

HANDOUT 3.6: MINDFUL CAFÉ

For this practice we invite you to take your mind for a special coffee, where we will cultivate a mindful compassionate look at what we notice in the world around us.

To begin the practice, leave the house and find a place to sit: it can be a table at a bar, or a bench, or maybe on some steps by the curb... choose a place from which you can observe a certain flow of people.

Start by paying attention to your posture while you are sitting: what position do your shoulders take? Your arms? Is your heart open or closed? Is your gaze hard or is it soft?

Now turn your curious attention to your breath: feel the air flowing through you, the exchange you have in this moment with the space around you. Feel the air filling your chest and perhaps gently inviting it to soften.

Now, from this state of connection with yourself, bring your gaze straight ahead - everything that enters your field of vision at this moment will become the object of your attention for this exercise.

Keep your gaze straight ahead for the rest of this practice. Notice everything that enters and leaves your field of vision. Maybe there are people, creatures, objects, entering and leaving your field of vision. How fast do they do it? How are they moving? Notice what effect these images have on your mind.

Notice what thoughts are activated within you as you look at the people, creatures, and objects your gaze encounters; observe what quality these thoughts have. Are they neutral thoughts? Of comparison? Of criticism? Of appreciation? What do you notice first about a person or in an object? What caught your attention? What system gets activated?

Gently alternate between observing that which appears in your field of vision, and that which manifests within you in response to what you see...both the external and internal views are unchosen, but what we can choose is the attitude of openness and curiosity toward both.

Continue practicing in this way for 5 - 10 minutes. Then, you can end the practice by standing up or, one last time, letting your gaze scan the space surrounding you. Before you go turn to where you were sitting and thank it for being the place, however informal it may seem, where

you allowed yourself this deeper awareness of the flow of things. Take a few moments to write what emerged during the practice:

