

Bulletin for Mindfulness

Business

Chalice Lighting

Come we now out of the darkness of our unknowing
and the dusk of our dreaming;
Come we now from far places.
Come we now into the twilight of our awakening
and the reflection of our gathering.
Come we now all together.

Annie Foerster

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence – meditation

Shared Readings

The greatest support we can have is mindfulness, which means being totally present in each moment. ... Being mindful means being fully absorbed in the moment, leaving no room for anything else. We are filled with the momentary happening, whatever it is—standing or sitting or lying down, feeling pleasure or pain. And we maintain a nonjudgmental awareness, a “just knowing.” *Ayya Khema*

Mindfulness is a process. We do not achieve a final and total state of mindfulness. It is a way of being in one moment that comes and goes. Mindfulness is losing our focus 100 times and returning to it 101 times. *Lizabeth Roemer*

For the person with attention, every day becomes the very day upon which all the world depends. *Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro*

Mindfulness exercises are a way of learning that we cannot choose what comes into our minds and what we feel. We can only choose what we pay attention to, how we pay attention, and what we do. *John P. Forsyth*

The garden is a perfect place to practice mindfulness. Watering, planting, touching the earth, and letting your fingers feel the soil are wonderfully restorative activities.
Thich Nhat Hanh

The challenge of mindfulness is to be present for your experience as it is rather than immediately jumping in to change it or try to force it to be different. *Jon Kabat-Zim*

Mindfulness can be summed up in two words: pay attention. Once you notice what you're doing, you have the power to change it. *Michelle Burford*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1

Raisin Meditation

Round 2

Share more deeply stories and experiences of mindfulness as a result of your exploration of the preparation materials.

Round 3

As time allows, share additional thoughts on mindfulness or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

Song

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Facilitator Notes for Mindfulness

Before the Session

Bring raisins for the meditation used during the 1st round of sharing. You may want to bring other fruits, such as a Craisin, grape, or small tomato for those who don't like raisins.

Review the breathing meditation used during the time of Silence. Decide what you will use as a gong or bell to end the meditation—you may want to adjust the wording if you are not using a gong.

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Sharing of Joys and Concerns (each person about 2 minutes)

Silence – meditation

Leader reads with long pauses at ...

Today we'll use a breathing meditation during our time of silence.

Let's come fully into this time and this place using the mantra, "Be here now..."

Close your eyes. As you inhale, mentally say, "Be here now." Repeat the phrase as you exhale...

Pace your repetition of "Be here now," so one repetition lasts for your whole in-breath and another repetition lasts for your whole out-breath. Continue until you hear the gong...

[Allow about 2 minutes for this centering exercise.]

Come back to this space and open your eyes...

Shared Readings

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Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1 The leader reads the following meditation with brief pauses between each statement.

Raisin Meditation

- Sit comfortably in a chair.
- Place a raisin in your hand.
- Examine the raisin as if you had never seen it before.
- Imagine it as its “plump self” growing on the vine surrounded by nature.
- As you look at the raisin, become conscious of what you see: the shape, texture, color, size. Is it hard or soft?
- Bring the raisin to your nose and smell it.
- Are you anticipating eating the raisin? Is it difficult not to just pop it in your mouth?
- How does the raisin feel? How small is it in your hand?
- Place the raisin in your mouth. Become aware of what your tongue is doing.
- Bite ever so lightly into the raisin. Feel its squishiness.
- Chew three times and then stop.
- Describe the flavor of the raisin. What is the texture?
- As you complete chewing, swallow the raisin.
- Sit quietly, breathing, aware of what you are sensing.

Round 2 (each person about 5 minutes. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure that all get to share at least once)

Share more deeply stories and experiences of mindfulness as a result of your exploration of the preparation materials.

Round 3

As time allows, share additional thoughts on mindfulness or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Elizabeth Selle Jones

Song

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Preparation for Mindfulness

Most of the world's religions include the idea of living in the moment with full awareness. Zen Buddhism especially is known for its emphasis on "nowness." Hindu, Taoist, Jewish, Moslem, Christian, and other teachers urge us to appreciate every day with the understanding that it will not come to us again. To be mindful is to live with a heightened awareness of each passing moment.

Though it has its roots in Buddhist meditation, a secular practice of mindfulness has entered the American mainstream in recent years, introduced by those who value the benefits of mindfulness in terms of health and stress reduction. Tim Ryan, congressman and author of *A Mindful Nation*, states, "Put simply, mindfulness is about finding ways to slow down and pay attention to the present moment – which improves performance and reduces stress."

"Mindfulness is awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally," states Jon Kabat-Zinn. Sounds complex! In this session we'll become acquainted with mindfulness by exploring some of the terms: awareness, paying attention, present moment, and non-judgment.

- Awareness: Take a few minutes now to just be here. Stop reading, and just breathe. Let the past be over, and let what has not yet happened be off in the future. Be aware of the present, your present, now.
- Paying attention: Henry Miller said, "The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself." Give your full attention to a plant, flower or scene for a few minutes.
- Present moment: In our covenant groups we are invited to be in the present moment in our deep listening where we focus only on the speaker. Thich Nhat Hanh tells us, "The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers."
- Non-judgment: Bhante Gunaratana describes mindfulness as "mirror-thought" that reflects only what is happening with no biases, pure observation. Acceptance may be a key to avoiding judgments, being aware of our experience without either clinging to it or pushing it away.

Quotes

Do not encumber your mind with useless thoughts. What good does it do to brood on the past or anticipate the future? Remain in the simplicity of the present moment.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Every moment is enormous, and it is all we have. Our life is a path of learning to wake up before we die. *Natalie Goldberg*

Training attention through meditation opens our eyes. *Sharon Salzberg*

Our minds are like crows. They pick up everything that glitters, no matter how uncomfortable our nests get with all that metal in them. *Thomas Merton*

If one looks long enough at almost anything, looks with absolute attention at a flower, a stone, the bark of a tree, grass, snow, a cloud, something like revelation takes place. Something is “given,” and perhaps that something is always a reality outside the self. *May Sarton*

A Buddhist monk was climbing a steep mountain when he came face-to-face with a ferocious tiger. Behind the monk was nothing but the path he'd taken, one so steep that the hasty retreat required would surely mean a fall to his death. To his right was a wild strawberry growing from the ground. A perfectly red, dew-kissed wild strawberry. The monk reached out and plucked the strawberry, popped it in his mouth, and closed his eyes in ecstasy. *A Buddhist tale*

Questions to Ponder

1. What does mindfulness mean to you?
2. How do you cultivate mindfulness in your life?
3. What are some struggles you have in trying to live with more mindfulness? How can you help your mind to turn off the background noise and focus on the present?
4. Describe an experience in which you felt you were fully alive to the moment.
5. Think about a time when you were on “autopilot.” How did you come to realize this was happening? What happened when you became aware?
6. Some say that listening to someone else can be a mindful spiritual act (mindful listening is, in fact, the very basis of Small Group Ministry). During the next few days, notice if there are times when you appear to be listening to someone, but your mind is really somewhere else.