

HANDOUT 3.4: THE CYCLE OF MINDFULNESS

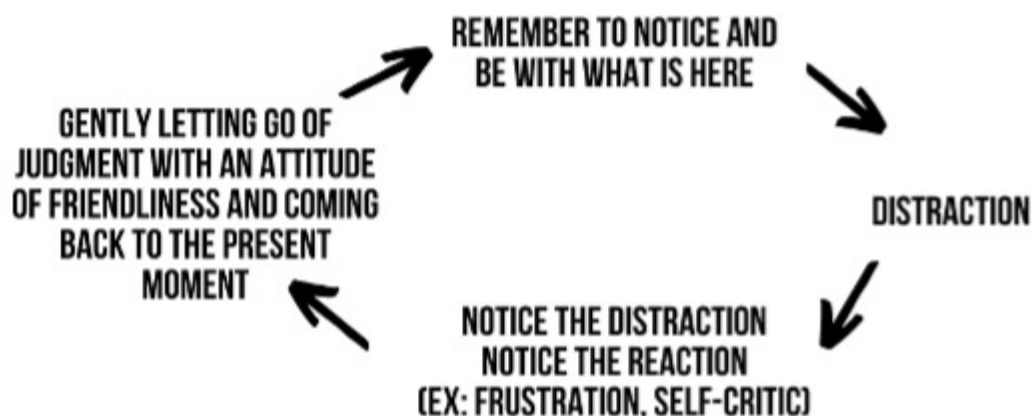
Mindfulness is a way of paying attention and knowing that one is paying attention, in a non-judgmental way.

Mindfulness is not trying to push things away, emptying the mind of thoughts or making the mind settled (though this is often sought). The moment we make an activity like mindfulness with a desired outcome, it becomes a task; this will bring us into a state of self-monitoring, asking ourselves whether we are doing it correctly, others are doing it better and so on.

Mindfulness is a process which unravels moment by moment, where we give direction but don't focus on expectation. It's like sleep: we try to create the conditions for sleep, but if we keep checking it, then we end up with thoughts like "I have fall asleep if I want to make it through my busy day tomorrow!"

THE CYCLE OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a practice of noticing and gently returning to the present moment - without trying to block or eliminate thoughts from the mind. Through mindfulness we can give conscious direction to our actions.

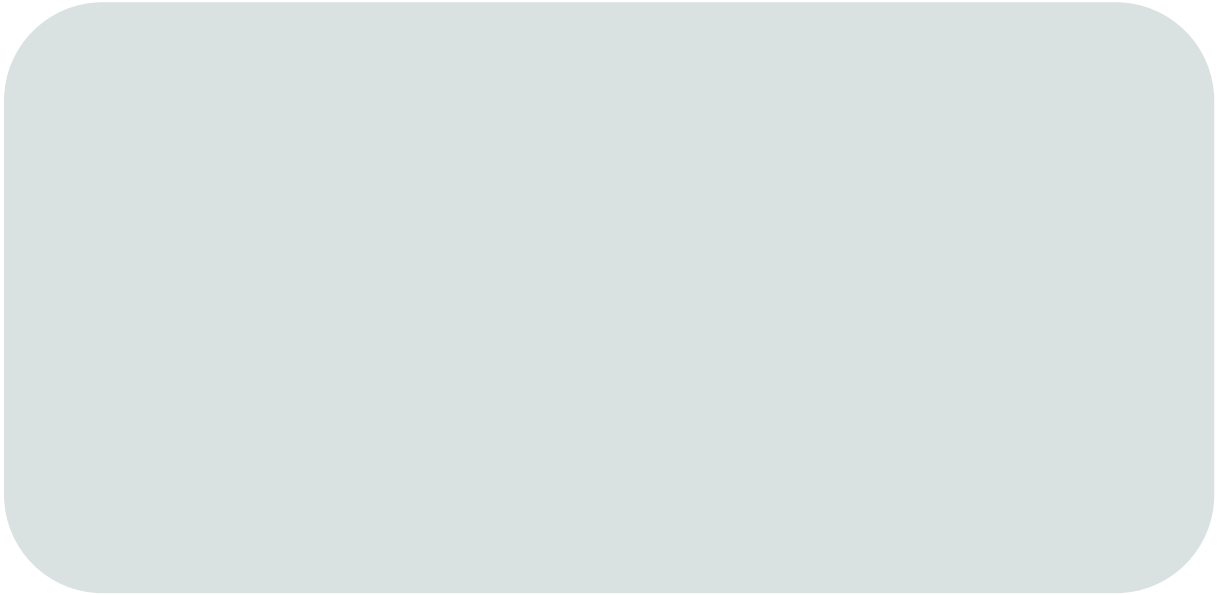


During your next Mindfulness practice, try to notice if your mind keeps returning to something in particular;

- What is it?

- Do you notice a sense of threat?
- Do you notice a sense of competition, of striving for a goal?
- Do you notice a desire to cultivate calm?

Take a few moments to write down your reflections:

A large, light gray rounded rectangle with rounded corners, intended for writing reflections. It is empty and occupies a significant portion of the page below the list of questions.

Remember that mindfulness can be practiced with many different intentions; this is true both for the intention with which we are sitting to practice (why am I doing it?) and the intention we are nurturing while we practice (how am I doing it?). Try to connect to these two elements each time you choose to practice mindfulness.

MOTIVES THAT SUSTAIN MINDFULNESS

