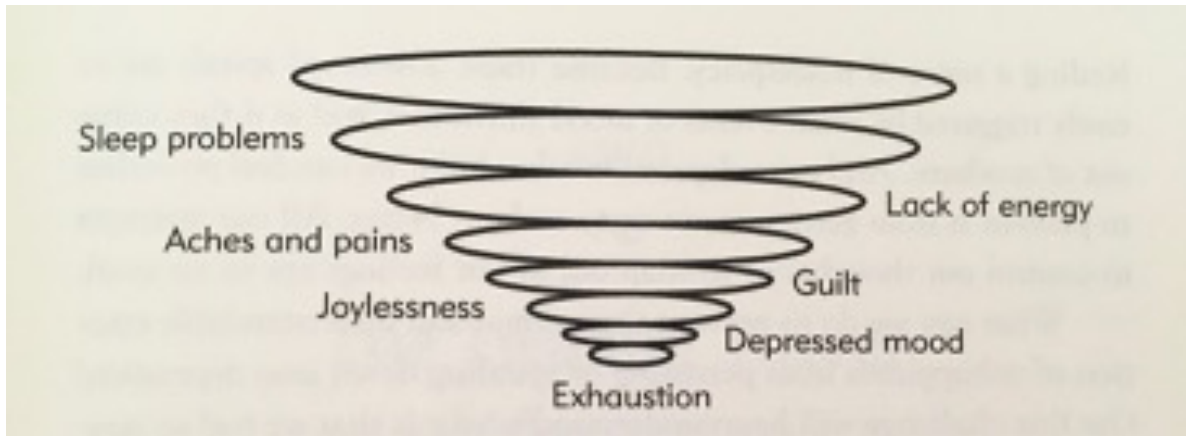


## THE EXHAUSTION FUNNEL

This is one of those pictures that is worth 1,000 words. It illustrates how we can spiral down into exhaustion, burnout, and depression as a result of trying to meet the demands of our busy lives.



The top circle (unlabeled) represents a state of normal and healthy balance. The narrowing of the circles represents what happens when we respond to life's demands by pushing ourselves harder, and letting go of our self-care practices. Often the first thing to go when life gets really busy and stressful is **sleep**. We stay up past our normal bedtime getting work done because there wasn't enough time during regular work hours. Or we stay awake scrolling through messages and news feeds on our devices because we're too stressed to be able to fall asleep. And when we finally turn off the lights and our devices, we sleep poorly, because the mind just won't turn off.

Often the next thing we let go of when we're stressed and overwhelmed is **exercise**, either because we've overslept and missed our workout time, or because our sleep-deprived body just doesn't have the energy. But when we don't exercise, we give up another self-care practice that can help manage stress. We become trapped in a vicious cycle of stress. Over time, as we continue to sacrifice the activities that are nourishing but that seem "optional" in our struggle to stay on top of all of the demands coming at us, we become more and more depleted. And the more depleted we become, the less we are able to respond effectively to those demands, leading to feelings of guilt, self-blame, and unhappiness.

The Exhaustion Funnel was first proposed by Professor Marie Asberg of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. She emphasized that those of us who continue downward on this spiral are likely to be "those whose level of self-confidence is closely dependent upon their performance at work," and who are the most committed and conscientious workers, not the slackers of the world.

## What is “Mindfulness”?

Your ideas?

1

## What Mindfulness is not:

- \* About becoming a Buddhist
- \* Controlling your thoughts
- \* An out-of-body experience
- \* Emptying the mind
- \* Difficult to learn

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## Our definition:

From Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programs and author of many books including *Full Catastrophe Living* and *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

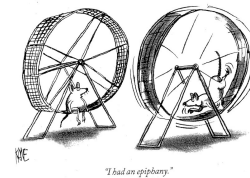
*“Mindfulness is paying attention, in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”*

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## First, “on purpose”

Having the intention to step out of “autopilot mode”



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## “in the present moment”

Your body is present.



Is your mind?



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Dana Alex

5

## And – “non-judgmentally”

Can we truly stop judging?

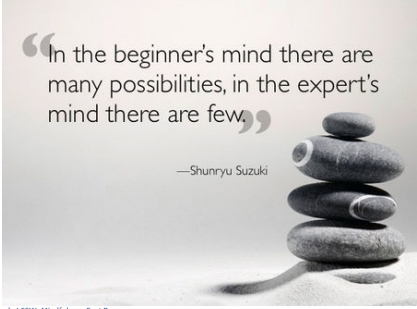
Can we become aware of the judgments our minds are making?

Can we consider that there may be another equally valid perspective?



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“In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few.”

—Shunryu Suzuki

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## The Raisin Exercise

- \* What did your senses tell you?
- \* Which sensory experience was most vivid?
- \* Were you aware of thoughts or judgments?
- \* How was this different than your usual experience of eating a raisin?

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## Doing routine daily activities mindfully

- \* Think of a routine activity that you do each day, something that just takes a few minutes
- \* How could you bring mindful awareness to doing it, like we did with the raisin?
- \* What would you do differently?
- \* How would that change your experience?

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## Bringing an attitude of interested curiosity to your experience:

Another way of using “beginner's mind,” this attitude acts as an antidote to the tendency to be judgmental

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## Mindfulness East Bay

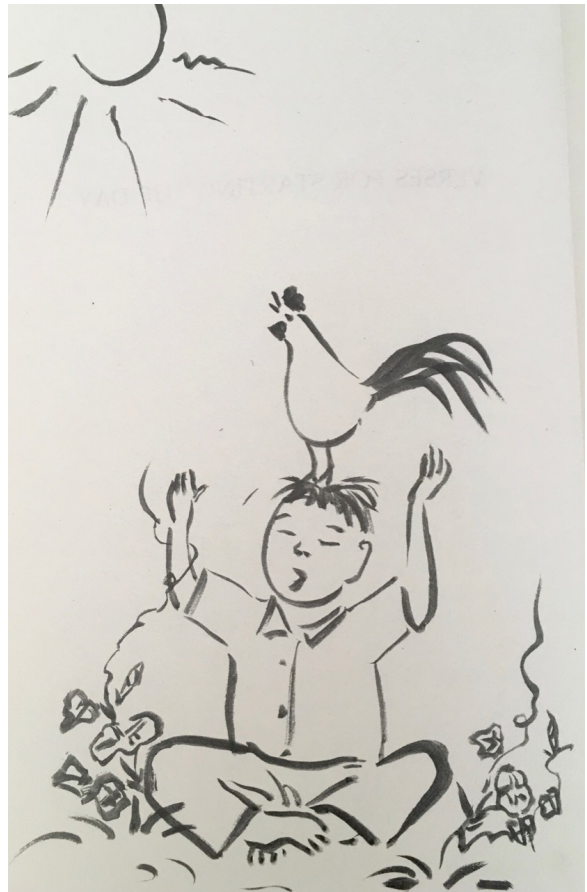
*Finding the space between stimulus and response*

### COOKIE OF CHILDHOOD

By Thich Nhat Hanh

When I was four years old, my mother used to bring me a cookie every time she came home from the market. I always went to the front yard and took my time eating it, sometimes half an hour or forty-five minutes for one cookie. I would take a small bite and look up at the sky. Then I would touch the dog with my feet and take another small bite. I just enjoyed being there, with the sky, the earth, the bamboo thickets, the cat, the dog, the flowers. I was able to do that because I did not have much to worry about. I did not think of the future, I did not regret the past. I was entirely in the present moment, with my cookie, the dog, the bamboo thickets, the cat, and everything.

It is possible to eat our meals as slowly and joyfully as I ate the cookie of my childhood. Maybe you have the impression that you have lost the cookie of your childhood, but I am sure it is still there, somewhere in your heart. Everything is still there, and if you really want it, you can find it. Eating mindfully is a most important practice of meditation. We can eat in a way that we restore the cookie of our childhood. The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it.



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This story by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh is from his book *Peace is Every Step* (1991) New York, NY: Bantam Books. Drawing by Mayumi Oda, in another of his books, *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment* (1990) Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.



## GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE PARTNERS

Research has shown that regular home practice makes a difference in obtaining the full benefits of the Mindfulness-based courses. In a systematic review of 43 studies involving MBSR and MBCT, there was a small but significant association between participants' home practice and positive intervention outcomes (Parsons et. al., 2017).

We also know that it takes time to develop new habits, whether to exercise, eat better, or learn to meditate, and the amount of time it takes is longer than what most people typically think. In fact, social psychology researchers have come up with a number, 66, as the optimal number of days of regular practice for a new behavior to be installed as a habit. We don't quite make that in an 8-week course, but by the time we finish, you'll be nearly there!

Research and experience have also proven that people are much more likely to show up to practice a new behavior, and stick with it for many weeks, when they feel accountable to another person, whether a teacher, coach, or workout buddy. It seems that as social animals, it is hardwired into us to be more responsible to show up for others, than for ourselves.

So with all of that in mind, I have assigned each person in this course a "Practice Partner." You will get a few specific assignments during the next eight weeks to do with your practice partner, but for the most part, it will be up to each pair of partners to determine for themselves their preferred working relationship. My hope is that you will find it mutually beneficial.

Here are some general guidelines to get you started:

Remember the basic elements of mindfulness: *purposeful, present-moment, and non-judging awareness*. These are the qualities you want to embody as a practice partner. You are not acting as a therapist, teacher, or friend. Therefore, you should not give, nor ask for, advice, but it's fine to ask for clarification on an assignment. Present moment awareness means there's no need to talk about your past lived experience, or your future plans, but rather, what practice(s) do you intend to do today, how, where, and when?

For those who like acronyms, here's one: SER, which stands for Support, Encouragement, and Reminders. *Ser* in Spanish means "to be" or "being," as in *un ser humano*, a human being. So with your Practice Partner, you will be offering Support, Encouragement, and Reminders to each other, as you practice simply *being*.

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Parsons, C. E., Crane, C., Parsons, L. J., Fjorback, L. O., & Kuyken, W. (2017). Home practice in Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction: A systematic review and meta-analysis of participants' mindfulness practice and its association with outcomes. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 95, 29-41. (In this review, the average amount of home practice was 30 minutes, six days a week, and it was noted that practicing longer did not correlate with even more improved outcomes.) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2017.05.004>