



*Stress-free*  
***Mindful Living***  
**A Four Part Buddhist Course By**  
*Venerable*  
***Thubten Tenzin***

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

The meaning of “stress”:

"Stress is the word that John (Kabat-Zinn) used in 1979 when he was coming up with the course, it was his word for the Buddhist word 'dukkha' which means suffering but it means that quality of things just not being right and its a great word to use for what we are doing. We are reducing the effects that stress might have on the body, but what we are really reducing is the way that people get lost in their pain and suffering and forget that there is this inherent capacity to come back to balance and ease in our lives and the program actually takes people on a journey of discovering that so to me that is what the mindfulness based stress reduction is - mindfulness based suffering reduction program." Melissa Blacker, Centre for Mindfulness.

Mindfulness meditation:

“So how could focusing on your thoughts have such impressive physical effects? The assumption that meditation simply induces a state of relaxation is "dead wrong", says Raison. Brain-imaging studies suggest that it triggers active processes within the brain, and can cause physical changes to the structure of regions involved in learning, memory, emotion regulation and cognitive processing."

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/apr/24/meditation-ageing-shamatha-project>

## HOW TO BREAK HABITS THROUGH MINDFUL LIVING

1. The first step is to live in the moment and be free of stress by not living in the past or future, not rehashing old things getting upset or thinking they were pleasurable, and not making plans for the future. Instead, in the present moment, we complete activities with concentration.

MEDITATION: "Present moment, Wonderful moment"

Relax your posture, sitting comfortably with your back straight. If you are sitting on a chair, let your feet rest flat on the floor a short way apart. Place your hands in your lap, right hand on top of left, thumbs touching. Let your tongue rest behind the upper teeth. Close your eyes. Take three deep breaths in and out of the body. Then breathe normally. Focus your mind on the sensation at the tip of the nostrils as the air enters and leaves the body. Stay aware of the full inhalation and exhalation.

Breathing in, we say to ourselves, "Present moment". Breathing out, we say "Wonderful moment." "Present moment, Wonderful moment, we repeat this to ourselves.

If thoughts appear, do not react to them or get involved. Just note them and let them go. Kindly and gently to yourself, keep returning your attention to the breath. Let go of thinking about the past and making plans for the future. Just try to be in the present moment and keep returning your attention to the breath.

When you feel calm and focused, return your attention to the room, open your eyes, and finish the meditation there.

2. The next mindful step is to recognise what emotions are coming up for us in this very moment. Once we recognise them, we can let them go. We can ask ourselves these questions:

"What are my emotions in this moment? Why do I feel like overeating, from feeling depressed, angry, sad, or resentful? Mindful of the emotion, I will let it go."

MEDITATION: "Stopping the war within"

– Jack Kornfield

Sit comfortably for a few minutes, letting your body be at rest. Let your breathing be easy and natural. Bring your attention into the present, sit quietly, and notice whatever sensations are present in your body. In particular, be aware of any sensations, tensions, or pains you may have been fighting. Do not try to change them, simply notice them with an interested and kind attention. In each area of struggle you discover, let your body relax and your heart soften. Open to whatever you experience without fighting. Let go of the battle. Breathe quietly and let it be.

Then, after a time, shift your attention to your heart and mind. Now notice what feelings and thoughts are present. In particular, be aware of any feelings or thoughts you are now struggling with, fighting, denying, or avoiding. Notice them with an interested and kind attention. Let your heart be soft. Open to whatever you experience without fighting. Let go of the battle. Breathe quietly and let it be.

Continue to sit quietly. Then cast your attention over all the battles that still exist in your life. Sense them inside yourself. If you have an ongoing struggle with your body, be aware of that. If you have been fighting inner wars with your feelings, been in conflict with your own loneliness, fear, confusion, grief, anger, or addiction, sense the struggle you have been waging. Notice the struggles in your thoughts as well. Be aware of how you have carried on the inner battles. Notice the inner armies, the inner dictators, the inner fortifications. Be aware of all that you have fought within yourself, of how long you have perpetuated the conflict.

Gently, with openness, allow each of these experiences to be present. Simply notice each of them in turn with interest and kind attention. In each area of struggle, let your body, heart, and mind be soft. Open to whatever you experience without fighting. Let it be present just as it is. Let go of the battle. Breathe quietly and let yourself be at rest. Invite all the parts of yourself to join you at the peace table in your heart.

3. The final step is healing. We can think to ourselves, "I don't need to be like this, I don't need to relive the past." We can have compassion for ourselves and connect to the heart.

MEDITATION: "Peaceful Essence Within"

– Venerable Thubten Tenzin

Begin by getting into a comfortable meditation position. Take three deep breaths and breathe out all negativities, including pain and tiredness, on the out breath.

Then breathe naturally and normally. Retain an awareness of the natural breath entering and leaving the body, and with this, relax into a space of calmness, adopting a feeling of peace.

As we meditate, we come to understand that our mind is still under the sway of suffering, whatever we perceive that to be in this very moment. For example, it may be that our mind is full of angry thoughts, or we may be feeling lonely, guilty, anxious or depressed. As we analyse our mind, we can identify the specific suffering we are experiencing right now.

Now that we see how much we are suffering, we must find a simple way to have some compassion for ourselves, to alleviate the mental pain.

We recall from our past a place of safety, of refuge, a place where we felt completely at ease and quiet. Our refuge place may be the bush, or a mountain top, or beside the sea. We now spend a few moments getting in touch with our refuge space.

Breathe in the essence of this light, airy place, which embraces and infuses our body with stillness and calm. We feel more and more peaceful, calmer and quieter, with each inhalation and exhalation. The natural breath is stopping our suffering, allowing us to be in the present moment of refuge.

Concentrating on each breath brings us a healing, precious moment, gradually stopping the suffering in our mind.

Not trying to change the past or make the future what we want, by just staying in this special place, and just being, we allow compassion to wash over us like a healing balm. We allow ourselves a cessation of suffering.

As we continue to breathe in and out, we become more and more peaceful, recalling the essence of stillness and calm in our own special refuge place.

We also begin to see that others suffer. Think firstly of those loved ones closest to you, and embrace them with your mind. Hold them dear, think to nurture and protect them. Offer to take them into your own safe space, and share with them the refuge, peace and quiet of your heart/mind.

Then take the people who may be suffering from the same afflictive emotions as you into that refuge space, your space of peace. Take away those very same sufferings from all those people.

Because this refuge space is within us, we can go there any time. We can take ourselves and others there any time. Extending the present moment into the future, through peace, calmness and stillness now, we cause ourselves to have peace and happiness, living in harmony now and in the future.

## PART TWO: MINDFULNESS OF BODY

Mindfulness of the body means not harming our own bodies through taking intoxicants or overeating for example, and it means not harming others' bodies. We practise this mindfulness because we recognise that harming ourselves and others has a long term and cumulative harmful effect. His Holiness says that if you benefit others, it brings happiness. Whereas, if you harm yourself and others, it creates illness, stress and other problems.

Mindfulness of being in the present moment means respect for our own body and respecting others' bodies. Mindfulness of the body includes eating properly, slowly and contemplatively and with the correct nourishment.

Mindfulness of the body means becoming mindful of our emotions in relation to the body – not allowing our emotions to dictate food intake, intoxicants, drug use, prescription drug use, etc. We become mindful of emotions arising in the body and we let them go. Mindfulness helps us to stop doing the same old things that we think make us happy but which in fact don't make us happy and instead contribute to depression. This allows us to practise contentment instead.

When we are mindful of holding emotions which result in physical pain, we practise letting go as much as possible.

Alexander Berzin's affirmations:

I shall not treat you in a rough physical manner

I shall stop mistreating myself physically by overworking, by eating poorly, or by not getting enough sleep

MEDITATION: "Opening the senses"

– Tarthang Tulku

Sit comfortably in the sitting posture, and begin to breathe softly through both nose and mouth. Lightly pay attention to the inhalations: gently slow them down as much as you can, while keeping the breath as soft as possible. Feel the sensations in and around your body as your inhalations slow; go deeply into these sensations, expanding and accumulating them with the breath.

Now lightly pay attention to your exhalations: breathing out very slowly through both nose and mouth, keeping the breath light and soft, the inhalations normal. As you develop the quality of these slow exhalations, try to open your whole sensory field as much as possible – every cell, tissue and organ. Let your feelings spread like a halo throughout and around your body.

MEDITATION: "Sweeping the Body"

- Venerable Thubten Tenzin

This meditation is good for relaxation, but also as an awareness or insight meditation. You can take your time and may focus on different parts for longer periods if you see a need.

Begin with some breath meditation and when you are feeling relaxed and focused begin a sweep of the body. Start at the crown or top of the head, breathing gently into that area. Move the awareness to the brain and all the chemicals and electrical impulses. If you feel any pain or tension in the top of the head, breathe into it, gently releasing it on the out breath.

Then move to the back of the head and the face. Become aware of each part of the face; forehead, eyes, cheeks, cheekbones, all the muscles in the face. If there is any tension breathe in to it and let it go on the out breath. Nose, mouth, tongue, jaw, teeth, ears, sinuses.

Now move your awareness to your throat and the back of the neck. The thyroid and glands there, the oesophagus, vocal chords, spine. Breathing into any pain or tension there.

Bring your awareness to your shoulders. Many people hold tension here. If you feel any tension just relax the muscles slowly, breathing into them. Move on to the upper arms, the elbows and the forearms. The wrists, the hands. The back of the hands the palms of the hands and each finger. Breathe into any issue there. Now the upper back. Relax any tightness or tension, breath into and pain you find there.

The chest and stomach are where we might hold tense emotions, become aware of the muscles in the torso and stomach, let go of any built up tension.

Become aware of the spine, all the organs like kidneys, heart, liver, spleen, bowel and digestive system. Relax any pain you find there, breathing it out on the out breath.

Keep breathing naturally and normally, relax any tension in the hips, buttocks and sexual organs. When ready move on to the thighs and knees. Make sure the legs and feet are relaxed, dissolving any tension or pain as you breathe in and out naturally, normally, without changing the breath in any way.

Now as we watch the breath if we find any tension begins to build up again in any part of the body, once again become aware of the tension and then let it dissolve away, relaxing the muscles and returning to the breath. When you feel relaxed and settled, slowly release your attention on the breath, become aware of the room you are in, where you are sitting and slowly open your eyes to finish the meditation there.

#### MEDITATION: "Walking Meditation" – Venerable Thubten Tenzin

Remove your shoes and place your feet on the ground. Stand and breathe deeply three times, exhaling all negativities. Then begin the walking meditation.

Every step is slow and your mind turns inwards and becomes reflective. Lift one foot slowly then place it down slowly, feeling the earth; solid, firm ground under your feet. Lift the other foot slowly with direct attention, then place it down slowly, once again noting the solid, firm ground beneath, the very stable essence of your life. With your hands either gently clasped behind your back, or loosely at your sides, continue very slowly contemplating the stepping and placing of your feet. Your head should not be looking around. Your gaze should be directed to the placement of your feet or just in front of them.

Now we can contemplate as we walk:

##### 1. Taking and Giving

As you lift each foot, feel that you are lifting the burdens of this life from yourself and all your loved ones. As you place each foot down, feel that you are giving them the solid foundation of happiness – their ultimate nature – to ease their pain.

##### 2. Calmness and Joy

As you lift each foot, you can lift your own spirits, and as you place each foot down, you can place yourself in joy, feeling the solid calmness of the earth. Allow yourself to be peaceful and calm with the basis of solid ground. Allow yourself to be uplifted as you lift each foot, placing yourself in joy and happiness.

Whichever method you use, with the rise and fall of each foot, you can include all your loved ones, all your friends, all strangers, and particularly all enemies. You are giving them the joy of their ultimate nature. You are giving them the happiness of your loving-kindness. You are freeing them from suffering with your compassion.

By repeating your steps you can see how even walking to the shop or to post a letter can be most meaningful. By walking for your health, you can also give health and happiness to others. Then each part of your life is giving, meaningful, placing yourself and others in happiness.

When you finish your walking meditation or walking in life, you can dedicate all that positive virtue to yourself and all those you included in the meditation, so that everyone can live in peace, happiness, harmony and the truth of reality.

### PART THREE: MINDFULNESS OF SPEECH

When we speak badly, we harm ourselves and others – do we want to cause ourselves harm in the future by speaking badly? We become mindful of what we are saying and examine our agenda in the words we say and how we say them. If we say harsh words it's going to come back to us as abusive language; if it's about manipulative speech we will be manipulated by others; if it's about talking for the sake of talking we will hear constant chatter which doesn't give us rest or peace; if it's about trying to separate people we are never going to have friends; when we lie, people will deceive us and won't listen to us. These are the ways our own speech causes us harm in the future. Instead, mindfulness of speech can change those habits. In fact, it's better to inwardly chant mantras than to put things out there all the time.

“The more and more you listen,  
the more and more you will hear.

The more you hear, the more and more deeply  
you will understand.” Khyentse Rinpoche

We can practise mindful silence – then we become aware of saying useless things, drawing attention to unnecessary things, and speaking before we think. We can be mindful of not paying lip service to things, which is meaningless speech.

Alexander Berzin's affirmations:

I shall not lie to you about my feelings or intentions

I shall not try to part you from your friends by saying bad things about them

I shall not verbally abuse you

I shall not betray your confidence by revealing your private matters to others

I shall stop deceiving myself about my feelings or motivations

I shall stop speaking so obnoxiously that my friends become disgusted and leave me

I shall stop verbally abusing myself

I shall stop speaking indiscriminately about my private matters, doubts or worries

MEDITATION: “Om Ah Hum”

“Om Ah Hum” universal chant – connect to the universe with speech rather than making it mundane, superficial, trivial and base. Chant each syllable slowly.

“At the heart of each of us, whatever our imperfections, there exists a silent pulse of perfect rhythm – a complex of wave forms and resonances which is absolutely individual and unique and yet which connects us to everything in the universe.” – George Leonard.

## MEDITATION: “Non-virtues of Speech”

– Venerable Thubten Tenzin

### Lying and Telling the Truth

Lying connects to the other ten non-virtues because we lie about stealing and adultery. We also lie to save face. We analyse our own lying and the harm it has caused. Part of the purification is telling the truth – the mindfulness of not lying in the moment and instead telling the truth.

### Harsh Speech and Kind and Gentle Speech

Harsh speech is mostly done out of anger. A stop sign should come up in our mind as part of our mindfulness practice.

### Gossip and Meaningful Words

Gossip can relate to divisive speech and jealousy. Think of the virtuous aspect and don't talk so much!



## PART FOUR: MINDFULNESS OF MIND

The mind is where everything comes from, everything is dependent on mind, and it is therefore where the best practise of mindfulness can occur. We can create the habit of breaking up baseless emotions, speech and actions, if we watch the mind we don't have to do that anymore, we can be careful, aware and in the present moment instead.

Mindfulness of thoughts and feelings means labelling thoughts and feelings in order to be aware of them, in order to let them go. Involving ourselves in negative thoughts and feelings gives rise to negative speech and actions. Instead of justifying our thoughts and feelings, we let go of what is negative and uphold what is positive.

The power of recognition in mindfulness is thinking "I don't have to do that." Instead of thoughts and emotions having power over us to involve us in them, recognition creates a space to say "I don't have to do the same old thing, I'm breaking habits of lifetimes."

Alexander Berzin's affirmations:

I shall stop thinking about how to outdo myself because of being a perfectionist

I shall stop thinking in self-destructive, irrational ways that sabotage my relations with others or my position in life

I shall stop thinking I am stupid for trying to improve myself or to help others

I shall not think jealously about what you have achieved

I shall not think with malice about how to harm you if you say or do something I do not like

If you are striving to improve yourself or to help others, I shall not think you are stupid, even if what you have chosen is not my own interest

MEDITATION: "Tapping the Knee" – J&M Levey

This Meditation may be helpful in maintaining mindfulness and any subject can be used.

Begin with some breath meditation to calm the body and mind. Focus on the breath entering and leaving the body at the nose. When calmness of mind has been achieved begin the mindfulness practice by placing both hands on the knees. Continue to breathe and when thoughts about the past: memories, resentments, joyful times, miserable times, sensations, images, words...anything related to the past comes up, gently tap the left knee. When thoughts about the future: plans, schemes, ideas, sensations, when these arise we gently tap the right knee. We watch the mind and how it oscillates between past and future. We don't force the thoughts away or try to control our thinking, we simply observe, with the help of the knee tap, how our mind works. Continue this for 15 minutes, or however long you like.

MEDITATION: "Relieving the suffering I"

– Venerable Thubten Tenzin

Introduction

There are many meditations on finding an "I" that is a permanently existing "something". They search for some "I" that has existed and will exist, at the very least in this lifetime. And they try to find this "I", this "something" that undergoes so much, so many ups and downs and so much emotional turmoil, for the sake of what? Trying to find happiness!

It is possible to see this “I” as not permanently existing and not permanently undergoing suffering, not permanently under the sway of afflictive emotions such as anger, greed, attachment, envy, wrong views, or any mental suffering that can cause physical suffering.

## Meditation

Begin the meditation by adopting the correct meditation posture, keeping the back straight. If we are sitting on a chair, we rest the feet flat on the floor a short way apart. We relax the face and jaw, and rest the tongue behind the top teeth. And we close the eyes. The hands should be at the level of the navel, right hand on top of left with the thumbs touching.

For at least seven rounds of breath, allow the mind to focus on the sensation of the breath entering and leaving the nostrils, adopting a feeling of calmness and peace.

Recognise the “I”, the dualistic mind that thinks good/bad, ugly/beautiful, right/wrong, praise/blame, pride/unworthiness, always comparing and judging with anger, jealousy, envy and fear.

See the impermanent, transitory nature of everything - emotions, thoughts, life, people, and let go of this suffering of “I” into that spaciousness of the impermanent quality of everything. By simply placing an awareness on the breath we can mentally let go of clinging to any particular emotion which causes so much pain and suffering. Seeing the emotion as impermanent helps us to just let go of it.

Breathe into the suffering, loosen the grip of the suffering. Allow it to dissipate into the empty, spacious vastness of our natural awareness. Your clean clear nature, spacious and perfect, is always there, always present. We are learning to realise that we don’t have to hang on to any thought within a vice-like grip.

In that place of spaciousness there is freedom. In the spaciousness of our mind there is no room for anything negative. It is a natural, abiding state of perfection within us all. Nothing that is unwholesome or negative can exist there. All that exists is your willingness to let all afflictive, suffering, painful thoughts and emotions dissolve away into the blissful void of freedom.

Learning to let go is a process. We keep bringing our mind back to not grasping at any thought or emotion. We let go of our own idea of self, “I am feeling this or that”. We let go of the permanently existing “I” or the “something” that has a hard, permanent core, that holds within it afflictive emotions.

With our out-breath, we let go of all holding, grasping and clinging thoughts and we allow ourselves to be lighter. We let go into the empty, peaceful void of the naturalness of our mind.

## Dedication

We dedicate this practice so that no one has to suffer from the great mental sufferings of greed, jealousy, desire, hatred and anger. And so that all beings have access to their pure nature of mind, devoid of any hardness, guilt, blame or ignorance. And we dedicate that we may take this responsibility ourselves, and cause this to happen.