

The real meditation is how you live your life. - Jon Kabat-Zinn

This final class reviews all the concepts covered in the program, and provides tips on sustaining your mindfulness practice. Consider this week something to carry forward.

CLASS SIX: DAILY INTEGRATION

Mindfulness practice isn't something to do or get done. It's not a task to complete or a self-help guide. It is not a way of fixing the past, present or future. Mindfulness is a way of being in the world. It gives us the opportunity to look for learning in every difficulty. Mindfulness does not treat our difficulties, but fosters a deeper and kinder self-awareness, which underlies all of our perceptions and experiences.

Trying to achieve a relaxed state or a calm mind defeats the main intention of practicing mindfulness. Instead, try adopting a perspective of practicing with no goals or objectives in mind. Stillness and peace is not achieved when the mind is calm or when our world is still. Stillness and peace arise when we accept things just as they are, moment by moment.

In Class One, you learned how to focus your attention on a single object, your breath. Every time you became distracted, you brought your attention back to that object. You learned about being on auto-pilot, and how a wandering mind is natural and normal. By becoming aware of how much the mind wanders, it provided you the opportunity to shift into a more intentional way of being, and to strengthen your attention muscles.

In Class Two, you experienced the ability to direct your attention to your body through the body scan meditation. By forming a closer connection with your body, you became attuned to the messages it sends you, and how closely connected the mind and body are. You experienced what it's like to intentionally shift your attention to different areas, and practiced letting go when moving on to the next.

In Class Three, you discovered how to relate to sounds and thoughts differently. Both occur automatically, without much of our control. You experienced how you may observe sounds, thoughts, and physical sensations, noticing a tendency to analyze, judge, or engage with them. You practiced to viewing thoughts as automatic mental events that can arise and move along, without requiring an automatic reaction or elaboration.

In Class Four, you recognized that pain and suffering are part of the human experience, and cultivated loving kindness of yourself. You expanded well wishes not only to yourself, but also to those close to you, and then to all people. You recognized that all people have a universal wish to be happy and healthy, and free from pain and suffering.

Class Five provided a different way of relating to difficult events. You noticed how our automatic habitual patterns of thinking and reacting can result in clinging and avoiding. Just by noticing, it allows us to make a shift toward accepting the things we cannot change, and plan how to react wisely to the things we can.

Class Six is the rest of your life. Focus on incorporating mindfulness into your daily life so these skills will be there when you need them the most. Think of it like practicing for game day. When challenging events happen, you'll have the skill and resilience to live with them.

Practice

Find what works for you. Mix up different mindful activities, guided meditations and self-guided meditations. Look for opportunities around Calgary to meditate, practice yoga and join mindfulness groups. Start a meditation group with friends, download a smart phone app. Practice every day - remember, all of the researched positive benefits of mindfulness require continual practice.

Reference

Williams M. & Penman D. (2011). *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan to finding peace in a frantic world*. New York: Rodale Books. Chapter 12.