us is cut off from the other and is not totally present. This practice shows us the meaning and importance of all the work we have done with emotions and learning to welcome unconditionally.

## ○ Attitudes, advice and summary of the sixth step

### **The characteristic attitudes of the sixth step**

10- Confidence and fearlessness

11- Benevolent non-violence

#### **The tenth attitude: confidence\* and fearlessness**

Confidence is the attitude that lets you overcome fear, resistance, and anxiety. Fear has many different forms, all of which have in common a deep fear of loss: fear of losing what we hold, fear of losing ourselves, fear of death. The primal fears of loss and death underlie delusions and their ensuing passions.

The confidence we develop in our training is not a confidence-belief, but a fearless confidence, which we live in our experience, rather than through concepts. It is thanks to this fearless confidence that we can surrender ourselves, that we are not afraid of letting go. It allows us to relax, to enter into relaxed openness, without wanting to control and master everything. This confidence is not mental, it is the state in which we are not afraid to expose ourselves, to let ourselves go into the experience of the present moment, without fear and without restraint.

Fear is attached to different ways we grasp and fixate, it is the source of blockages and resistance. It is the ground of duality and the source of all illusions. The remedy, confidence, liberates us from fear.

#### **The eleventh attitude: benevolent non-violence**

Benevolent non-violence is one of the fundamental attitudes of open mindfulness. It applies to ourselves, to others, to the world, and to the environment. It is the expression of the goodness of mindfulness, the result of withdrawing the ego. In this withdrawal, egolessness manifests itself as gentleness, non-violence. The nature of the ego is violent.

The Golden Rule that we mentioned in the introduction and which we will return to in the conclusion enjoins us: "Do not do violence to others that you would not want done to yourself." It is the statement of the practice of benevolent non-violence.

### **Advice of the sixth step**

Practice giving-receiving with the flow of the breath in all relational circumstances, with ourselves, with others, and with the environment.

### Summary of the sixth step

The sixth step, "Altruistic presence in relationships and communication," is the training in open and kind presence through the practice of giving-receiving.

Good relationships and good communication are based on the three different qualities of mindfulness: attention, openness, and kindness. They are cultivated with ourselves, with others and with the environment.



### A model practice sequence for the sixth step

- **Sitting practice: Altruistic presence in relationships and communication (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this model practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days a week. Note that the introduction to the session and its conclusion are always the same.

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

#### THE MAIN PRACTICE (30')

- Seated stretches– **P 8** (3')
- The seven points of the sitting posture– **P 9** (1')
- Relational training, "giving-receiving:" saying yes to the present moment with a smile of kindness **P 35** (5')
- The practice of giving-receiving in general: receptivity-availability with the flow of the breath– **P 36** (5')
- The practice of giving-receiving with oneself– **P 37** (5')
- Discovering giving-receiving with others– **P 38** (10')
- Giving-receiving in all situations– **P 39** (5')

#### CONCLUSION (1')

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

- **Reminders: meditation in action week 6 “Altruistic presence in relationships and communication”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

**ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of open presence while practicing giving-receiving

**BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three minutes of the practice of giving-receiving in general with the flow of the breath
- Three minutes of the practice of giving-receiving with others
- Three minutes of the practice of deep listening

**PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

Ongoing

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep

In particular

- Giving-receiving with emotions as they arise
- Getting dressed in full presence
- While looking at the smartphone
- Giving-receiving in all relational situations in daily life

Don't forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website  
[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

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## **STEP SEVEN**

### **MINDFULNESS EVERYDAY**

The training presented in Steps 1 through 6 let us discover the multiple aspects of the open mindfulness experience:

- Beginning with the sensation of the body (*1<sup>st</sup> step*)
- Then following the breath (*2<sup>nd</sup> step*)
- Opening our senses to the sensorial landscape (*3<sup>rd</sup> step*)
- Cultivating the state of relaxed openness (*4<sup>th</sup> step*)
- Integrating our thoughts and emotions (*5<sup>th</sup> step*)
- And finally, applying mindfulness to relationships and communication (*6<sup>th</sup> step*)

We are now going to train ourselves to integrate open mindfulness into all circumstances of daily life.

#### **THE POINTS OF GUIDANCE AND TOOLS**

As before, our training continues using the tools of reminders and the state of presence, as well as the points of guidance that let us adjust our practice.

#### **The eleven presentations and exercises of the seventh step**

1. Integration and stabilization of mindfulness (E 53)
2. Integrating the training into the rhythm of daily life (P 41)
3. Sitting meditation and meditation in action (E 54)
4. Mindfulness as a sitting practice (E 55)
5. The nine points of a model sitting meditation session (P 42)
6. The relationship between the nine points and the eight steps of the training (E 56)
7. The essential meditation in five points (P 43)
8. Mindfulness in action (P 44)
9. Meditation in action: being 100% present in every moment (E 57)
10. Mindfulness is the best state for harmonious action (E 58)
11. Perfection of the present moment (E 59)



## 1. Integration and stabilization of mindfulness

**E53**

Integrating mindfulness in ordinary life means living in deep presence: such is the purpose of practice and the training as a whole. Living in deep presence brings all of the benefits of open mindfulness into our daily lives.

By integration\*, our mindfulness and our daily life merge, becoming one, not two. Stated another way, it is living every day fully in a state of deep presence. This may seem like a distant or inaccessible goal. Nonetheless, such is the ultimate goal of practice and this state of permanent mindfulness is where happiness and freedom live continuously.

Even if we do not reach this ultimate goal, to the extent that we approach it, we will enjoy its qualities and benefits. The goal of the training and its criterion of success are thus measured by its integration into everyday life. This is true regardless of the level or the stability of the integration. Integration comes from cultivating non-distraction, returning regularly to the present moment. This present moment is always here, even before the "I" appears!

The integration of mindfulness in everyday life transforms us: it transforms what we are and how we experience and relate with our world. Integration and stabilization are closely associated. The more stable our practice is, the more naturally mindfulness integrates itself into the circumstances of our everyday lives.

When we introduced the path of open mindfulness, we presented the discovery of the experience of mindfulness with its three dimensions. We then suggested that the training had two major phases: the discovery of the experience and its integration, which calls for stabilizing the experience throughout the acts and gestures of everyday life. Indeed daily life becomes the training itself, and we cultivate the inseparability of ordinary life and training. Each act and movement becomes an experience of attention, openness, and altruistic benevolence.

## 2. Integrating the training into the rhythm of daily life

### Description

**P41**

To integrate open mindfulness, we learn to synchronize the cycle of our ordinary life with the rhythm of the training, and make the very heartbeat of life become that of the training.

First, let us recall the training dynamics: motivation comes from practice, and successes in our practice encourage us to persevere and make our practice grow deeper.

We will apply this dynamic to the rhythm of our day.

The rhythm of a day has two basic beats—at the beginning and at the end—with two essential activities for training, one in the morning and one in the evening.

- Morning: we set our motivation and intention with a strong resolution.

- Daytime: we practice the various aspects of the training, with reminders carried by the strength of the morning intention.

- Evening: we look back and review the day. This guides us in continuing the next day.

**Practice** (Duration: variable, according to circumstances)

### **Morning**

- Begin your day with a moment of open mindfulness by setting a motivation, a strong resolution to not depart from a deep, attentive, open, and altruistic presence the whole day.  
.....
- This moment of waking up is very important: you place your day under the seal of attentive, open and benevolent presence, and develop the firm resolve to live the day with recollection, returning regularly to mindfulness, for the benefit of all. This is the best way to start the day.  
.....
- Make the aspiration: "May I live this day in full presence and accomplish what is good and useful for all." This positive thought, this wish, if it is strong and intense, will accompany you during the day, inspire your practice, and promote gentle reminders. Of course, it will take more than just a day or two for the habit to take hold, but if you persevere, this aspiration will quickly become a source of automatic benefit, laying a good foundation each morning for practice, for your own good and that of others.  
.....
- To make this morning aspiration, you can start with some stretching and some deep breaths to revitalize yourself. Then it is good to rest for a moment in mindful contemplation. Then, in the relaxation and openness of this state, develop the aspiration, placing it deep within you.  
.....

### **Daytime**

- During the day, practice is about remembering your morning motivation and returning to it by the various forms of gentle reminders. Just go about your business while keeping the morning wish in your heart. It will accompany you throughout the day, helping you to practice reminders and return to mindfulness in every situation.

**Note:** Below, in the presentation of mindfulness in action, we review the three types of reminders. It is particularly important that, little by little, the situations that present themselves become naturally reminders of mindfulness. All situations, easy or difficult, can become stimuli. This is an essential element of integration.

### **Evening**

- In the evening, before falling asleep, it is useful and important to look back and review the day. Review the circumstances in which you experienced mindfulness, the circumstances in which you engaged with the reminders, and also the circumstances in which you lacked attention, openness, and kindness. It is important to evaluate your training during the day by noting strengths and weaknesses. Rejoice in the successes, wishing that they build on themselves, but without any kind of narcissistic pride. And without any appropriation, dedicate the benefits to the good of all. Likewise, cultivate regret for any omissions, gaps, or lapses, and set the intention to be particularly attentive in the future to those situations where you lacked mindfulness and its qualities.

**Note:** The qualitative and quantitative evaluations in the practice notebook are there to help make these assessments. Such an assessment is part of the training, which lets you notice progress and take note of the positive and difficult points. The daily dynamic of setting the motivation in the morning, the reminders during the day, and the recollection in the evening is very important for monitoring and integrating the training.

### 3. Sitting meditation and meditation in action

**E54**

The sitting sessions are privileged moments, entirely devoted to practice in a protected context. These are moments to deepen and cultivate our experience. It is during these protected sitting periods that it is easiest to discover the experience of presence and start cultivating it.

When the experience of presence that is cultivated during the sitting sessions has been discovered and learned, it becomes possible to integrate it into everyday life.

Integration is the development of the regularity of the practice through reminders, bringing more and more continuity to our experience of mindfulness.

Sitting is not a goal in itself, it is the framework for training. The goal of practice is the integration of mindfulness in daily life, and through this, the transformation of our life towards happiness and freedom.

### 4. Mindfulness as a sitting practice

**E55**

Training in mindfulness involves organizing a daily sitting period of at least 20 to 30 minutes. This period can be in the morning or in the evening, whichever is usually the easiest, but it can be anytime during the day. The important thing is to have a dedicated and protected time, during which we know that we will not be disturbed and during which we can disconnect the phone and remain peaceful in a pleasant and quiet place.

## 5. The nine points of a model sitting meditation session

The nine-point meditation session is the model daily session as it includes all of the main practices contained in the various steps. It thus constitutes the heart of the training with its basic three-part structure remaining firm while, allowing for a focus on one aspect or another of the practice, depending on the circumstances.

The session in nine points consists of three parts:

- 1 Introduction,
- 2 Main practice in seven points, and
- 3 Conclusion

**The introduction and the conclusion provide a frame for the main practice whose contents may vary according to the steps and circumstances. All of the essential aspects of the practice are included in the seven points of the main practice.**

These nine steps constitute a complete session.

### Introduction: entering into presence and posing our motivation

- Begin the practice by simply entering into presence, with confidence and fearlessness. Confidence is not so much about having confidence in something, but a fundamental attitude of fearlessness. You are confident in the present moment, safe, and in a protected environment.
- Start with a positive, calm, and kind mindset, with the motivation to practice for the benefit of all, yourself and others. Such motivation generates softness and inner peace and orients your practice towards an altruistic harmony.

### The seven points of the main practice

The body of the main practice has seven points: six sequences deal with the essentials of the training and the seventh sequence, the integration of thoughts and emotions, applies to all six.

The successive stages follow the general structure of the training:

- Begin with the body and breathing: attentive presence (Steps 1+2)
- Continue with the sensorial landscape and openness: open presence (Steps 3+4)
- Finish with relationships and communication: kind and altruistic presence (Steps 5+6)
- Integrating thoughts and emotions is associated with all of the previous stages (Step 7)

For each stage, various options are available according to your specific needs and time.

### THE SEVEN STAGES

#### 1 – Attentive presence to the body

- If you have the time, it is good to start with a physical practice:

- Stretching (sitting, standing, or lying down)
- Self-massages, bouncing, hopping,
- Dynamic exercises
- Short body scan
- Then, well placed on your cushion, sit comfortably
- Stay resting, in the overall sensation of the body.
- The main reminder for attentive presence of the body is to return to the overall feeling of the body.

## 2 – Attentive presence to the breath

- After you are well-seated and feel your body well, connect with the sensation of the breath.
- Begin with three deep and slow breaths, soft and relaxed, with the full amplitude of respiration. These three slow and deep breaths ventilate your lungs and energize you.
- You can, if necessary, practice attentive presence to 21 cycles of the breath.
- Then, rest and simply stay with the continuous sensation of the breath.
- The main reminder for attentive presence of the breath is to return to the continuous sensation of the breath.

## 3 – Open presence to the sensorial landscape

- Comfortably seated, rest relaxed in panoramic vision, completely open to the sensorial landscape.
- The main reminder is to return to the sensorial landscape in panoramic vision.

## 4- Openness in the outbreath

- While breathing naturally, follow the outbreath through its opening, relaxing, and dissolving into space.
- With each outbreath, relax completely by opening to the overall sensory environment as if you are dissolving into space. Let yourself go completely, surrendering as in a deep sigh... and at the end of the exhalation, stay suspended in openness, in an open and relaxed presence.
- The main reminder is the return to the sensation of the outbreath.

## 5- Open and relaxed presence

- Allow yourself to let go into the experience of total openness: remain completely relaxed, free of grasping, suspended in the experience of the presence of absence. If this state seems difficult, simply rest and relax in the state of the transparent observer.
- The main reminder is returning to simple relaxed presence or the transparent observer.

#### 6 – Kind presence: “giving-receiving”

- Then practice giving-receiving with the flow of the breath: welcoming and receiving on the inbreath, offering and giving on the outbreath.
- At last, you conclude with a moment of presence in the kind, relational, and altruistic openness. Become absorbed in the natural pulsation of the breath, “giving-receiving” with the alternation of inhalation and exhalation. If you have a particular situation that touches you, you can invoke it at this point and practice with it. In giving-receiving, you are preparing yourself for the period after the session and for all relationship situations.
- The main reminder is returning to the flow of giving-receiving synchronized with the breath.

#### 7 – The integration of thoughts and emotions

- In all of the preceding steps, from the first to the sixth, the integration of thoughts and emotions lets us avoid becoming distracted.
- The main reminder is that which brings us back to the experience of the stage we are practicing.

#### Conclusion

- Conclude with a wish from the heart that extends kindness and universal harmony to everyone. In this state of mind, dedicate all the benefits of the practice to the health of all living beings and the harmony of the world.
- The sitting session ends with a positive feeling of appreciation and gratitude, which will inspire you to return to the practice as soon as you can.

- **Between sessions**

In general

Cultivate relaxed open presence and/or the transparent observer

In particular

In particular relational situations, practice giving-receiving with the flow of the breath.

The main reminder is always that of presence. The integration of thoughts and emotions lets us not become distracted.

## 6. The relationship between the meditation in nine points and the eight steps of the training

E56

It is useful to see that the nine-points meditation generally follows the steps of the training. The design of this progression makes it possible to follow and review each step.

The meditation in nine points begins with the introduction, ends with the conclusion, and the main practice comprises seven points that we saw in the first six steps of the training.

Correspondence between the seven points of the practice and the first six STEPS:

1 - Attentive presence to the body	STEP 1
2 - Attentive presence to the breath	STEP 2
3 - Open presence to sensorial landscape	STEP 3
4 – Openness in the outbreath 5 - Open and relaxed presence	STEP 4
6 –Integrating thoughts and emotions	STEP 5
7 – Altruistic presence: giving-receiving	STEP 6

The two final steps of the training are:

- Integration everyday (STEP 7)
- And the practice throughout life (STEP 8)

These last two steps deal with integrating the practice into daily life and applying it as an art of living and way of being.

The meditation in nine points is the model for a session of sitting meditation. It is used throughout the training. In the first steps, only the first points are practiced. Only at the end are all nine practiced together.

## 7. The essential meditation in five points

Description

P43

When you have become familiar with the meditation in nine points, the essentials of the practice can be summarized in five points.

You can therefore practice the session in nine points or the summary in five points according to the circumstances and your own discretion.

### **The five points**

- 1- **The introduction**, as before
- 2- **Attentive presence** to the body, breath, and the environment with the practice of opening with the outbreath
- 3- A period of **relaxed open presence**
- 4- A final period of **kind presence** with the practice of giving-receiving
- 5- **The conclusion** with an altruistic dedication, as before

**P44**

## **8. Mindfulness in action**

Training begins with sitting practice in a protected environment. Next the habit of practice is continued out into action.

Train yourself to cultivate mindfulness in movement: first with walking meditation and then in the movements of everyday life, using those that are repetitive as many special reminders. And finally, little by little, integrate mindfulness with all of your daily actions and movements.

As we have seen from the beginning, gentle reminders are the key to integration. Reminders, along with presence itself, constitute the two tools of mindfulness training. They are now familiar to you. Without reminders, we would be constantly distracted by mental wandering or by various sensory experiences. Mental habits are very tenacious and strong. To free ourselves from their hold takes much time and effort, requiring great perseverance in the practice of reminders. To change habits, we must let go of the old ones and develop new ones. It is all a question of training.

Throughout meditation in action, we practice reminders with mini breaks, brief pauses, and pauses in special situations. During all these breaks we suspend ourselves, giving up the mental activity in which we are invested. In doing so, we reverse the process: instead of being cut off from the present moment by mental activity, we suspend mental activity, a suspension that brings us back again and again to presence.

**We have dealt with the different forms of reminders in Chapter 2. We return to them briefly now at the end of the training because they are the heart of mindfulness in action:**

- **On-the-spot reminders** make mini pauses arise, which “unhook” our minds from discursive thoughts and let us “remain suspended” for a moment, bringing us back to presence.



It is an immediate flash of mindfulness. We touch the state of presence for a moment, without clinging to it. Clinging introduces a source of tension and artificial fixation, which would be counterproductive. Then we continue with the activity of the moment. This on-the-spot reminder is cultivated in all circumstances. It is like a sparkle of presence, brief but frequent. With practice, these brief moments gradually become more and more frequent, until a kind of continuity is established, at first punctuated but eventually continuous. The on-the-spot reminder is the most important reminder, the most essential, but also the most difficult to really integrate.

- **The reminder of brief pauses:** The brief pauses are short periods of presence that we offer ourselves during the day. They are a moment of respite, a pause, a chance to drop agitation and come into contact with presence. These brief pauses can be done anywhere and anytime, they can last a few minutes, or for a cycle of twenty-one breaths, for instance. We also make brief pauses at all particular moments of the day: morning, noon, evening ...

- **Reminders in particular activities:** To train in these, we select particular activities or situations of our life and take them as opportunities for reminders, an activity or situation becomes an occasion of reminders. Thus, many typical situations of our daily life become moments of mindfulness. For example, when the phone rings, or when brushing your teeth ... You can even use post-it notes and special objects as reminders.

- **Relational situations as reminders:** Relational situations such as meeting someone, the beginning of an interview, or a telephone call, are all special situations of reminders that can establish our relationships in a space of an open heart and mind ...

Thus, reminders, in their different forms, make it possible to integrate mindfulness in daily life. As the frequency of reminders increase, the continuity and the stability of mindfulness increase. The reminders give a rhythm to our life, they become the fabric of our experience, and eventually become a stable habit. By constantly returning to the experience of presence, we finally come to stay in it continuously.

To do this, it is enough to simply and regularly come back to the sensation of the breath in panoramic vision.

## 9. Meditation in action: being 100% present in every moment

E57

Mindfulness means being 100% present in every moment, in all circumstances, without exception.

After practicing for a while with reminders and short breaks throughout the day, we begin to notice their usefulness and benefits. Whenever we take a break, we relax tension, set ourselves at ease, and become more receptive and available to what we are doing. We become more mindful in our activities. This receptivity and availability, as well as the openness associated with it, places us in the best position to act with harmony and efficiency, responding in the right

way to the situation. Openness to the present moment, open presence, puts us in tune and harmonizes us according to the situation, while, at the same time, benevolent sensitivity and empathy opens us to others with compassionate understanding.

## 10. Mindfulness is the best state for harmonious action

**E58**

Open mindfulness is the state of immediate responsiveness to the present moment. It is a state without fixation—supple, flexible, without resistance to change—and at the same time stable, where we dance with the situation, spontaneously and unintentionally. Let us recall the examples of the musician and the dancer that we saw previously<sup>1</sup>. When we embody the present moment, a harmonious and well-suited dynamic emerges spontaneously. Our resources, our potential, and our qualities are at their very best. In this open presence we find the freedom of creation and inspiration, artistic or intellectual. It is a state of happiness, joy, and peace.

## 11. The perfection of the present moment

**E59**

We just mentioned that open presence is the best state for harmonious action. Open presence to the moment is the state of perfection in action. It is also the perfect state for all natural qualities to arise. In this regard, let us recall the metaphor of the foggy landscape<sup>2</sup>, which illustrates how these fundamental qualities are revealed when they are unveiled, when obscuring factors are removed.

Perfection of the present moment is experienced in the state of open presence, free from the conditioning which we undergo habitually. It is the fundamental state of well-being, freedom, happiness, harmony and health.

### ○ Attitude, advice, and summary of the seventh step

#### **The characteristic attitude of the seventh step**

12- Patience, perseverance

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1: "An overview of contemplative sciences - Examples of embodiment"

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1: "The metaphor of the foggy landscape."

Twelfth attitude: patience and perseverance

The course of training is long, especially to fully integrate thoughts and emotions, which is why it requires patience and perseverance. The integration of thoughts and emotions is a process that erodes grasping, a slow process that dissolves any propensity to grasp. It demands unrelenting diligence, regularity, continuity, and perseverance.

Reminders are practiced by returning again and again to full presence: one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand, one million times ... Gradually, the propensities for distraction erode, exhaust themselves, and finally dissipate. The state of full presence then becomes permanently stable. It is a lifelong training.

### **Advice of the seventh step**

The advice of the seventh step is to integrate mindfulness into everyday life in sitting practice and in action, cultivating non-distraction with diligence, patience, and perseverance.

### **Summary of the seventh step**

The seventh step is training in mindfulness in daily life. Sitting practice and meditation in action teach us to integrate the stages of training in all the circumstances of the day. We transform our way of being and discover a new way of life, an art of living.



### **A model practice sequence for the seventh step**

- **Sitting practice: Mindfulness in daily life (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this model practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days a week. Note that the introduction to the session and its conclusion are always the same.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

**THE MAIN PRACTICE (30')**

- The main practice of meditation in nine points – **P 42** (30')

**CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important not to fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

● **Reminders: meditation in action week 7:**

**“Mindfulness in daily life”**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

**ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of relaxed open presence, in all circumstances

**BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three minutes of the practice of giving-receiving directed towards yourself
- Three minutes of the practice of giving-receiving directed towards others

**PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

Ongoing

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep

In particular

- When an emotion arises (the three stages)
- Getting dressed in full presence
- Looking at the smartphone
- Giving-receiving in all relationship situations in daily life

Don't forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

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## **STEP EIGHT**

### **MINDFULNESS THROUGHOUT LIFE**

The eighth step recaptures the practices of the previous steps while teaching us how to integrate them into our lives.

#### **SUMMARY OF THE ADVICE FROM THE PREVIOUS STEPS**

We begin by recalling the advice from the previous steps:

**1) Attentive presence to the body**

Train in simply feeling the body and using reminders to return to this simple sensation.

**2) Attentive presence to the breath**

Experience the sensation of the breath, feel that “it breathes” continuously, and let the breath be as it is, naturally.

**3) Opening the senses, open presence to our surroundings**

Open your senses panoramically, without interfering with the experience.

**4) Open and relaxed presence**

Loosen and suspend yourself in openness, embodying the experience.

**5) Integrating thoughts and emotions in mindfulness**

Experience thoughts in the state of the transparent observer, or otherwise recognize them and accept them without following or avoiding them. Recognize, embody, and let the emotions free themselves.

**6) Altruistic presence in relationships and communication**

Practice giving-receiving with the flow of the breath in all relational circumstances.

**7) Mindfulness everyday**

Integrating mindfulness in everyday life through sitting practice and in action, cultivating non-distraction with diligence, patience, and perseverance.

#### **The eight presentations of the eighth step**

1. The training of a lifetime (E 60)
2. Why is it difficult to integrate mindfulness throughout life? (E 61)
3. How do we continue and deepen the practice of mindfulness? (E 62)

4. Unity in diversity (E 63)
5. Progress: signs of success, pitfalls, and deviations (E 64)
6. Guidance (E 65)
7. Supplements drawn from the teachings of the Buddha (E 66)
8. The path of mindfulness (E 67)

## 1. The training of a lifetime

**E60**

We have applied the previous steps to the circumstances of our lives. Presence and reminders sew the thread of regular daily practice. Ultimately, the goal is to experience open mindfulness in every moment of life, which is the training of a lifetime. The more we succeed in integrating mindfulness, the more it will improve our wellbeing and our quality of life, until it becomes a way of life, for our greater good and that of others.

We will return to the path of mindfulness in the conclusion.

## 2. Why is it difficult to integrate mindfulness throughout life?

**E61**

It is difficult to integrate mindfulness into every moment of life because we are hooked to our discursive thoughts, and they continually pull us out of the state of presence.

All of the practice involves developing new habits which will gradually replace the old ones.

This process of changing our habits continues until mindfulness becomes our way of being. We must gradually reintegrate our fundamental nature. Though it has been there from the beginning, a lifetime of diligent and patient practice is necessary to find it and realize it...

## 3. How do we continue and deepen the practice of mindfulness?

**E62**

By following the procedure of the training protocol, the basic course lasts two months, at a rate of one step per week. For this we use a specific training program<sup>1</sup>. If we see the benefits of practice during this two-month period, we will be inspired to continue. There is a specific program for those who are interested.

- In the first place, it is good to continue your training with a daily sitting practice and to integrate mindfulness into your daily life through the various reminders.

- Many practitioners who appreciated the basic course wish to continue with an eight-month training that goes through the eight steps at a rate of one per month. It is also possible to join a practice group. There are many people who come together with one another like this, or sometimes create a formal practice group. Such practice groups are made up of practitioners united by the same motivation to share a moment of mindfulness and are a source of inspiration and recollection.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be found on [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net), as well as all of the resources and links of the learning ecosystem, such as images of the physical exercises, guided meditations, tutorials with facilitators, etc.

- Undertaking occasional integration retreats is also an effective way to immerse ourselves in practice. Such retreats are periods of intensive practice for a day, a weekend, a week or more. For example, there is the "continuous retreat" at the Institut Pleine Présence in Avallon<sup>2</sup>, Savoie, France. You can begin a continuous retreat there at any time and stay as long as desired. Other possibilities exist in many places and the Institute organizes periods of retreat year-round in different locations<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. Unity in diversity

**E63**

Unity in diversity is a very important concept enabling us to perceive the complementarity of diverse practices, how they converge, and to avoid the partial or partisan attitudes that are likely to appear if this convergence and complementarity are not perceived.

When applied to practices of mindfulness, the principle of unity in diversity is simple: it rests on the understanding that all practices of authentic meditation converge on the same experience of presence which is the ultimate form of non-duality and of altruistic benevolence.

Thus, the unity of which we speak is not a notion or a mental concept, it is a state, a non-conceptual experience, transcending cultures and representations.

In this perspective of transcendent unity, the diversity of expressions and methods appear as a didactic richness adapted to different mentalities, contexts, cultures, and social circumstances. A very important quality of this vision is to esteem all authentic methods and to hold them as legitimate.

#### 5. Progress: signs of success, pitfalls and deviations

**E64**

Progress in the realization of mindfulness takes place gradually through a process of "dissolving-developing," dissolving layers of illusions and passions, and the associated development of qualities. We have illustrated this simultaneous dissolution and development in the metaphor of the foggy landscape (Chapter 1). When the veils—the habitual tendencies which separate us from whole presence—are dissipated, or dissolved, the qualities of instantaneous presence are revealed. Conflicting emotions and illusions based on fear and ego grasping dissolve, and the perfection of the state of presence manifests itself. Progress comes entirely from wearing down, eroding, and dissolving the habitual mental tendencies in which we exile ourselves perpetually from the present while repeatedly rehearsing events of the past and anticipating the future.

Understanding how the dynamic of this dissolution-development progresses, the path of mindfulness can be summarized by the following two dimensions:

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<sup>2</sup> See "Shangpa Karma Ling" online

<sup>3</sup> See the details on [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

1- **Deepening the state of presence:** Depth of presence is proportional to the fullness of the release of cognitive grasping<sup>4</sup>.

2- **Stabilizing the state of presence:** Stability of presence is proportional to the frequency of reminders together with the release of grasping.

As reminders become more and more frequent, grasping is suspended and progress is made. With greater frequency, release from grasping becomes more natural and our mindfulness stabilizes, free of grasping, eventually becoming a permanent natural state.

- **Signs of success**

The best signs of success are seeing a positive development in our relationships and in our daily life. We can see that if:

- We have less stress and tension,
- There are fewer conflicting emotions, either in intensity or frequency, fewer fears, illusions, misunderstandings of situations,
- We feel less selfishness and more altruism,
- The world becomes more peaceful and harmonious,
- We are less judgmental, have more capacity for understanding and relating,
- We feel more willingness to change, more kindness and compassion towards ourselves and others.

We may also recall all of the various benefits of mindfulness as they occur, and these are also indications that the practice is bearing fruit.<sup>5</sup>

There are also different signs in terms of contemplative experience: clarity, well-being, and diminished discursive thought. These signs come from a decrease in cognitive grasping. When this is the case, it is important to talk with a qualified facilitator<sup>6</sup> to avoid pitfalls and deviations.

- **Pitfalls and deviations**

The practice steers off course if instead of advancing in the direction of a positive evolution, as we have just described in the signs of success, it goes in the opposite negative direction, which can be described as the opposite of signs of success. For example, if instead of having fewer passions and illusions, we actually have more (if we experience more anger, more jealousy, more arrogance, more greed, more insensitivity, indifference, etc.).

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<sup>4</sup> See the Brief Overview of Contemplative Science, Chapter 1, particularly the second part, "In the middle: travelling on the path."

<sup>5</sup> See the Introduction

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 4: The Training Method within the Learning Ecosystem.



Nonetheless, inner change takes time, and it is always necessary to know how to persevere before giving up. It is important to be patient and caring towards ourselves, without judging or devaluing ourselves. We all have the potential for success. The mind is transformed little by little, in and through regular practice.

In particular, the loss or the lessening of our empathy and altruism would be a bad sign. Indeed, the attentive, open presence we have experienced includes an essential ingredient: a caring and altruistic attitude. There is always a risk of reducing attentive conscience, mindfulness, to a tool aimed at increasing concentration and achieving limited goals. This mistake can even lead to deviations in behavior or conduct. Simple steady attention is a force that can be used for positive or negative purposes. Deep and authentic presence is all at once attentive, open, and benevolent.

## 6. Guidance

**E65**

The profound practice of mindfulness is subtle. It requires a precise and accurate presentation and, as far as possible, support by a qualified facilitator. This is the best guarantee for good progress that avoids pitfalls and deviations. A qualified facilitator must be an experienced practitioner who is well-trained as a guide.

The ecosystem for the transmission of Open Mindfulness with its method, the basic course, retreats, and tutoring system associated with the network of facilitators has been designed to offer the best support facilities and framework for progress. Its facilitators are rigorously trained and have strict accreditation standards to ensure the best possible transmission.

## 7. Further sources drawn from the teachings of the Buddha

**E66**

Mindfulness is a natural and universal teaching that does not belong to any particular tradition. It is also at the heart of the Buddha's teachings. For more than two millennia, these teachings constitute one of the largest literary corpora of humanity. Countless accomplished scholars have compiled their experiences and instructions.

There are many classical manuals and qualified teachers who continue to transmit them. For this reason, we urge motivated practitioners and researchers to seek out this vast treasure of humanity in which they can find all of the further materials they could possibly wish. The teaching of the Buddha is not a religion, although some popular practices may have certain religious traits. The teaching does not require adherence to a belief, and everyone can find valuable guidance for awakening.

## 8. The path of mindfulness

E67

The practice of mindfulness is a path of realization. To practice “the path of mindfulness” over our lifetime develops our quality of being, our way of life, our relationships with others, and with the world. It is a path of experience, understanding, and goodness that offers us the opportunity to realize our authentic self and contribute to a better world. By starting with our own self-transformation, but without stopping at our self, we transcend the self. In other words, it is a matter of realizing our authentic self that transcends the selfish little self, becoming an “authentic, attentive, open, and altruistic presence.” We will elaborate on the path of mindfulness in the conclusion, notably from the perspective of a “natural humanism.”

### ○ Attitude, advice, and summary of the eighth step

#### The characteristic attitude of the eighth step

13- Happiness-freedom and the joy of the present moment

#### Thirteenth attitude: happiness-freedom and the joy of the present moment

Happiness, freedom, and joy are the result of training and are a sign of successful practice. They emerge with self-confidence and altruistic benevolence.

The joy that comes is not exuberant, but it testifies to a well-being coming from the liberation of the hindrances and impediments created by illusions and passions, and the happiness arising from the realization of a deeply healthy and harmonious state.

This joy is also the essential satisfaction that what was to be done has been accomplished. It is born of the feeling of having given meaning to life through practicing its essence, yielding benefits for ourselves and for others.

And, as is said by a great master of the universal path<sup>7</sup>:

*"All the suffering in the world comes from the desire for one's own happiness,*

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<sup>7</sup> Shantideva (685-763), Bodhicaryāvatāra, The Bodhisattva's Way of Life, Chap. 8, verse 129.

*While all the happiness in the world comes from the desire for other's happiness."*

This quote perfectly sums up how altruistic presence is a source of happiness. On the other hand, mindfulness is also the place of creativity, inventiveness, freedom of thought, freedom of spirit, and the happiness-freedom of the present moment.

Now that we have arrived at the end of the thirteen attitudes of mindfulness, we thought it useful to summarize them in a poem that will facilitate their recollection while highlighting their progression and harmony.

## **The poem of the thirteen attitudes**

### **THE PATH OF THE PRESENT MOMENT**

With a beginner's mind (1)  
Feel simply, body and breath (2)  
In panoramic vision,  
Suspended in openness.

Free of all judgment (3)  
Welcoming all that comes  
In kind neutrality (4)  
And attentive presence  
Breathing in and out (5)

Release yourself, letting go (6).

In the openness of non-grasping (7)  
Be relaxed without effort  
In wide open clarity (8).

Integrate presence in your life  
Again and again  
Without distraction (9).

Confident and free of fear (10)  
In the state of non-violent kindness (11)

Continue, persevere  
With great patience (12)  
Experiencing joy  
Happiness and freedom (13).

**From the present moment, attentive, open and altruistic—**

### **The advice of the eighth step**

Life is short, do not waste your time.  
And don't stop until you have realized the happiness-freedom of the present moment.

### **The summary of the eighth step**

The eighth stage of the training: Mindfulness Throughout Life, introduces the path of mindfulness as an essential mind-body therapy, a universal ethic and spirituality. This training leads to the achievement of health, harmony, well-being, and freedom—for ourselves, for others, and the whole world.



### **A model practice sequence for the seventh step**

- **Sitting practice: Mindfulness in daily life (30 - 40 min)**

It is recommended to do this model practice sequence every day if possible, at least 6 days a week. Note that the introduction to the session and its conclusion are always the same.

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION (2')**

- Entering into presence and setting an altruistic motivation  
(See Chapter 2: "A session of mindfulness practice")

#### **THE MAIN PRACTICE (30')**

- Seated stretches– **P 8** (3')
- The seven-point sitting posture– **P 9** (1')
- The essential meditation in nine or five points– **P 42 or 43** (20' - 30')

#### **CONCLUSION (1')**

- Close the session with a positive mind of rejoicing, satisfaction, and an altruistic dedication.

**The timing of the different parts is given as an indication, it is important to not fixate on the durations and to know how to practice flexibly, according to circumstance.**

#### ● **Reminder: meditation in action week 8:**

##### **"Mindfulness throughout life"**

The three types of reminders presented below should be practiced as much as possible.

#### **ON-THE-SPOT**

- Simple reminder of relaxed open presence, in all circumstances

#### **BRIEF PAUSES**

- Three minutes of the practice of panoramic vision
- Three minutes of the practice of integration of emotions in three stages

#### **PARTICULAR SITUATIONS**

##### **Ongoing**

- Morning: when getting up, set the intention to practice the reminders throughout the day.
- Noon: begin lunch with a brief pause and eat in complete presence.
- Night: take stock of the day, practice the body scan while falling asleep

##### **In particular**

- When an emotion arises (the three stages)
- Getting dressed in full presence
- Looking at the smartphone
- Giving-receiving in all relational situations in daily life

Don't forget that all of the practices are available in audio and video on the website  
[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)

## Chapter 4

### The Training Method within the Learning Ecosystem

In this chapter we will look at the method of mindfulness training, its pedagogy, steps, and supports, along with the organization of transmission, its gift economy, and its spirit of cooperation.

**E68**

#### THE METHOD OF MINDFULNESS TRAINING

The training for attentive, open, and altruistic presence is based on a two-month learning protocol called the Open Mindfulness Training (OMT\*). This protocol lets us discover the state of mindfulness and teaches how to cultivate it in everyday life. It consists of eight steps combining sitting practice and meditation in action. Altogether, it constitutes an eight-week training program that offers us the opportunity to pursue the practice throughout our whole life.

To accompany and facilitate the training we have planted the trees of a "learning ecosystem" that can help and guide practitioners in the two-month training and beyond.

#### THE LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

##### What is a learning ecosystem?

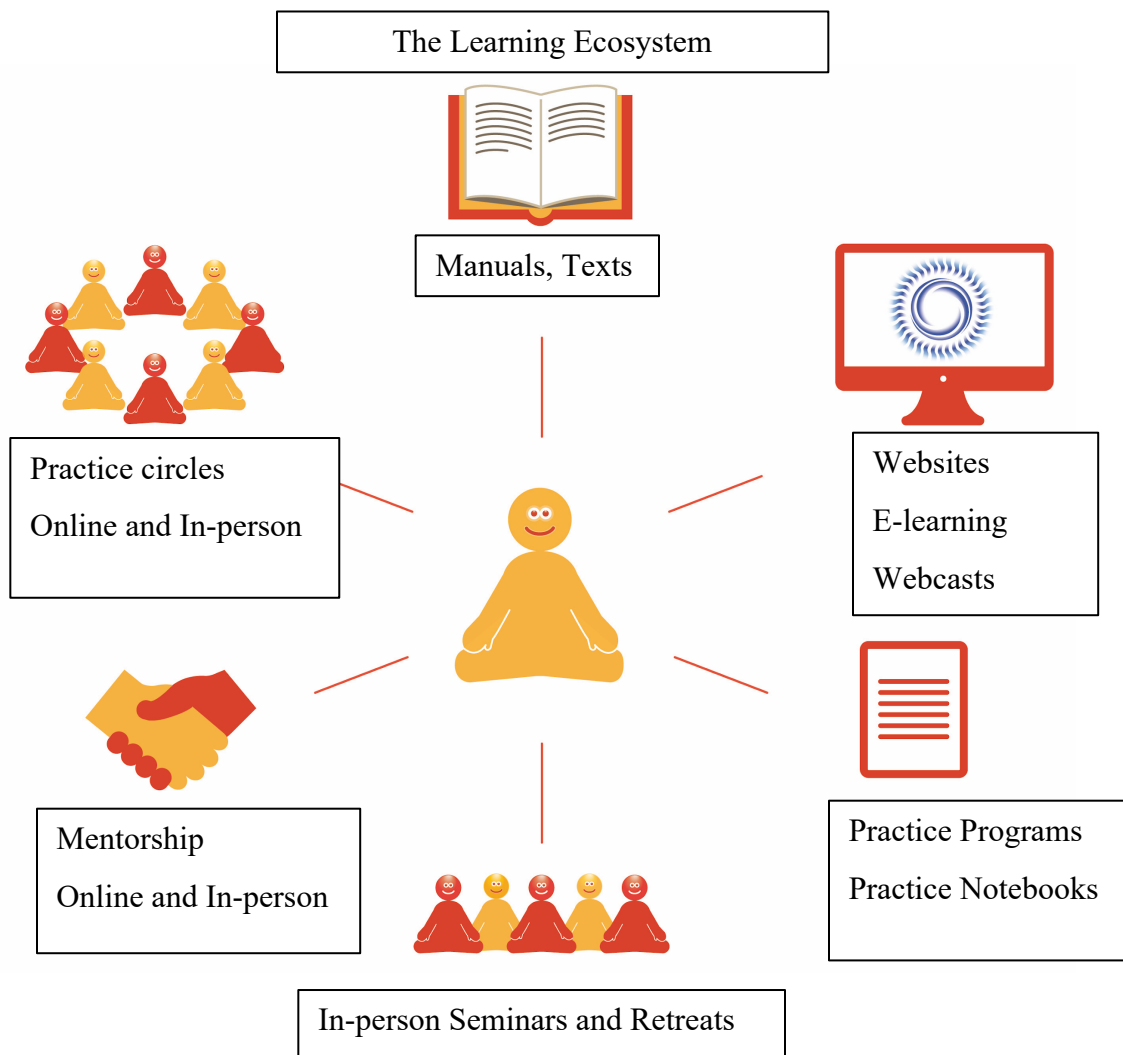
The dynamic or method for training in mindfulness works with an array of teaching elements that foster and facilitate learning. These instruments of learning, referred to as a learning ecosystem, consist of six elements. The present book is the foundation, and all of the other elements revolve around it.

The term "learning ecosystem" expresses that this set of interdependent and complementary elements form a method of learning or training that is organic and alive.

Thanks to the learning ecosystem, it is possible to follow the training wherever you are, at your own pace:

- Simply by following the manual;
- Through e-learning on the site [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net) where all the elements are freely available;
- With in-person seminars organized by the AOM Institute;
- By combining e-learning and in-person seminars with other elements of the ecosystem.

The learning ecosystem is comprised of six interdependent elements:



## 1 – The Open Mindfulness book

The contents present the whole training and its context and lets you follow it wherever you are, and at your own pace. The book is a manual forming a whole that is enriched and enhanced by the elements of the ecosystem which support your practice and aid in its integration.

## 2 – The e-learning site "[openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net)"

This includes all the elements of the method contained in the manual as well as supporting materials such as guided meditations, audio, video, and a training journal. It also provides possibilities for connecting with facilitators, joining the network of practitioners, finding groups of practitioners near you and in-person retreat programs and seminars....



The e-learning site is the home that brings together the dynamic interactions of the ecosystem.

### **3 – The assistant, mobile app**

This is a smartphone version of the e-learning site. It lets you have access to all of the elements of the site, even when offline, and use them easily in any situation.

### **4 – In-person seminars and retreats**

These offer conditions for intensive training and are very important for deepening your training and integrating the practice.

They can take place:

- In a weekday or weekend seminar in a city
- In weekend programs in secluded locations
- In weeklong practice retreats
- Throughout the year as part of the continuous retreat in Avallon

In-person programs are organized by the AOM institute.

### **5 – The network and practice circles**

- **The network of practitioners**

A "network of practitioners" can be formed online with people who have completed the basic training and who wish to keep in contact to maintain their practice and inspiration. It is a community network that can also give rise to practice circles.

- **Practice circles**

These invite motivated practitioners to share a moment of mindfulness with a local group. Such circles can be formed freely and spontaneously after the basic training. They foster a common motivation and heartfelt connection between practitioners. Such groups already exist in many cities (see the [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net) website: "find a practice circle near you").

### **6 – Online mentorship and tutoring**

Accredited facilitators who have completed intensive training are available through the website and app. They oversee the network's practitioner forums and offer personal tutoring online.

Several facilitators regularly coordinate local practice circles and can be consulted for one-to-one meditation counselling.

In short, taken all together, this didactic ecosystem gives support to each practitioner, assisting each one in his or her training in various and complementary ways. It is through the

interaction of all these elements that the path of mindfulness and its natural humanism can best grow and take shape in our lives.

## THE PEDAGOGY OF THE TRAINING, ITS STEPS AND SUPPORTS

We will now present the steps of the training along with the methods underpinning it.

### The eight-step protocol

The table below summarizes the progression of the eight steps of the training protocol. It displays the relationships between the steps, the dimensions of mindfulness, and the corresponding attitudes of the practice.

STEPS OF THE PROTOCOL	DIMENSIONS OF MINDFULNESS	ATTITUDES OF THE PRACTICE
1 Attentive presence to the body	ATTENTIVE PRESENCE	1) Beginner's mind 2) Naked sensation, or feeling with "complete simplicity"
2 Attentive presence to the breath		3) Attentive presence to inbreath and outbreath 4) The suspension of judgement 5) Neutral and kind acceptance
3 Open presence to our surroundings	OPEN PRESENCE	6) Letting go—releasing grasping in openness
4 Open and relaxed presence		7) Non-effort in relaxed openness
5		8) The state of open clarity without grasping

<b>Integrating thoughts and emotions in mindfulness</b>		<b>9) Reminders and non-distraction</b>
<b>6</b> <b>Altruistic presence in relationships and communication</b>	<b>ALTRUISTIC PRESENCE</b>	<b>10) Confidence and fearlessness</b> <b>11) Benevolent non-violence</b>
<b>7</b> <b>Mindfulness everyday</b>	<b>WHOLE PRESENCE:</b> <b>ATTENTIVE, OPEN, AND</b> <b>ALTRUISTIC</b>	<b>12) Patience, perseverance</b>
<b>8</b> <b>Mindfulness throughout life</b>		<b>13) Happiness-freedom and the joy of the present moment</b>

## Pedagogy

The pedagogy of the training is designed around teachings online and in-person. It is about discovering the experience of mindfulness, living it, and integrating it into our life. The pedagogy emphasizes "understanding through experience," and "experiencing what we understand." As the nature of the teaching is cultivating lived experience, the method alternates between explanations, practices, and feedback. The training combines sitting meditation and meditation in action, integrating experience into everyday life.

## Supporting materials

The ecosystem and its six elements integrate a set of complementary supportive materials. It is not possible to describe them all, we will only mention those used in the first steps.

### Presentations, practices, and physical exercises

All of the explanations, practices, and physical exercises mentioned in the manual are summarized in the appendix.

Guided meditations are freely available on [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net). Illustrations and video demonstrations of the sequences of the physical exercises are also on the website.

### The practice notebook

The practice notebook serves to record our quantitative and especially qualitative observations. Quantitative notes evaluate the regularity and duration of our sessions as well as the frequency of our reminders. The qualitative notes concern the quality and the difficulties that

we encounter in our experiences. We can enter them into the practice notebook which can be downloaded from the [openmindfulness.net](http://openmindfulness.net) website.

As we have seen, experience reports are essential in training because they let us sharpen our attention and gradually come to better articulate our experience. This is also how we will be able to communicate with a facilitator who, understanding our experience, will be able to counsel us appropriately.

## **ORGANIZATION AND COOPERATION**

### **The principle of cooperation: a gift economy**

Transmitting and sharing mindfulness is carried out on the general economic principle of cooperation and generosity and does not use a profit-based model. This cooperation aims at improving the well-being of all through an altruistic approach. We hold that cooperation is stronger than competition, and that altruism is the source of true happiness. We seek to engage in solidarity and exchange with all groups and associations enjoying a common motivation and outlook. The gift economy, free of interest in financial gain, allows for a sharing of resources and open cooperative exchange.

## **Organizations**

### **Buddha University and its partners**

Buddha University and its online campus make up a mixed community of student-practitioners engaged in a living philosophy. It is a private, non-profit university. Its economic model is that of the “gift of the teaching,” following the ancient tradition of the Buddha. Its values are humanistic, ecological, and secular. It was the Buddha University that founded L’Ecole de la Pleine Présence which oversees the OMT training protocol and its learning ecosystem.

(See the website [buddha.university](http://buddha.university))

### **AOM\* Institute: an association of facilitators\***

The AOM institute leads the tutoring and in-person open mindfulness sessions of the learning ecosystem. It is an association of facilitators working in an economy of generosity in cooperation with all practitioners enjoying the same motivation.

The AOM Institute trains qualified facilitators who are accredited following a comprehensive training. The association ensures their supervision, continuous training, and the renewal of their accreditation. It also organizes the coordination and supervision of in-person activities wherever such activities are launched by facilitators.

## **International collaboration**

Zen and Vajrayana lineage holders of the Buddha's teachings have chosen to cooperate to make the practice of mindfulness and its benefits accessible to everyone in our day and age.

A cooperative network named AMIN, "Altruistic Mindfulness International Network" was founded with this intention.

The AMIN operates in accord with the intelligence of the fundamental unity of the teachings and subscribes to a gift economy based on solidarity and benevolence. In this spirit, we help each other, beneficially sharing our resources and know-how. Our cooperation has given birth to open mindfulness training methods, both in Spanish and French. These convey the same basic teaching while keeping the flavor of the original lineage.

We will pursue and deepen our collaboration, which is a fine example of inter-tradition cooperation. We invite all of the Buddha's disciples who appreciate the value of such synergy to join us in the spirit of the AMIN. Its gift economy comes directly from Buddha's teaching and we are convinced of the benefits of this cooperation.

# CONCLUSION

## THE PATH OF MINDFULNESS: A FUNDAMENTAL THERAPY AND A NATURAL HUMANISM

In this conclusion we will present mindfulness as a fundamental therapy and a natural humanism in view to highlighting the full breadth and depth of its potential as a practice. We will also elaborate on some of its broader benefits.

### 1. A FUNDAMENTAL THERAPY

E69

#### Mindfulness cultivates the harmony of our inner health

Let us first consider the practice of mindfulness as a mind-body therapy that cures the illness of delusion and the conflicting passions that arise from cognitive grasping.

According to a classical metaphor of the Buddha, the great healer: we are like a sick person suffering from different forms of dis-ease, malaise and unhappiness. The diagnosis identifies an existential and cognitive illness that has its source in our delusion and our passions. Understanding that a cure is possible, we apply the treatment and therapy that leads to healing. The therapy is training in attentive, open, and altruistic presence which, in its entirety, constitutes threefold learning or training comprised by:

- An ethical dimension: benevolent attention and non-violence, cultivated through applying attentive conscience;
- An experiential dimension: the openness of deep presence
- And a dimension of insight: of “what I am and what is,” cultivated through complete understanding in the state of presence.

From this outlook of healing, we will consider each of the following in succession:

- The sickness,
- The diagnosis,
- Health, the cure
- And the therapy.

- **The sickness: the different forms of dis-ease**

To begin with, our illness is unhappiness and uneasiness—in the world, in ourselves, in our lives, in what we are and what we experience—dissatisfaction, disharmony, and suffering.

There is overt dis-ease—the pain and the usual suffering that we experience in life with sickness, old age, and death, as well as all of the difficulties associated with existence. Whether it involves being confronted with those who are hostile to us, being separated from those who are dear to us, not being able to get what we want, or not being able to keep what we have, life is full of suffering.

Next, there is a subtler dis-ease which stems from a sense of lacking something, a sense of unwanted change, or a sense of loss. We yearn for stability in existence and we try to maintain that which is by nature impermanent. Everything is impermanent, life, happiness and all of its components are impermanent. Everything is ephemeral and in perpetual change. The changes associated with loss and disasters constitute this second type of dis-ease.

Finally, there lies in us a very subtle dis-ease that is existential in nature. It is inherent in existing as an individual, in separation, and in feeling the lack of incompleteness. This subtle malaise is often imperceptible, underlying the first two types, and usually hidden by them.

These difficulties, these sufferings and this dis-ease, are a reality present in our lives.

- **The diagnosis: dis-ease arises from the delusion and passions that stem from cognitive grasping**

The search for the cause of this dis-ease comes next. It originates in our mind, in our cognition, in the disharmony arising from delusion and the imbalances generated by the passions. Looking for the cause of illusions and passions, we discover that they come from the constant mental grasping\* which takes place, and which structures the mind and animates it. The process of grasping occurs in two stages, first grasping at what we take to be other, separate from us, which then leads to grasping at representations created by passions. At first, the grasping by the mind generates the illusion of the existence of the subject-object, the ego and its dualistic world. Thereafter, in a second stage, the ego in its world experiences grasping under the impulse of the passions which produces the conflicting emotions of desire-attachment, aggression, and indifference and their multiple combinations (See Chapter 1 "A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science").

- **Inner health: the cure**

Then comes the great discovery, the good news: there is a state of health beyond delusion and the passions, transcending the disease of grasping. This reality, this fundamental harmony, is happiness and well-being.

It is because we are fundamentally healthy that it is possible to cure ourselves. If there were not this inner health, we could not cure ourselves from the disease!

- **The therapy: the threefold training**

Having understood the illness, its origin, and the possibility of curing ourselves, the question is now: how to cure ourselves?

What is the path that lets us cure the illness of delusion and the passions?

How to liberate ourselves from the cognitive grasping that binds us?

The path of healing, of liberation, is the training in mindfulness which, through its various practices, will diminish and free us from grasping. This liberating therapy forms a balanced body of threefold training\* or threefold study:

- **Training in “attentive conscience”** or the ethics associated with attention. We are training at being completely attentive in what we are doing, fully conscious of everything that we do, of our actions and their consequences. Attentive conscience is particularly concerned with attention as it relates to training in ethics. We will elaborate on it below as the "Golden Rule of Universal Ethics".
- **Training in “deep presence”** or the profound experience associated with the openness and the release of grasping. This refers to training in mindfulness generally, and in the open and relaxed presence in particular. Open presence is the profound experience of the present moment, free of grasping. It comes from being 100% open to the present, receptive, and available.
- **Training in “complete understanding”** into reality, of “what I am” and “what I experience.” This training gives rise to transcendent understanding beyond duality and concepts. This vision proceeds from the ultimate experience of mindfulness, in open and non-conceptual presence that is direct and immediate insight.

The Buddha distinguished the three dimensions of this study or training which in Sanskrit are called *shīla*, ethical discipline; *samādhi*, profound experience; and *prajñā*, understanding of reality.

**In short, the path of mindfulness includes these three dimensions: ethics, experience, and understanding, which constitute the three levels or stages of the training.**



## Some benefits of open mindfulness: individual, social, economic, and ecological

We have already discussed the personal and spiritual benefits of mindfulness in the introduction, we will explore in this section some of its broader benefits.

- **“Truly becoming your Self”**

In its deepest sense, training in open mindfulness is an ethical, spiritual, and humanistic path in which you truly become your Self with a capital S. Becoming your Self means recognizing and realizing your good nature, your inner health, your "authentic person." The Self is not the "me", the ego which hinders and masks the authentic person. In a phrase, it may be said that the less there is of "me/ego", the more the "Self/authentic person" is present. The realization of the authentic person is ultimately "Self without a self," Self without ego. The Self is profoundly altruistic because the less of a selfish ego there is, the more altruism there is.

**Thus, the practice of mindfulness begins with yourself, but it does not stop with yourself, and goes on to the Self—the state of perfect altruism that transcends the self.**

- **Altruistic mindfulness: less egoism is more altruism**

Some critics of the practice of meditation present it as an individual and egocentric practice, but it is quite the opposite. It is certainly important and necessary to start working with ourselves, individually, with self-discipline. Nonetheless, it is essential not to stop at our self in an egocentric way. Truly working with ourselves in the practice of mindfulness leads to the opening of the heart and the mind, to altruistic openness to others and to the world.

Furthermore, open mindfulness, as we have described in the pages of this book, advances while diminishing egoistic grasping. Mindfulness training loosens the solidity of the ego/subject and its projections/objects. In this context: weakening the solidity of the ego translates into more altruism. Less ego, less selfishness, means more altruism. Egoism and altruism are inversely proportional. So, mindfulness helps grow "non-selfish altruism." The altruistic state, free from selfishness, is the nature of the fundamental experience of mindfulness.

**In short: open mindfulness is an altruistic state of being that acts as a cure to unbridled individualism and egotistical materialism that are at the root of most of our society's ills.**

***"If you want others to be happy, be altruistic;  
If you want to be happy, be altruistic"***

- **Transforming the world by transforming ourselves**

***"Be the change you would like to see"***

In our modern world we have attained a very remarkable degree of external material comfort, but we often lack the comfort of peace and inner happiness. It is a pressing question and a problem for society. Our society and culture are oriented towards materialism and individualism. Our educational system hardly speaks of inner values and altruism and is overly oriented towards selfishness and external values.

Our human world, our society, needs profound changes that require collective changes, which is to say, a set of individual changes. But collective change begins with personal change. It is only if everyone changes that the collective transformation can happen. The demand is on "me" to start the change. Wanting to transform others without transforming ourselves is deluded.

Moreover, to develop external peace, it is necessary to find inner peace at the individual level. It is by knowing how to transform ourselves, our behaviors, and ways of life that we can change the world. It is through confidence in ourselves, our authentic Selves, and through an altruistic worldview, that we will be able to solve the problems we have created. We cannot change the past, but the future can be changed, and it is our present responsibility to do so, mindfully.

**The transformation of the world involves self-transformation and self-transformation occurs through training in open mindfulness.**

- **Cognitive grasping at the origin of crises**

At the root of ecological, economic, societal and human crises is a cognitive crisis, a crisis of consciousness that has its origin in the cognitive grasping that has made it.

The problem is that we have exiled ourselves from nature, from our nature, into a world of representation, containing nothing but mental concepts, a bubble of mental consciousness that cuts us off from nature, the nature that we are. Our overwhelming reliance on mental representations in our daily existence makes us live in a closed virtual world. This enlarged and overwhelming conceptual realm in our mind goes hand in hand with the enlargement of our ego: the more cognitive grasping, the greater is the ego. We suffer in some way from an "acute egoism" whose manifestations appear in our society's individualism and our selfish materialism.

The grasping mind and the ego exile us from nature, while at the same time they exile us from the present moment, both going hand in hand. They exile us from the present, constantly drawing us towards the past or anticipating the future. The practice of open mindfulness teaches us not to be distracted from the present moment, embodying it without going into the past or the future. The past and the future are mental phenomena, only the present moment is truly real. In this sense, the practice of open mindfulness is a way of incorporating the reality of the present moment.

**The cognitive grasping of the ego exiles us from the present moment and our true nature, while the practice of open mindfulness brings us back to it.**

- **The social dimension of open mindfulness: knowing how to be and live together**

Training in mindfulness cultivates the openness and altruism that brings us in harmony with our social and natural environment. Altruistic openness, free of the violence of ego, is a space of living together in harmony.

The deepest aspects of human nature, of our authentic person, are fundamentally altruistic. We are social animals and our individual well-being depends on the well-being of the rest of society. Thus, by ensuring the happiness of others, we fulfill our own happiness. If you want to be happy, be altruistic! Unfortunately, as we mentioned, our society today emphasizes individualism, we have become overly self-centered. Nevertheless, our contemporary world is completely interdependent, and our future depends on the rest of humanity, the human family.

We need to develop this sense of unity in our human family. Our human nature is the same, our human aspiration for well-being is the same, and our fundamental interests converge. Through understanding and experiencing this unity, our common natural heritage, our cooperation and solidarity can grow. Selfish violence comes from the feeling of separation which is illusory, and conversely, the feeling of unity brings peace and solidarity.

Moreover, when we are invested in selfless engagement, when we truly help, we feel that we are useful to others, and this feeling brings self-confidence and a meaningful life. Taking care of others makes us less lonely and gives meaning to our lives. Altruistic presence makes us healthy and happy human beings.

- **The economic dimension of mindfulness: an economy of moderation**

The moderation economy of happiness is a discipline that is beginning to be taught in various universities in the United States, and some view it as a way to save the global economy and to bring about a renewal of civilization<sup>1</sup>.

This approach considers happiness and freedom to be more important than the accumulation of possessions. It is an ethical economy based on the value of real interpersonal exchanges rather than on speculative capitalism that produces virtual money from "nothing." This economy affords more importance to inner values, which lets us optimize personal

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<sup>1</sup> See: Prayudh Payutto, *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place* (1982); E.F. Schumacher, *Buddhist Economics*; Tania Singer, Matthieu Ricard, *Caring Economics: Conversations on Altruism and Compassion, Between Scientists, Economists, and the Dalai Lama* (2015); Collectif - Forum de l'Université Rimay, *Une vision spirituelle de la crise économique, Altruisme plutôt qu'avidité*

satisfaction by offering more happiness with fewer resources. It takes care of both humanity and the planet while providing for the well-being and happiness of all.

Our consumption-combustion economy, based on excessive consumption, has produced mountains of waste and destroyed the environment. It has created immense inequalities: the rich grow wealthier, while the poor remain poor. Given our interdependence, we cannot remain insensitive to this situation; we need a less consumption-based and less selfish economy.

The current market economy is based on three erroneous assumptions: (1) that people are only selfish and care only for themselves; (2) that they are always following their insatiable selfish desires, and seek to build an extravagant lifestyle; and (3) the environment is an inexhaustible resource that can be consumed in an unlimited way. This consumption-based model has led us to a dead end.

The economy of happy moderation is based on three principles: (1) Basic human nature is good and altruistic; which is the opposite of the idea of everyone selfishly pursuing only their own individual good ; (2) humans are interconnected; and (3) they are connected to nature, they do not dominate it but are part of it, in ever-present interdependence.

The desire to possess always ends up inducing a cycle of dissatisfaction, misery, and despair. The approach of happy moderation advocates "voluntary simplicity." It proposes an economy of means with a limitation of desires, a life of harmony in the interconnectedness that binds us together with other humans and with nature. It is a social economy of cooperation, solidarity, and mutual aid.

The economic model of the transmission of mindfulness, based on a gift economy<sup>2</sup>, follows the principles of this "economy of happy moderation" which stems from the same ethic and spirit as mindfulness itself.

- **The ecological dimension of mindfulness**

Economic and ecological problems are closely connected to what we have just said about the economy of moderation and the happiness of voluntary simplicity is deeply ecological in nature. Another very important aspect is that the practice of mindfulness changes our relationship to nature. The practice brings us closer to nature and lets us commune with nature. It makes us feel truly a "child of nature." The environment is no longer an inert thing that we treat selfishly and carelessly exploit. Nature, our nature, is alive, she is our benevolent mother, the mother who gave birth to us and who gives us everything we need. We must treat nature with respect and gratitude. Mindfulness reconnects us to mother earth and naturally gives us this appreciation and respect. We develop a loving relationship with the Earth, a love story. Within the intelligence of interdependence, we understand and experience how habitat and inhabitant

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4, AOM Institute

depend on each other, and that the abuses we inflict on our habitat are abuses that we inflict on ourselves. In our wholesome altruistic presence, we learn to treat nature as ourselves, with non-violence and benevolence.

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## **2. A PRACTICE OF NATURAL HUMANISM**

- **The path of mindfulness as a natural humanism.**

The practice of open mindfulness is a natural humanism, an ethical and spiritual path in the sense that its practice cultivates in us an attentive conscience, and an open and benevolent presence. Mindfulness reveals our inner health and our essential human values, fostering less selfishness and more altruism. Overall, the practice makes us better human beings.

This humanism has a universal quality in the sense that it is natural. It reflects a quality of natural experience, which is not culturally specific, but is fundamentally present in all humans. The practice of mindfulness, in its three dimensions, develops the natural experience of inner health and goodness that is universal and common to all humans. Collective culture or individual tendencies may cause it to appear deformed, but it nevertheless remains, underneath, naturally present.

Mindfulness is a practice that helps make us better persons. As we mentioned above, the transformation of the world can only be done through self-transformation. This is a fundamental point and is the reason why mindfulness as a tool of self-transformation is the central practice of natural humanism. By transforming ourselves, by training in open mindfulness ourselves, one by one, we contribute directly and indirectly, through our attitudes, our example, and our actions, to transforming the world.

- **Natural humanism reveals what is good in mankind**

Natural humanism as we understand it is not an ideology, it is a practice. The practice of open mindfulness brings us closer to the experience of empathy, of kindness, cooperation, solidarity, and altruism. It develops what is essentially good in a person. Its goal is to realize our fundamental nature, our basic goodness. The humanisms of East and West converge in this fundamental humanism, though the former is more applied while the latter is often more theoretical.

The humanism of the East, as we practice it, comes from the example and teaching of the Buddha. It is primarily applied and lived, it is chiefly concerned with the transformation of what we are, of our little "self," in order to realize our authentic person, or "Self." Concepts are relativized and applied in order to let us discover and realize the immediate experience of the present moment. It proposes and emphasizes personal realization, from which originate all

fundamental human qualities and values: empathy, kindness, goodness, solidarity, intelligence, understanding.

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## **The ethic and spirituality of natural humanism**

- **The humanist ethic of mindfulness**
  - **A way towards greater happiness**

We all have the same aspiration for well-being and happiness. It is a natural aspiration, a legitimate fundamental motivation that drives us all. The state of open presence, while ego grasping is suspended, cultivates health, happiness, and well-being. It disconnects us from our deluded conditioning and our habitual passions, the sources of problems and discontent. We have already discussed how training in the state of open presence is a fundamental therapy that treats the various forms of suffering and develops greater happiness. We have also discussed how this practice promotes harmony and its consequences, what we have called the three H's (harmony, health, and happiness).

In short, open mindfulness cultivates wellbeing, health, and happiness.

It is important to understand that cultivating what is healthy, that which is a source of health and well-being, is ethical. Ethics, as we understand it, is "that which is a source of well-being, health, and happiness for ourselves and for others." Mindfulness, whole presence, has an extremely important ethical dimension that is not cultural but natural.

- **Natural ethics based on health vs. cultural and legalistic morality**

By ethics we mean the discipline that enables us to achieve well-being and happiness for ourselves and for others. The ethics of fundamental or natural humanism is medical in nature rather than legalistic. To be simple and clear we will make a distinction between "natural ethics" and "cultural morality." It is important to distinguish natural ethics from cultural morals. Cultural morals emerge and exist in specific sociolinguistic matrices that underlie their particularities and specificities. They are part of a society, a language, a mentality, an environment. Note that culture, language, social models, and cultural or customary morality are closely related and interdependent.

Cultural morals can be religious or secular. Most of the Western world has inherited the morality of a monotheistic culture, which is legal in nature, stemming from arguments of divine authority. There may also be arguments based on human authority, human laws of many sorts. Our Western heritage induces a tendency in us for a legalistic mentality associated with law, judgment, and guilt. It is an extremely potent and often alienating type of conditioning, often

occurring without our knowledge. Legalistic morality quickly leads to dogma, a closed self-referential conceptual system.

On the contrary, the ethics that we are calling “natural” is not founded on a dogma, but on a state of health, the state of empathic presence. Natural ethics is the spontaneous attitude of kindness and benevolence that is experienced in open mindfulness.

– **The story of the old man, the little child, and the well**

An example of the ethics inherent in mindfulness is given in a story attributed to an ancient Chinese master.

A father goes at noon with his little child to fetch water from the well. When they arrive at the well, the man seats the child on the edge of the well and begins to draw water by sending down a bucket at the end of a long rope. The little child, sitting quietly on the edge, looks at the bucket that descends slowly, his attention being captured by the bucket descending down further and further. The bottom of the well reflects and sparkles with sunlight. Fascinated and captivated by this somewhat hypnotic vision of the flicker and the descent of the bucket, the child leans over the edge further and further, following the movement, and becomes dizzy, loses his balance, and tips. His father, at his side, drops the rope and instantly catches the boy, and sets him on the ground outside the well. In a flash, he acted and caught the little child; he was simply fully present at the moment, he was one with the situation.

The question is now: was this man's action moral or ethical? The father saved the life of the little child who would otherwise have fallen and drowned in the well. From this point of view, we could, of course, say that the man engaged in virtuous behavior, that he had moral behavior. But in fact, he rescued the child because he was simply in a state of empathic presence. He did not say, "Oh, my little child is tipping, he's going to fall; when he falls, he will hurt himself at the bottom of the well and drown himself. I will have to do something quickly because if I do not do anything it will soon be too late and he will be drowned ... ". He did not ask himself, "Would it be moral for me to catch my child?" He did not enter into these mental considerations. If he had, the child would have died before the end of his dithering. In a state of empathic presence, he acted altruistically, spontaneously, and immediately.

– **Efficacy and compassion**

We have seen that the state of attentive and open presence makes us more efficient in all things: as a therapist, at work, in business, in financial markets and even in war (this is the fundamental state of traditional martial arts). But deep and whole mindfulness includes the three aspects we have discussed. Thus, although our resources and our potential are optimized with attention and openness, whole presence is not achieved without the third and most fundamental dimension: the empathy of non-violence and the altruistic compassion that comes from it.

Essentially, true openness is a state of non-grasping, disengagement, or suspension of the ego. And finally, in the ultimate release of grasping towards non-duality, resides ultimate non-ego, ultimate empathy, ultimate compassion, and ultimate altruism. Openness and compassion eventually converge in the ultimate state of whole presence.

Thus, mindfulness makes us more efficient, but this efficiency includes a danger of being appropriated by the ego. Becoming a better trader or sniper is not part of an ethic of nonviolence. To avoid this pitfall, it is therefore necessary to experience the entire dimension of the practice of mindfulness. The practice in its whole dimension is inherently ethical in the sense of being compassionate and altruistic.

– **The golden rule of universal humanist ethics**

- **Open Mindfulness is the heart of the golden rule**

The state of open mindfulness has, as we have seen throughout this book, three essential qualities: clarity of attention, openness free of grasping, and altruistic empathy. In the state of empathic participation with the reality of the other, "the other being like me," the good of the other is accomplished as naturally as we would accomplish for ourselves. And this respect for the other as being just like ourselves arises here not from intellectual reasoning but simply from an empathic participation that is naturally present in the state of open and benevolent presence. Natural empathy and altruism are the basis of the universal ethic expressed by the golden rule: *"do not do to others the violence you would not want to suffer."* This golden rule of empathic, non-selfish, altruistic non-violence is natural in the state of mindfulness which is our universal ground.

- **The golden rule is universal**

The golden rule of universal ethics appears in different expressions in all non-violent humanist or religious traditions: *"Treat others as you would like to be treated," "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you," "Do not inflict on the other the violence you would not like to suffer," "Love your neighbor as yourself," etc.* This rule of benevolence comes from our natural aspiration for well-being and happiness and does not depend on beliefs or arguments of authority, constituting simply "the foundation of universal natural ethics."

Whoever we are, we aspire to well-being and happiness, and we all want to avoid suffering. *"You are like me and I am like you."* In the recognition of our similarity and closeness, beyond our differences, and in the experience of communion that we feel, the golden rule is practiced and lived. It applies at all levels: personal, marital, familial, professional, social, economic, political, geopolitical, and ecological. It is the foundation of nature based secular humanist ethics. It is independent of all belief structures and arises naturally in the experience of mindfulness.



- **The humanistic spirituality of mindfulness**

- **Spirituality at the intersection of science, philosophy and meditation**

The ethical and spiritual dimensions of the path of mindfulness place it at the intersection of three disciplines: meditation, contemplative science, and philosophy. All three are based on analysis, logic, reason, and direct experience. The practice and understanding of mindfulness are secular and agnostic, there is nothing religious in them, and at the same time they do not contradict any religion based in non-violence, love, and compassion.

Let us briefly consider how mindfulness participates in the three disciplines of meditation, science, and philosophy:

**1. The meditative dimension** of mindfulness is its practice, the training which develops all of the benefits and qualities we have seen. Mindfulness meditation stabilizes the mind, reduces cognitive grasping, and liberates the subconscious imprints that fuel delusion and conflicting emotions.

**2. The philosophical dimension** is found in the ethical and spiritual dimension of mindfulness, as well as in the knowing of ourselves and of what is. The practice is understood and developed in the context of an applied and transformative phenomenology.

**3. The dimension of contemplative science** is connected to mindfulness training in how it offers a first-person experience that includes the subject of experience. Contemplative science is associated with scientific experiments attesting to the benefits of mindfulness. Research in contemplative science has given rise to a new discipline, neuro-phenomenology, which studies the interactions between lived experience and the brain.

These three dimensions broadly overlap, with mindfulness at their point of intersection, and constitute a field of interdisciplinary study and experimentation.

- **A path for the realization of “who I am” and of “what is”**

We have highlighted the difference between the religious viewpoint, based on belief, and spirituality, which is the quest for complete understanding of the reality of what I am and experience. This universal and timeless human quest is expressed in the eternal injunctions of both Socrates and the Buddha to “know thyself,” and “realize the nature of your mind and reality.”

This spiritual quest, and the fundamental human search, is the eternal adventure of humanity. From this perspective, it is also how we speak of the spiritual quest as a natural, fundamental humanism. It is a humanism which is not reductive, anthropocentric, or materialistically limited, but an integral humanism that considers the reality of the human in all its dimensions—body, breath, and spirit, to “realize our authentic person” and Self.

– **A timeless spirituality of the present moment**

We have just presented mindfulness as a central practice of humanist ethics. We will conclude by saying that it is also a humanist spirituality of the present moment, of immediate presence, of non-dual immediacy. The experience of the present moment, which the practice of mindfulness introduces, is the groundless ground of all essential spiritual traditions of genuine transcendence. This genuine transcendence is that which transcends duality, overcoming the delusions of the conceptual mind and the conflicting passions which arise from it. This presence of instantaneity is the place of transcendent, immediate, non-dual, non-conceptual knowledge, unthinkable thought (which we discussed in step five).

The natural and universal teachings of mindfulness constitute a millennial experience that, from its timeless origin, have crossed through many cultures and situations. These teachings have maintained their experiential essence. They have been presented and stated in many forms but have always been about the same experience. They have not always been recognized but have always been present. These teachings are timeless because they point to the fundamental human experience: pristine and pre-conceptual. This natural experience has been there since the beginning of humanity and will remain so until its end.

Mindfulness is the most fundamental and precious intangible heritage of humanity. Since the origin of human evolution, our conceptual development has increasingly obscured the state of presence with more and more complex and thick mental elaborations. The practice of mindfulness allows us to realize the relativity and transparency of concepts. Transcendent understanding is thus a natural intelligence that, without rejecting concepts, is free from their delusion. The simple experience of the state of mindfulness, direct and immediate, has always been and always will be. This pristine experience, natural and universal, is free of mental conditioning and delusion, and is the realization of happiness-freedom.

This teaching was pertinent 2,500 years ago, it is relevant today, and will continue to be so in the future.

## APPENDIX 1: THE 73 EXPLANATIONS

Number	Title of the explanation
INTRODUCTION: MINDFULNESS IN 10 POINTS	
1	Mindfulness: The Fullness of the Present Moment
CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCE	
2	Mindfulness from the Point of View of Contemplative Science
CHAPTER 2: THE PRACTICE IN GENERAL	
3	Discovering the State of Mindfulness
4	The Three Dimensions of Mindfulness
5	Some Synonyms of the Three Dimensions of Mindfulness
6	The Training: Cultivating the State of Whole Presence
7	The Method of Training in Mindfulness The Tools of the Training: Presence and Reminders
8	The Obstacles of the Training and their Remedies
CHAPTER 3: THE EIGHT STEPS OF THE OPEN MINDFULNESS TRAINING	
STEP 1: ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BODY	
9	Listening to the body
10	The interdependence of body-breath-mind
STEP 2: ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BREATH	
11	The breath: between body and mind
STEP 3: OPEN PRESENCE TO OUR SURROUNDINGS	
12	Open presence
13	Open presence to our sensory landscape
14	Open presence to the present moment
15	The six senses
16	Our consciousness as cognitive grasping
17	Our consciousness opening and our release of grasping happen together
18	Opening our senses, sensorial awakening, and “naked sensation”

19	Naked vision and letting go
20	The state of contemplation, meditation without support, and communion
STEP 4: OPEN AND RELAXED PRESENCE	
21	Health is our original natural state
22	Disharmony is a sickness
23	Cognitive grasping as the source of disharmony
24	Openness as a remedy for clinging and the path of nonduality
25	Relaxed openness as a principle of the training
26	The presence of absence, instant presence, is embodiment
STEP 5: INTEGRATING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS IN MINDFULNESS	
27	It is not about not having more thoughts!
28	Changing our relationship to thoughts
29	The ego and thought: "I think therefore I am," "I am because I think?"
30	Thought is useful, but does it not maintain the ego?
31	Boredom as a withdrawal symptom
32	The present moment is found in the silence of discursive thinking
33	Emotions: conflicting and participatory
34	Conflicting emotions or "passions"
35	The two parts of passionate states
36	Emotions of participation
37	Not struggling and not suppressing
38	Practice by testing yourself
STEP 6: ALTRUISTIC PRESENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION	
39	Altruistic presence as attentive openness to others
40	The heart of altruistic presence: the practice of giving-receiving
41	The stages of relationship training in particular
42	Training begins with giving-receiving with ourselves
43	Mindfulness as fundamental therapy

44	Our “good nature” is our fundamental health
45	Equality of self and other
46	Our relationship with the environment: interdependence and non-violence
47	Transforming our relationship with the world
48	The importance of good communication
49	Deep listening and deep speaking
50	Opening the ego with good communication
51	Empathy and altruism vs egoism
52	Mindfulness summarized by “P.A.R.O.L.E.S.”
STEP 7: MINDFULNESS EVERYDAY	
53	The integration and stabilization of mindfulness
54	Sitting meditation and meditation in action
55	Mindfulness as a sitting practice
56	The relationship between the meditation in nine points and the eight steps of the training
57	Meditation in action: being 100% present in every moment
58	Mindfulness is the optimal state for harmonious action
59	The perfection of the present moment
STEP 8: MINDFULNESS THROUGHOUT LIFE	
60	The training of a lifetime
61	Why it is difficult to integrate mindfulness throughout life
62	How to continue and deepen the practice of mindfulness
63	Unity in diversity
64	Progress: signs of success, pitfalls and deviations
65	Guidance
66	Further sources drawn from the teachings of the Buddha
67	The path of mindfulness
CHAPTER 4: THE TRAINING METHOD AND LEARNING ECOSYSTEM	
68	The method of mindfulness training and its learning ecosystem

CONCLUSION: THE PATH OF MINDFULNESS: A FUNDAMENTAL THERAPY AND NATURAL HUMANISM	
69	Mindfulness cultivates the harmony of our inner health
70	Some benefits of mindfulness: personal, social, economic, and ecological
71	A practice of natural humanism
72	The ethic and spirituality of natural humanism
73	The humanistic spirituality of mindfulness

## APPENDIX 2: THE 44 PRACTICES

Number	Title of the Practice
INTRODUCTION: MINDFULNESS IN 10 POINTS	
1	A Basic Meditation in three points
CHAPTER 2: THE PRACTICE IN GENERAL	
2	Discovering attentive presence
3	Discovering open presence
4	Discovering empathic and kind presence
CHAPTER 3: THE EIGHT STEPS OF THE OPEN MINDFULNESS TRAINING	
STEP 1: ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BODY	
5	Learning to sense the body
6	Stimulating bodily sensations
7	Sitting in simple presence
8	Seated stretches
9	The seven-point sitting posture
10	Deepening the experience of the body: the “body scan”
STEP 2: ATTENTIVE PRESENCE TO THE BREATH	
11	A preliminary practice: three slow and deep breaths
12	Attentive presence to the breath
13	Abdominal breathing
14	The sensation of our breath through the nostrils
15	Complete breathing
16	The continuous sensation of the breath
17	A short pause of attentive presence for 21 cycles of breath
18	The sensation of the “energy-body”
STEP 3: OPEN PRESENCE TO OUR SURROUNDINGS	
19	Opening with the outbreath and pause
20	Panoramic vision, naked vision, and global sensing
21	Open presence to sound: naked hearing

22	Contemplating the elements of nature
23	Naked open vision of objects near and far
24	Attentive and open presence while walking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slow meditative walking</li> <li>- Meditative walking at three speeds</li> <li>- Aimless wandering</li> </ul>
25	Short pauses of attentive and open presence
STEP 4: OPEN AND RELAXED PRESENCE	
26	Panoramic vision in loose openness
27	Sky gazing
28	The transparent observer and the absent observer
STEP 5: INTEGRATING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS IN MINDFULNESS	
29	Integrating thoughts in relaxed open presence
30	Integrating thoughts in the state of the transparent observer
31	Integrating thoughts with and without labelling
32	The three-stage method of integrating emotions
33	Mindfulness of a pleasant emotion
34	Mindfulness of an unpleasant emotion
STEP 6: ALTRUISTIC PRESENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION	
35	Relational training, "giving-receiving:" saying yes to the present moment with a smile of kindness
36	The practice of giving-receiving in general: receptivity-availability with the flow of the breath
37	The practice of giving-receiving with ourselves
38	Discovering giving-receiving with others
39	Giving-receiving in all situations
40	A practice for training in deep listening
STEP 7: MINDFULNESS EVERYDAY	
41	Integrating the training into the rhythm of daily life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Morning</li> <li>- Daytime</li> </ul>



	- Evening
42	The nine points of a typical sitting meditation session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction</li> <li>- The seven points of the main practice</li> <li>- Conclusion</li> </ul>
43	The essential meditation in five points
44	Mindfulness in action

### APPENDIX 3: BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BENEFITS

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Denys Rinpoché  
On the Island of the Blessed,  
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Open Mindfulness Translation Committee



## GLOSSARY AND CORRELATED REFERENCES

**Altruism:** The word *altruism* and the adjective *altruistic* refer today to behavior in humans and animals that is characterized by acts that appear to be disinterested, not leading to any apparent or immediate advantage for the individual who performs them but are beneficial to other individuals. Altruism can promote, especially in the long term, a harmonious cohabitation and mutual recognition within a group, although strict altruism is acting with nothing required in return. Altruism is a quality of mindfulness, and it develops on the foundation of empathy and compassion. In a general sense, altruism is the opposite of egoism and selfishness.

*See in the Conclusion, "Altruistic Mindfulness: Less Egoism is More Altruism," "The Golden Rule of Universal Humanist Ethics;" and in Chapter 3, Step 6 "Mindfulness in Communication," particularly point 1.*

**AOM :** Acronym for *Altruistic Open Mindfulness*. The AOM Institute is an association of trained and accredited mindfulness facilitators that promotes the transmission, diffusion, and development of the OMT (Open Mindfulness Training) and AMT (Altruistic Mindfulness Training) methods.

*See Chapter 4 "The Method of Mindfulness Training" and in particular in that chapter "The AOM Institute: An Association of Facilitators."*

**Attention :** The ability of the mind to experience something in a clear, precise, and stable way. In the practice of mindfulness, attention is not concentration with mental tension. A slight tension, a selective focus is necessary in the beginning, but deep attention develops with calmness and comes to remain on a single thing, relaxed and stable, without being distracted by other objects of the mind (sensations, thoughts, emotions, etc.). Attention is a lucid vigilance, stable and without tension. This "attention to" something consists in "being simply, fully, completely present to" that thing.

*See Chapter 2 "The First Dimension of Mindfulness is Attentive Presence," "The Tools of the Training: Presence and Reminders" and Chapter 3 "Attentive Presence of the Body" and "Attentive Presence of the Breath."*

**Attentive Conscience:** The expression "attentive conscience" means the ethics associated with attention and notably being aware of the consequences of our actions. As part of the teachings of full open mindfulness, attentive conscience refers to the first of three trainings

(see "the threefold training"), while deep presence is the second, and complete understanding the third.

*See the Conclusion, "The Remedy: the Threefold Training," "Attentive Conscience, the Heart of Ethics"*

**Attentive presence:** see "(The Three) Dimensions of Mindfulness"

**Attitudes of Mindfulness:** The 13 attitudes of mindfulness are cognitive states, states of being, of living, ways of experiencing the outer world and/or inner world of our thoughts and emotions. The aim is to discover and to train in integrating these attitudes into our practice and progressively into our daily life, which will transform our way of being, living, thinking, acting, and our overall cognitive dispositions. These 13 attitudes are what constitute the state of mindfulness, and they reflect the 13 facets of attentive, open, and altruistic presence, in all of its dimensions.

*See the descriptions of each attitude at the end of each of the eight steps in Chapter 3 and the poem at the end of the eighth step of Chapter 3.*

**Autopilot:** "Autopilot" is a way of talking about the conditioning of habitual consciousness that creates an obstacle to open mindfulness. It is our habitual, reactive way of functioning in our preconceptions and emotional reactions. Autopilot operates through repetitive and self-sustaining habits in an environment that makes up our own virtual world.

*See Chapter 1, Running on 'Autopilot' in the 'Virtual World'" and The Metaphor of Radar Reading the Terrain on Autopilot"*

**Body-scan :** The body-scan is a particularly important practice for developing attentive presence to the body: it puts us in our body and our body's sensations, it lets us "incorporate" our body without remaining locked in our mental "bubble." It makes us feel our body rather than thinking about it. The body scan awakens us to the experience of our body and the information that it sends us, it is a precious "dashboard of the body" that informs us about our general emotional state. The practice of the body-scan refines our sensorial awareness and our somatic intelligence.

*See Chapter 6, Point 6 of the First Step.*

**Breath:** In the context of teaching mindfulness or yoga, the notion of breath goes well beyond just respiration. The breath is in an intermediate position between the body and the mind, and interacts with both. There is a close interdependence between body-breath-mind. In

the perspective of yoga, the breath is the "breath-energy" that animates our body and mind. The different yogic practices and practices of mindfulness will use this interaction or interdependence between the body, the breath, and the mind. By means of the breath, these practices act on the mind through the body, and on the body through the mind, harmonizing the three and working towards a balance that is health and happiness.

*Chapter 3, Step 1, Point 8; "The Interdependence of body-breath-mind"*

**Cognition:** "Cognition" refers to all of the sensory and mental processes related to the function of experience and knowledge. Cognition implements the five exterior senses with mind, language, reasoning, immediate direct experience, memory, learning, and intelligence. In brief, all lived experience is cognition. In the sense that we are using it, cognition and lived experience are synonymous. Cognition thus covers the whole field of experience of consciousness and the mind.

*See Chapter 1, "At the Beginning of the Path: A Cognitive Model of Habitual Consciousness."*

**Cognitive grasping:** Cognitive grasping is the cognitive process underlying dualistic consciousness. In cognitive grasping, the *grasping-subject* and the *grasped-object* arise in relation to each other through polarization which constitutes habitual consciousness. In its action of grasping, cognitive grasping simultaneously "projects" the object and "introjects" the subject. This grasping is what makes us experience the duality of habitual consciousness.

*See Chapter 1, "Cognitive Grasping" and "Cognitive Grasping Structures Habitual Consciousness"*

**Compassion:** Compassion is the state in which we empathize, that is to say, in which we participate in the suffering of others, stirred by a deep feeling of kindness or altruistic love bringing a response of active solidarity, even engaged solidarity. Compassion is an amplification of empathy that has an active motivation to be kind. It can be divided into three levels: the first consists in a capacity to see the other as "another just like myself." The second has the capacity to exchange "self" and "other," putting ourselves in the place of the other in order to better understand the reality of their difficulties. The third is an altruism that goes beyond egoistic blockages to give priority to the other and to the common good beyond ourselves. Compassion and altruism can be considered as synonymous.

*See in Chapter 2: "The Third Dimension of Mindfulness" and in Chapter 3, Step 6, "Altruistic Presence in Relationship and Communication."*

**Complete Understanding:** see "Threefold Training"

**Confidence:** Confidence is central to the practice of mindfulness. It enables us to overcome fears and limitations, to let go and surpass ourselves. Confidence is born from example, from understanding, and from experience. It is an inspiration, and aspiration, and ultimately an unequivocal direct experience. It is not a question of confidence in our individual ego, but of surrendering our self in order to open ourselves to the basic goodness present in our depths. Confidence lets come forth the openness to ourselves and to others, it is the heart of the practice of open presence and it grows as signs of success appear in the practice.

*See Chapter Three, Step 6, "The Characteristic Attitudes of the Sixth Step."*

**Consciousness:** The word consciousness can have several meanings. In the context of mindfulness, we are considering "consciousness" as "consciousness of," that is to say, as a cognitive relationship that a living being establishes with its environment or itself. It is therefore a dualistic cognitive process, consciousness is always conscious **of** something, as we have consciousness of what we are experiencing.

*See Chapter 1, "At the Beginning of the Path: A Cognitive Model of Habitual Consciousness."*

**Contemplative science:** Contemplative science is a field of scientific research that was initiated in the 1970s by the Mind and Life Institute. Contemplative science was born from the convergence of the Buddha's teachings on the mind, phenomena and their nature (phenomenology), derived from Abhidharma, and modern neuroscience, which examines the effects of meditative practices on the brain and nervous system. Contemplative sciences form an emerging multidisciplinary field, studied today in various North American, European, and Asian universities. In the context of this book, the term is also used as a translation of Sanskrit dharma and abhidharma terms. The meaning of Dharma includes: phenomena, their nature, and the teachings on their nature; abhidharma is the science of phenomena, phenomenology. Contemplative science is the scientific basis of the teachings on mindfulness. Contemplative science can also be said to be an applied phenomenology or a science of the mind experience.

*See Chapter 1: "A Brief Overview of Contemplative Science"*

**Deep Presence:** see "Threefold Training"

**(The Three) Dimensions of Mindfulness:** The state of mindfulness has three simultaneous qualities: **attentive** presence, **open** presence, and **empathic** or **altruistic** presence. These three dimensions are three aspects of the experience of mindfulness. These are also three successive steps in learning mindfulness. We generally begin by developing attentive presence, then open presence, and finally empathic and altruistic presence. The training

consists of integrating these three dimensions into our practice and at every moment of our lives.

*See Chapter Two, "The Three Dimensions of Mindfulness."*

**Effort:** In the context of mindfulness, effort is primarily diligence, perseverance or assiduity, with what we are applying in practice with the two tools of mindfulness, namely presence and reminders.

*See Chapter 2: "The Obstacles of the Training and their Remedies," "The four remedies for laziness."*

**Ego:** The ego is the feeling or impression of being an autonomous and independent "Me-subject." The ego is not an entity or thing, but is the result of a process of cognitive grasping that generates this impression of a "me," of a subject, an experiencer that lives in a world of experienced things. The ego is structured by habitual consciousness, and the impression of the ego is the origin of our egoistic tendencies.

*See Chapter 3, Step 5, in "The Integration of Thoughts in Mindfulness," points 3 and 4, and in the Conclusion, "The Benefits of Mindfulness: Personal, Social, Economic, and Ecological."*

**Embodiment:** By embodiment, we mean "to become one with" sensory experience in its totality. Mindfulness does not aim to develop more or less ethereal states of consciousness, but to live an embodied experience in which we become one with our physical body and the whole body of our experience in a state of complete openness. It is about being unified with the present, the reality of the moment.

*See Chapter 1, "At the End: The Ultimate Fruit of Practice"*

**Emotions:** Emotions are events arising in the internal sense of the mind. They are thoughts invested with an affective emotional charge. Two general types of emotions can be distinguished in mindfulness: on the one hand conflictual emotions which are dualistic and passionate, and on the other, emotions of participation which are nondual and empathic.

*See Chapter 3, Step 5, "Integration of Emotions in Mindfulness."*

- **Empathy:** Empathy is the recognition and comprehension of another person's feelings and emotions, and, in a broader sense, his or her non-emotional states such as beliefs. In the latter case it is more specifically a question of cognitive empathy. In everyday language, the phenomenon is often rendered by the expression "putting ourselves in

another person's shoes." It is being in communion, in participation with another person. In the study of interpersonal relations, empathy is distinguished from notions of sympathy, compassion, altruism or the empathic distress that can result. In mindfulness, empathy is a quality of experience that comes from attention and openness to another without grasping, it is the basis and prerequisite of compassion and altruism. It is understood that compassion and altruism are indeed more than simple empathy.

*See Chapter 2, "The Third Dimension of Mindfulness..." and Chapter 3, Step 6.*

*See Chapter 3, Step 4, Point 9: "The Presence of Absence, Instant Presence, is Embodiment"*

**Empathetic and altruistic presence:** see "(The Three) Dimensions of Mindfulness"

**"Giving-Receiving":** Giving-Receiving is the most important relationship mindfulness practice.

Giving-Receiving is practiced with the breath, welcoming all aspects of experience, particularly those that are difficult, and going beyond hesitation and resistance to offer all of the goodness that we can give. Practicing Giving-Receiving amounts to exchanging egoism for altruism through opening our heart and mind to an empathic and benevolent experience beyond our habitual blockages. Giving-Receiving is the central practice of altruistic mindfulness.

*See Chapter 3, Step 6, "Mindfulness in Relationship" and in particular in points 3, 4, 6, 11, and 12.*

**H (The 3 H's):** The 3H's are Harmony, Health and Happiness. It is a useful mnemonic device for remembering the three basic benefits of mindfulness. The 3 H's are an art of living and a state of being beyond a simple reduction of stress and discomfort.

*See Chapter 1, "Motivation, the Source of the Training"*

**Inbreath-Outbreath (presence to):** Presence to the inbreath and outbreath is the heart of the practice of attention to the coming and going of the breath.

*See Chapter 3, Step 2: "Attentive Presence to the Breath"*

**Instantaneity:** see "Instant Presence"

**Instant presence:** The state we embody when suspending our cognitive grasping in which we become one-not-two with the present moment. Instant presence is also the state of presence of absence, the suspension of the self in the present moment, which becomes a time of eternity. As in the experience of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century French poet Lamartine on Lake Bourget: "O time, suspend your flight! And you, auspicious hours, suspend your course!" It is because mindfulness is instant presence that we may say it is an out-of-time experience.

**Interdependence:** All elements of nature interact and exist in different forms of mutual dependence physically, cognitively, or logically. Thus, all phenomena are interdependent, be they physical objects, sensations, perceptions, thoughts or consciousness itself. Especially in becoming aware, being conscious of x, the observing subject and the observed object exist in mutual dependence. Universal interdependence has as its corollary that nothing exists independently.

*See Chapter 1: “The Interdependence of Self and World” and Chapter 3, Step 6, Point 13: “Our Relationship with the Environment: Interdependence and Non-violence”*

**Mahāmudrā-Dzogchen:** These two names translated respectively as "The Great Union" and "The Great Perfection" designate, in the Buddha's teachings, the ultimate meditative or contemplative practices grounded in instant presence. They are also names of the state of absolute presence, of fullness and perfection transcending all duality.

*See the Introduction: “The Origins and Sources of Mindfulness”*

**Meditation:** In the Western context, the term meditation usually has the meaning of deep reflection. Used in an Eastern context this word designates rather a state of observation or contemplation. The practice of mindfulness with its qualities of attention, openness, and benevolence is the fundamental meditation.

*See the Introduction: “Mindfulness in Ten Points”*

**Mental (sense):** In the phenomenology of mindfulness, the mental sense constitutes the inner sense (the outer senses are the five senses). The mental sense is particularly important because with it we think, understand, interpret, and feel attraction, repulsion, or indifference towards the other objects of the senses. The mental sense is associated with concept formation and representation. The practice of mindfulness helps to free us from deluded mental representation and grasping by returning to pristine experience: the state of clarity, open, and free from grasping.

*See Chapter 3, Step 3, Point 5: “The Six Senses”*

**Mindfulness Facilitator:** To ensure the authenticity and quality of the transmission, the mindfulness facilitators accredited by the Altruistic Open Mindfulness (AOM) association are the only teacher-practitioners authorized to transmit the Open Mindfulness Training (OMT) method or protocol. The quality of the facilitators is ensured with a rigorous training and maturation process. The criteria for accreditation rely on long-term experience and

regular practice of mindfulness, social responsibility, and personal and professional discipline that ensure the ethical standards of the transmission. Accredited full-time facilitators are all members of the AOM Network. The method of transmission and practice of AOM is scientifically grounded and designed according to the Open Mindfulness Training (OMT) protocol.

*See Chapter 4, "The AOM Institute: An Association of Facilitators"*

**Naked sensation:** The experience of the senses stripped of any judgment, free of representation or interpretation. In this sense, sensation is naked or raw because it is experienced as it is, directly. It is a pristine sensory experience, that is, before mental representation.

*Chapter 3, Step 1, "The Second Attitude: Naked Sensation"*

**Non-duality:** By non-duality we mean the experience of absolute embodiment transcending the separation between subject and object, observer and observed. It is the experience occurring when we have completely merged into the present moment. It is the experience of fullness and absolute perfection.

*See Chapter 3, Step 4, Point 4: "Openness as a Remedy for Grasping and the Path of Non-duality"*

**OMT :** Acronym for *Open Mindfulness Training*, OMT is a training method in mindfulness that is accessible to everyone and is generally taught in student groups by an accredited facilitator. This method offers a training of the heart and mind to discover and cultivate a quality of presence that is spacious, quiet, and caring—in everyday life, in our family, profession, society, and world. Adapted to the conditions of our time, it offers a workable and practical solution to agitation and disharmony. While proposing a humanistic, non-sectarian approach, the OMT forms a bridge between universal contemplative traditions and the contemporary world.

*See Chapter 4, "The Method of Mindfulness Training"*

**Open presence:** see "(The Three) Dimensions of Mindfulness"

**Panoramic vision:** This is a fundamental element of the OMT method. A very wide and relaxed gaze is called "panoramic" because it lets us see globally, without looking at anything in particular, in an entirely open field of vision, from right to left and from top to bottom. In this vision spread over 180 degrees, we see the whole panorama of what is present in a diffuse way, which brings the experience of visual openness. This opening of the gaze favors



naked sight. With practice, we notice that this open, panoramic vision brings about a certain peacefulness, a certain calmness, and we learn to integrate it into our daily life.

*See Chapter 3, Step 3, Point 9: “Panoramic Vision”*

**P.A.R.O.L.E.S.:** Meaning “Spoken Words” in French, it is an acronym recalling the six qualities of mindfulness: Presence, Attentive, Relaxed, Open, Lucid, Empathic, and Sensitive.

*See Chapter 3, Step 6, Mindfulness in Communication: “Mindfulness Summarized by P.A.R.O.L.E.S”*

**Polarization:** We use the analogy of the positive and negative poles of an electromagnetic polarization in the context of the practice of mindfulness. In this analogy, habitual consciousness is a polarization in the sense that consciousness of something is the simultaneous and interdependent emergence of the two poles of the duality of subject and object. These two poles are positioned relative to each other through cognitive grasping. The intensity of the polarization of subject and object is proportional to that of the cognitive grasping. In this way, the subject exists in proportion to the intensity with which it fixates on its objects. In other words: the subject and its objects exist in proportion to the intensity of the apprehension or grasping of consciousness.

*See Chapter 1, “The Cognitive Model of Habitual Consciousness”*

**Presence of absence:** The presence of absence is the state of presence in which the subject is absent. Whole presence is inversely proportional to the presence of the subject. Fundamentally, mindfulness, whole presence, exists only in the absence of the witnessing, observing subject—this is the presence of absence. As a synonym for “presence of absence”, we could say “the presence empty of subject,” or even “mind empty of subject and object,” stemming from the notion of mind emptiness. We gradually train ourselves in the presence of absence through the practice of the transparent observer (see this term).

*See Chapter 3, Step 4, Point 9: “The Presence of Absence, Instant Presence, is Embodiment”*

**Primal experience:** Pristine, primordial or immediate experience is the first sensory experience experienced before the grasping of dualistic consciousness which poses a subject who perceives an object that is perceived. Pristine experience is prior to concepts, interpretations, judgments, or representations. The practice of mindfulness aims to discover this pristine experience, most notably through training with naked sensation, and with relaxed openness, free of grasping.

*See Chapter 1, “The Metaphor of the Map and Terrain” and “At the End: The Ultimate Fruit of Practice.”*

**Releasing Grasping:** This is a letting go in which we surrender ourselves and release our grasping and fixations. Releasing grasping depolarizes dualistic consciousness into the relaxed openness of open presence. The practice and experience of releasing grasping constitute the heart of the practice of mindfulness.

*See Chapter 1, "In the Middle: Travelling the Path", "The practice of releasing grasping."*

**Reminders:** see, "(The Two) Tools of Mindfulness)

**Representation:** Representation is the mental idea, or the mental image that one makes of both the reality one experiences and, through a mirror effect, the subject who experiences it. Before representation, there is the present instant, reality as it appears as instantaneous immediacy. This is pristine, primal experience. The process of conceptualization superimposes the mental representations that constitute our habitual, virtual world onto pristine experience. Mental representations interpret the present, as a map interprets the terrain.

*See Chapter 1, "The Interdependence of Self and World" and "The Metaphor of Radar Reading the Terrain on Autopilot"*

**Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:** A Pāli treatise that sets out the foundations of mindfulness. In this discourse, the Buddha enumerates the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of the body (kāya), mindfulness of sensations (vedanā), mindfulness of mind (citta), and mindfulness of phenomena (dhamma).

*See the Introduction, "The Origins and Sources of Mindfulness"*

**Shamatha - Vipashyanā:** Sanskrit terms, or Samatha-Vipassana in Pali. These two terms refer to a practice of Buddhist meditation that consists in "remaining quiet and present without distraction" (shamatha) and "clearly seeing the nature of reality and the mind" (vipashyanā).

*See the Introduction, "The Origins and Sources of Mindfulness"*

**Six senses:** In addition to the five external senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—is the internal sense of the mind, the objects of which are thoughts, mental images, and emotions, which is to say, all mental phenomena.

*Chapter 3, Step 3, Point 5: "The Six Senses"*

**Spirituality:** Like the word "meditation," the word "spirituality" is a delicate term with many connotations. We can say there is a spirituality of mindfulness, but it does not seek to produce modified states of consciousness and is not so much a "spiritualization" as an "embodiment" of the body of experience, of immediate sensation and experience, or instant presence.

*See Introduction: "A Universal Humanist Spirituality"*

**State of open clarity free of grasping:** This is the state of naturally clear open presence that comes through releasing grasping, through relaxation of the grasping which gives rise to conscious experience. It is a state of receptivity, and at the same time availability, a state of instant presence, free of blockage. This state combines presence, lucidity, and openness. It is the heart of the practice of mindfulness.

*See Chapter 3, Step 5, "The Characteristic Attitudes of the Fifth Step."*

**State of presence:** In a profound sense, "mindfulness" and "whole presence" are the state of presence, of simple presence, of complete presence, without distraction, in which we become one with the present moment. The state of presence has three fundamental qualities or dimensions: attention, openness, and empathy.

*See the Introduction, "Mindfulness in Ten Points"*

### **Threefold training:**

Mindfulness fits within an ethical and spiritual context that can be presented in three parts:

- **attentive conscience**, which is cultivated through constant vigilance in our actions and their consequences; an ethics of living.
- **deep presence**, which is found through training in the experience of the present moment, being 100% present, receptive, and available. Deep presence reveals the profound experience of surrender and immediacy;
- **complete understanding**, which is the intelligence that knows what I am and what is. The complete understanding of reality emerges through immediate presence.

*See the Conclusion: "The Therapy: The Threefold Training"*

**Tools of Mindfulness (the two):** These two tools or elements of the practice are present attention, attentive presence, and reminders, the return. Attention is a quality of attentive presence, in the whole sensation of the moment. Reminders consist in returning to that attentive presence each time we become distracted. To experience attentive presence and reminders is the cornerstone of the training in mindfulness.

*See Chapter 2: "The Tools of the Training: Presence and Reminders"*

**Training:** In mindfulness, “training” is synonymous with learning, practice, or meditation. Training is based on the reminders of presence which allow the integration of the state of mindfulness with all circumstances and at every moment of one’s life.

*See Chapter 2, “The Training, Cultivating the State of Full Mindful Presence.”*

**Transparent Observer and Absent Observer:** The practice of the transparent observer consists in cultivating a quality of observation, presence, and observer that is light, open, and suspended. In this practice the observer becomes transparent, that is to say, relaxes, and suspends the mind in an open and relaxed experience. This transparency is at the same time an embodiment, a sensory opening with less cognitive input. With practice, the observer becomes more and more transparent, and the transparent observer becomes more and more stable. Eventually, in complete embodiment, observer and observed merge into a state of non-duality. The practice of the transparent observer is the supreme way of training in non-dual mindfulness.

*See Chapter 3, Step 4, Point 8: “The Transparent Observer and the Absent Observer”*

## **DETAILED OUTLINE**

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**A PRACTICE AND STUDY SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL TRAINING**

**A STUDY AND PRACTICE SUPPORT DURING IN-PERSON SEMINARS**

**A SUPPORT FOR DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING AND VISION**

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