

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

“A practical way to translate mindfulness is as present-centered, non-judgmental awareness with acceptance – in terms of the body, we could also refer to mindfulness as immediate awareness. The meditative experiences lead to greater ability to concentrate, greater freedom from distraction, greater tolerance of change and turmoil around and inside oneself, and greater alertness about one’s own responses, both physical and mental”

Michael Stone

Instructions for sitting

When arriving to take your seat, pay attention to how the body is being aligned – ensure that there is height beneath hips, that spine is straight and knees are supported. And here’s that body checklist (the seven points): crown of head – eyes – mouth – shoulders – hands – sit bones – legs.

Instructions for breathing

Be very light in the counting – and count on the exhale. To begin with, explore counting up to 10: there will be thoughts in the background, emotions and physical sensations – if these become so strong that you lose count, simply note “wandering” and start again at 1. If you do manage to get to 10, then count backwards (again on the exhale) – see if you can perhaps get back to 1. If you are able to do this, then the next round is 1 to 9 and 9 to 1 – and so on until you eventually go from 1 to 2, 2 to 1: and then just 1. And then start again...starting again over and over again. When you become more confident and the capacity for concentration grows, then after 3 cycles of counting you can let go of this technique and just rest in an awareness of breathing: but this can take a long time so there is no rush – be patient and gently persistent in practicing.

“Ten thousand flowers in spring, the moon in autumn
A cool breeze in summer, snow in winter
If your mind is not clouded by unnecessary things
This is the best season of your life”

Wu Men

Resources

London Meditation Project – www.londonmeditationproject.org – 020 8980 9289

West London Buddhist Centre – www.westlondonbuddhistcentre.com – 94 Westbourne Park Villas W2 – 0207 727 9382

Gaia House – www.gaiahouse.co.uk – a beautiful retreat centre in Devon

Watkins Books – www.watkinsbooks.co.uk – 19 Cecil Court WC2 – stock many books and also sell meditation cushions

Recommended books

Breath by breath – Larry Rosenberg

Loving Kindness – Sharon Salzberg

Radical Acceptance – Tara Brach

Everyday Zen – Charlotte Joko Beck

Seeking the heart of wisdom – Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield

“Meditation is a spiritual discipline that allows you to have some degree of control over your thoughts and emotions. Our normal state of mind is that our thoughts and emotions are wild and unruly and as a result they control us. And thoughts and emotions tend to be controlled by our negative impulses rather than our positive ones. We need to reverse this cycle.”

HH Dalai Lama