

Ideas for practicing mindfulness

Strategies and tools for investigating our experience.

These could be used to investigate: a thought with a lot of juice, a persistent story, an afflictive emotion, e.g., anxiety, anger, frustration, resentment, sadness, etc. Note: The same thought can have different effects on different minds. To an agitated mind it will proliferate; to a still mind it will just pass through.

1. Simply being with it, curious, accepting vs. repressing/fighting/hating it. What is happening?
Note: acceptance does not mean passive and resignation; it means accepting that this state is currently present and fully feel it before then taking appropriate action.
2. Getting to “know” the mental phenomenon by experiencing it in the body.
includes recognizing—physical, mental, and/or psychological discomfort/pain.
3. Look for patterns (in relationships, in your conditioning) that led to the arising of this issue: for example, “Why does this keep coming up?”
Over time, we lose our fear/dread of it, we see its story and the conditions that led to this arising again, and what causes it to grow & what helps it to ease.
4. Bring questions: How does it feel? So how is this working for me? What else is going on?
5. Be kind and direct to this part: “I’ll come back to you later.” “Not this, not now.”
6. Persistent stories need skillful efforts. One is “stop it;” think of the metaphor of the circuit breaker.
Negativity—sometimes it’s just a habit and even that part of us is really sick of it.
7. Witness its impermanence maybe with a mental note: this anger, anxiety, etc. won’t be here forever!
8. Compassion (may I be peaceful, free from suffering) can change your relationship to what has arisen and can bring less identification with it, i.e., *my* problem.
9. Reframing our perception, e.g., practicing metta to shift from seeing the other as the enemy.
The story of boys in subway running around; when admonished, the father apologized and said “we’re coming home from the hospital where their mother just died.” All anger melted.
We don’t have to know the full story, just that there is more of the story than we know.
10. Be creative, e.g., feel the spaciousness of the sky which holds everything, visualize clouds which come and go so quickly.
11. See the universal—relate to your story in less personal terms. Recall the mustard seed story.
12. Acknowledge how much energy this pattern costs and how little it gives you *but* do acknowledge what it gives you. For example, my resentment pattern made me feel better about myself in comparison to others.
13. You’re not just working on the emotion but also cultivating the lovely, appreciating when this emotion is not present.