

MINDFULNESS IN A NUTSHELL

Venerable Brisbane DhammaRakkhitha
Mindfulness in a Nutshell

All rights reserved

Copyright © 2025 by Venerable Brisbane DhammaRakkhitha

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Published by Spines
ISBN: 979-8-89691-974-2



MINDFULNESS IN A NUTSHELL

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

VENERABLE BRISBANE
DHAMMARAKKHITHA

CONTENTS

<i>About the Author</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1. JOURNEY TO INNER SPACE	1
2. CHOICELESS AWARENESS	6
3. GATEWAY TO THE LIBERATION	8
4. WELCOME TO THE PRACTICE	12
Mindful walking	13
Mindful sitting	21
Mindful living	27
5. PATH TOWARDS HAPPINESS	30
6. SKY IS THE LIMIT. ARE YOU READY?	38

DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my mindfulness master, Most
Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero, the abbot
of Nissarana Vanaya monastery, Sri Lanka.*

**Exploration of inner space, “Awareness of I am here
and now”, is more enjoyable than the exploration of
outer space**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Journey from Finance world to the Saffron Robe...

Growing up, my life was filled with curiosity and a thirst for knowledge beyond science. However, given the demands, aspirations and challenges in early life, I was another ordinary boy looking for sensual pleasures. That energetic young man was a successful Chartered Accountant and a Certified Public Accountant, who had a very successful professional career around the globe.

My spiritual journey started when I was working in Bahrain. Dealing with many nationalities, languages, beliefs and behaviours was daunting. Although I was not a strict spiritual person, my then wife had encouraged me to participate in basic Buddhist rituals. That helped me to face the unexpected social shocks and find a network of like-minded people in Bahrain.

This meeting of noble friends paved the way to take the initial practical steps into the spiritual world. By the time I left Bahrain, I was practicing Vipassana as taught by Mr. S N Goenka. I had been strictly following his technique until I met Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero, who introduced mindfulness to me, in December 2006. Although I was still following Goenka Ji's technique even after meeting Venerable Dhammajiva, it was gradually evident to me that mindfulness is the key in the teaching of the Lord Buddha, the Blessed One. By about 2011, I was more of a mindfulness meditator than sticking to one technique and felt that I had found the best teacher for mindfulness in the world, Most Venerable Dhammajiva, the abbot of the well-known forest monastery, Nissarana Vanaya, in Sri Lanka.

I was a frequent visitor to Nissarana Vanaya for longer retreats and it kept growing. As a layperson, my sole aim was to provide a strong foundation for the future of my son and the daughter. Accomplishment of this gradually changed my priorities. I started enjoying a simple life in solitude, which provides the happiness that all human beings are after.

Several people in my networks noted my change and the dedication to the practice of mindfulness and consequently I was invited to be their guide in their mindful journeys. The group kept growing and so was the need to formalise the growing practicing community. Hence, we registered an association and named it "Sama

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hitha Mindfulness Group” both in Australia and Sri Lanka. Sama Hitha means “equi-poised mind”. These associations organise workshops and retreats in Australia, Sri Lanka, Canada and Bahrain for practitioners from all walks of life such as entrepreneurs, professionals, academics, young adults, teens, kids from many nationalities and beliefs. We also conduct weekly virtual sessions for the continuing practitioners to give an opportunity to discuss the progress of their practice.

In Dec 2020, I received the reluctant (understandably) approval from my family to renounce the lay life and become a Buddhist monk. I left home in March 2021 and was ordained as Venerable Brisbane DhammaRakkhitha by Most Venerable Dhammawasa Maha Thero, on the Vesak full moon day of 2021, at the Sri Lanka Buddhist Monastery in Brisbane, Australia.

Since then, I have continued to practice mindfulness and provide guidance to practitioners of mindfulness throughout the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was a great pleasure to have so much support ever since the idea of the book was conceived.

A huge thank you and blessings to Mrs Ruchithra Darshani Perera and Mrs Dharshika Ellepola for their financial support to make this a success. May you have a comfortable mindful journey!

Miss Kalpika Jayakody, Mr Harindhu Jayakody, Gayaani Sumanapala and Vayani Sumanapala took the painstaking task of going through the drafts over and over again. My blessings to you, Kalpika, Harindhu, Gayaani, and Vayani. May you enjoy the practice of mindfulness and reap the highest possible benefit.

I am also incredibly grateful for the invaluable contribution from Miss Nilusha Kodithuwakku who shouldered the entire weight of coordinating the artists and providing constructive evaluation on the overall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

presentation of the book. May you thrive on the path to happiness!

I would also like to acknowledge Mrs Padma Ratnayake and Mr Harindra Ratnaweera, who meaningfully and beautifully designed both the front and back cover pages of the book. Their patience to incorporate constant changes suggested by myself and Nilu was unbelievable. Much merit! May you steadily walk on the path to happiness!

Finally, I would like to extend a massive thank you to everyone else who supported me during this endeavour, and everyone who continues to support me on my path of mindfulness.

May you all have a comfortable mindfulness journey!

Namotassa bagawatho arahatho Samma Sambuddassa !

Namotassa bagawatho arahatho Samma Sambuddassa !

Namotassa bagawatho arahatho Samma Sambuddassa !

JOURNEY TO INNER SPACE



It was a charming, beautiful morning. The blue sky was a canopy of blessings on the day. The sun's mild radiance warmed everyone's hearts, while the gentle breeze fanned the gathered well-wishers. This was the full moon day of May 2021, when I was ordained as a Theravada Buddhist monk. Full moon day in May, is also known to Buddhists as "Vesak" as the Lord Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away (the great demise).

After spending a year in the Brisbane Sri Lanka Buddhist Monastery, where I was ordained, I decided it was time to go to Sri Lanka and pay respect to my mindfulness teacher, Most Venerable U. Dhammajiva Maha Thero. This trip became a turning point in my journey as a mindfulness coach.

Do Buddhists practice the teaching of the Buddha?

While Sri Lanka declares itself a Buddhist country, very few Buddhists know, train, or practice mindfulness, which is the core teaching of the Buddha. This initial visit to my mother land to pay respects to my mindfulness teacher was only meant to be three months long.

However, during that period, my followers managed to organise a five-day residential retreat, so that my physical presence would better aid their practice.

The attendees of this retreat were diligent, faithful and devoted a great deal of energy to their practice. However, after speaking with several devotees at the retreat, I discovered that there was a lack of understanding of the teaching. While they all had good intentions on following the Buddha's path, the significance of mindfulness within the Buddha's teaching had not been understood. An introduction to mindfulness and the demonstration of its practice was very well received at this retreat.

Meditation Vs Mindfulness

The success of this first retreat in turn led to invitations from all over the country, for me to conduct mindfulness programs. Consequently, my three-month trip to Sri Lanka has turned into two years (and counting as I am yet to return to Brisbane permanently.)

The longer I stayed and the more places I visited, **I was increasingly convinced that there was confusion between meditation and mindfulness, as well as its techniques.** Wherever I taught, I sought to gain insight into the participant's understanding of the true message of the Lord Buddha. My first question was usually a standard one. "What is meditation?" The most common answers to this question were breathing meditation and walking meditation (along with a variety of other meditations). However, it is important to note that these are simply techniques of meditation. Meditation, or "*Bhāvana*" in Pāli (the language of the Lord Buddha), is defined as "*development, cultivation or growing*".

This easily leads the conversation to my next question - "What do you develop, cultivate or grow in the context of meditation?". The most common response to this was concentration; eradication of defilements or the Eight-Fold Noble Path.

While these answers are not wrong, they are however, based on academic knowledge and lack the experiential crux. Buddhists often have a habit of over-intellectualizing the Dhamma, reducing their opportunity to grasp the fundamentals of the practice.

According to the Blessed One, *what one develops, cultivates, or grows is "mindfulness" or "Sati" in Pāli.* Therefore, breathing mindfulness ("*Ānāpānasati*" in Pāli), walking mindfulness and other methods are used to

cultivate mindfulness (or Bhāvana or meditation). These are the techniques or tools available to cultivate (develop or grow) mindfulness.

The practice of mindfulness can and will lead to the eradication of defilements and ultimately lead to the attainment of nirvana (Final Liberation). However, to obtain these fruits of the Dhamma, intentional, continuous practice of mindfulness is imperative.

This is why the Blessed One trumpeted that the four foundations of mindfulness are the one and only way for the purification of beings (i.e. Ekayāno ayaṃ bhikkave maggo). The key for us to reach the four foundations is the precise understanding and practice of mindfulness.

In summary, meditation (i.e. Bhāvana) means cultivation, in this context, the cultivation of mindfulness, which is a skill, quality or mental strength.

What is Mindfulness - a million-dollar question?

So, what is mindfulness? This is a million-dollar question because there is no definition in the discourses. At least I haven't found it yet.

The four foundations of mindfulness discourse ((Mahāsatiipaṭṭhāna Sutta) is the Bible for those who practice mindfulness.

This discourse is very rich and provides vital resources, hints, and tips for the practitioner. For the same reason there is a possibility that the reader can become entrenched in the scripture and infer a multitude of alternate paths for practicing mindfulness.

CHOICELESS AWARENESS



The most frequently used word in the sutta is “Pajānāti”, meaning “be aware”. In my opinion, terms such as “be alert”, “be vigilant” and “just being” are also appropriate translations.

Therefore, for me, the simple equation of mindfulness is “*Mindfulness = Awareness*”. To refine this explanation of mindfulness further, I like to use a wonderful term coined by the Western world, “Choiceless Awareness”. *Mindfulness is Choiceless Awareness*. Simply be aware of your experience irrespective of whether it is good or bad, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, like or dislike, agreeable or otherwise. This is choiceless awareness

I have been challenged many times in the past, when I have encouraged people to cultivate awareness (as mindfulness). Many people struggle to accept this as the

definition of mindfulness because they believe that they do not lack awareness. They are “always aware”.

This is true. Without awareness, you would not be able to do anything in life. Without awareness you would not be able to eat, drink, walk, study, commute, work, have relationships or look after a family etc. However, there is a distinct difference between the general awareness required in daily life and the awareness that the Blessed One is teaching. *The Buddha’s awareness is introspective or introverted and general awareness is extrospective or extroverted.*

People are often aware of what’s happening around them—whether it’s what their child will have for lunch tomorrow, which groceries are on sale, or even what their next-door neighbours are arguing about. However, this is extrospective. That awareness is directed outwards.

Awareness in the Blessed One’s teaching is the awareness of the self. An introspective awareness. *In mindfulness, we do not explore the outer space but the inner space instead.* This is often in direct contrast to what most of our global leaders in science, technology, education, politics and sometimes even in spirituality are preaching and motivating society to engage in. However, the personal discoveries through introverted awareness can be even more incredible than those that science or technology could ever show us.

GATEWAY TO THE LIBERATION



There are three key ingredients to introspective awareness (mindfulness):

1. Self (I am)
2. Right here, and
3. Right now.

So, ***the awareness of “I am here and now” is mindfulness.*** Of these five words, the most significant word is still “the awareness”. The other words, “I am, here and now”, are constants in everyone’s life. They have been, are, and always will be with you. However, we have not been able to reach the final liberation because we haven’t cultivated the awareness around it. The missing link was ‘awareness’, which is the gateway to liberation.

With everything you need (I am, here and now), you don't need any external ingredients to practice. You simply need to guide your attention to these ingredients. ***The key to opening the gate of mindfulness is "choiceless awareness".***

The simple observer/non-reactor

Now that we know what mindfulness is, how do you put this into practice? That is the next hurdle.

Be a simple observer - Sounds like the easiest job in the world but it is a lot easier said than done. To be a simple observer, you must master the art of not doing anything while being awake and alert. Simple observers do not react to physical and mental manifestations. Even if they do, they simply observe that as well. ***This is the beginning of non-reactive behaviour.*** The Blessed One says, "observe like a watchman".

In the context of today's world, being like a CCTV camera is a good example. When a vehicle approaches and the CCTV is on, it will automatically record the number plate, the type of vehicle, the faces of the passengers, the face of the driver etc. but the CCTV doesn't do anything other than noting the facts and staying switched on. ***This is "choiceless awareness".*** In the same way, when you practice, you simply need to be switched on and direct your attention towards 'self'.

With that general principle in mind, what do you observe? You observe ‘right now’ and ‘right here’. These two phenomena are common and available to the entire universe. Therefore, you need to ensure that you observe the ***‘here and now as it pertains to YOURSELF’*** and not the here and now of someone else or somewhere else. On this basis, nobody can say that another person was not mindful. That is simply not self-attention and hence it is not mindfulness. ***A mindfulness practitioner always simply observes oneself and does not talk about someone else.*** This means that you are aware of what is going on within. While it is easier said than done, it is still a goal that is very much possible. This is the gateway to the path taught by the Blessed One.

Who Am I? - To observe ‘oneself’ we need to understand what ‘Self’ is in the first place. ‘Self’ is a combination of the physical process, the mental process and their interconnection. However, the Buddha’s advice was to start with observing the physical process- “Kāye kāyānupassi viharathi” (refer to the four foundations of mindfulness) -because time and time again, living beings prove that they predominantly define ‘self’ as the physical process (or the body).

Why physical process is the key- For instance, human beings spend a considerable amount of time, energy, and resources on maintaining, protecting, and improving the physical process. All the major systems in a society are geared towards improving the ***physical*** wellbeing of the

community. This is evidenced by the abundance of food outlets, clothing retailers, hospitals, pharmacies, gyms, cosmetic services etc. Scratching a thin layer of the surface highlights how obsessed human beings are with the body (or the physical process). Therefore, it serves as the perfect starting point for observation of the self.

WELCOME TO THE PRACTICE



Now that we have a basic idea about what mindfulness is, how do we practice?

Our teaching recommends 3 main practices to observe the body (physical process):

1. Mindful walking
2. Mindful sitting, and
3. Mindfulness of the day-to-day activities.

These mindfulness techniques demand energetic, determined, disciplined and patient training.

These techniques centre around being aware of common activities that people generally take part in during the day (such as breathing, walking, eating etc.).

Usually, we do these activities on autopilot. We tend to be unaware of life happening around us, as we often physically do one thing, while being mentally occupied with something else - mostly about other people, the past, and/or the future. This takes away our opportunity to experience the present moment of the self. Living a life where the interaction between the physical and mental processes is disconnected, creates friction, burnout, tension and ultimately more suffering. Simply said, this disharmony in life causes people to overexert themselves into an early grave, and in death to crave for one more moment of life. This is why the Buddha's teachings implore mindfulness practitioners to diligently train and become familiar and comfortable with the present moment (the here and the now).

MINDFUL WALKING

Below is a detailed guide for beginners, on how to practice mindful walking:

1. Select a path for walking

Ideally, the selected walking path is straight, flat and may have 30 to 35 steps in length. Natural paths such as gravel, sand, or grass are optimal. While these are the best conditions for the practice, please do not let the lack of any 'optimal' conditions stop, delay, or shorten your practice. In addition, mindful walking should not be done

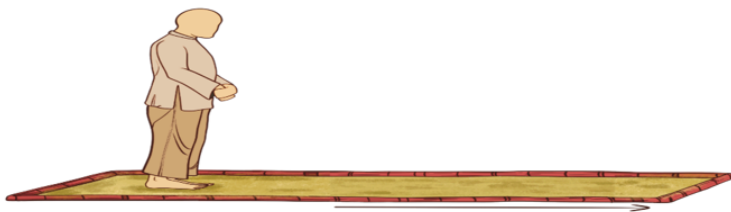
in place of purposeful walking, such as an evening walk for exercise.

2. Footwear

Barefoot is recommended for the practice of mindful walking. However, footwear is perfectly acceptable when barefoot is not practical due to terrain or weather conditions etc.

3. Posture

Stand at the beginning of the path. Eyes directed about 2 meters ahead of you.



4. Hands held by the side or folded in front or back



Hand Position

5. Start the practice

Walk up and down on the selected walking path once or twice, to ensure that the path is clean and hazard free. If so, stand at one end of the path and be aware that you are standing. Here, you might feel the shapes, textures, manners, and a variety of sensations on the soles of **both** feet.

Now you are ready to walk mindfully. Start walking along the selected path, at your normal walking pace and be mindful and aware of your walking. Do not change your natural walking pace or rhythm to be more mindful. ***The walking should be at your natural pace and in your normal manner.***

6. Attention to walking

While walking, you should direct your attention and presence of mind to the moving legs. Some people do this by merely ‘focusing’ their mind on the feet, while others achieve this by labelling.

7. Labelling

Beginners may not be able to bring their attention to the complex walking process right from the outset. Therefore, to help bring your attention to the movements of the legs, different and distinct stages of the walking process can be labelled. Verbalisation of the walking process in this manner aligns the mind with the physical activity, which will help to pay firm attention to only the walking. Like in embroidery, where the cloth is firmly fitted into the frame before starting the embroidery.

It is important to note here that this labelling of the process is not mindfulness. It is simply a technique used to facilitate and encourage mindfulness.

To ensure smoother practice, this technique of labelling must be used wisely. My advice is to progressively identify the stages of walking. These stages can largely be broken down as below.

- **Right and left** - Initially, you may label “right, right, right...” when the right foot is moving and

then “left, left, left...” when the left foot is moving. This is a fantastic beginning process and should be repeated during the whole walking practice.

- **Moving and placing** - If you begin to feel that your attention is firm when using the ‘right and left’ labelling, you can move on to the next stage, i.e. “moving and placing”. This refines your attention further by observing two processes of each leg, bringing you closer to the physical process.
- **Lifting, moving and placing** - Once you are satisfied with your attention on the walking when using the above processes, you can go to an even finer stage i.e. “lifting, moving and placing”. With this, your attention is actively engaged in the whole walking process.

Again, please bear in mind, that this labelling is only to facilitate mindfulness, and it is not mindfulness per se. When you feel that the attention can be maintained without the help of labels, it is not necessary to continue labelling the process. If you are satisfied that your mind is well set in the walking, there is no need to go through all these steps.

8. Knowing you are mindful

Basics

Observing as many details as possible of the walking, is mindfulness in walking. Details include textures, signs, shapes, manners, sensations etc. noted in the walking process. Walking is a surprisingly complex process that we take for granted. There is an innumerable amount of information to notice by observing this process. Since it is such basic information, you may assume that it is insignificant or unimportant. Irrespective of whether you feel the details are insignificant, observe any and all details that come across your feet as much as possible. This affirms and reaffirms the strength of your mindfulness. The more detailed the information, the better your mindfulness.

Tips for beginners

My tips/suggestions are to:

- Pay attention to the sole of the foot,
- Observe *how* the foot is placed and lifted,



- Observe the sensation felt in the placing and lifting of the foot, and
- Try to notice the changes in the details/observations over time.

Challenges

As you might expect, when practicing the technique of walking mindfulness, it might not be all smooth sailing.

There are often plenty of instances where your attention is not on the primary object (i.e. on the walking or the sole of the foot). There may be other variables such as sights, sounds, thoughts, and aches/pains which will challenge and vie for attention. In considering what to do when there are such disturbances, among many recommendations, there are two alternatives that stood out to me when I was a beginner.

1. Try to maintain the object; and
2. Change the object.

Maintain the object - in the first method, when the attention goes to a challenging variable (sights, sounds, aches, pains etc.), you should try to intentionally bring back your focus to the primary object (in this case, walking). After that, if the attention is not disturbed by the challenging variable/s, you can continue to observe and gather the information of the primary object.

However, if your attention continues to be pulled away from the primary object, then you can revert to the second method.

Change the object - This means that you change the primary object to the disturbance. Instead of continuously trying to focus on walking, you can start observing the 'disturbance' and try to gather as much information as possible about it. This was considered a radical method to teach. This technique ensures that you neither crave for

the primary object nor create aversion towards disturbances. Practicing mindfulness with this attitude makes it an enjoyable game and a way of life.

MINDFUL SITTING

Mindful sitting is the second technique of mindfulness. It is important to practice sitting mindfulness immediately after walking as the two techniques complement each other. Consecutive practice is important as walking helps the mind to slow down and get closer to the body which helps to provide the heightened introspection required for sitting mindfulness.

Compared to walking, where you are trying to be mindful of something you are doing (i.e. walking), sitting mindfulness is slightly different. Here you are simply sitting to observe anything and everything that is naturally unfolding within yourself. In this technique you completely stop all 'doing' and just observe. Since you are only observing, you can dig deeper into the physical process and get more details of your own inner space. It has been said that the walking technique provides width to your mindfulness whereas the sitting technique provides the depth. It is a great combination that helps make mindfulness a way of living.

Below is a guide for beginners, on how to practice sitting mindfulness:

1. Select a place to sit

The place should be quiet and free from sensual stimulations. According to the Buddha, the ideal place is a forest, the foot of a tree or an empty hut. However, again, please do not forgo the practice, searching for an ideal place. A quiet space in your own home, free from distractions, is very suitable.

2. Sitting posture

The Buddha advises that the optimal posture is to sit in the full lotus position. This position helps to hold the spine and the upper body upright.

Present day teachers recommend the half-lotus posture, or any other cross-legged posture that feels comfortable. Sitting on a small stool or a chair is also okay. Those who opt to sit on a chair should try not to lean on to the back rest. It is also common practice to use a mat and/or a cushion.

Once you have found a comfortable position to sit based on the above guidelines, hold your hands on your lap by placing your left palm underneath the right hand and gently shut your eyes. Sit as relaxed and as natural as possible.

MINDFULNESS IN A NUTSHELL



Lotus Posture



Half Lotus Posture



Non Conventional Posture



3. Start the practice

There are many ways to start. In retreats that I am conducting, I normally lead the practitioners through a technique called “body scanning” which guides your attention quickly over the whole body to catalogue any immediate sensations. There is an audio recording of the body scan on our Youtube channel, “Sama Hitha Sri Lanka”. The other common ways to start the sitting mindfulness practice, are,

- Observing the breath.
- Observing the sitting posture; and
- Observing any other prominent physical process at the time.

Whichever method you may use, over time, either the breath, sensation or any other phenomena may be

prominent. *Observe any such prominent object without manipulation.* As with walking, it must remain natural. Let the natural process occur and evolve. No intentional involvement is necessary. You can simply relax and observe.

4. Assuming the attention is on the breath, you may feel it in any of the four places below

- At the entrance of nostrils,
- Along the walls of the nostrils,
- In the chest, or
- In the stomach

Don't force the sensation into one particular place. Just locate where you can predominantly feel the breath and observe that place constantly. If you like, the labelling technique can again be used to get a firmer grip on the primary object (i.e. breath).

Labelling.

Like walking, it is not easy to break down the stages of the respiratory process. Common labelling of the breath observation is either "in,in,in..." or "breathing in, breathing in, breathing in..." while inhaling. and, "out,out,out..." or "breathing out, breathing out, breathing out..." when exhaling.

5. Knowing you are mindful

Basics

There are no major differences between the walking and sitting techniques, in so far as how to know whether you are mindful. Even in sitting mindfulness, you should just observe and gather as much information as possible about the primary object and any associated sensations. The more information gathered, the sharper the mindfulness.

Tips for beginners

My tips/suggestions are to:

- Pay attention to the most prominent place that you can feel the breath (nostril, chest, tummy etc). There is no wrong answer here, so do what you feel right for yourself.
- Identify how the in-breaths and out-breaths are felt in that place.
- Be aware of the distinct sensation for in and out breathing.
- Notice the changes over time.
- If you don't feel breath, observe whatever sensation that is prominent.
- In either situation there should be no intentional involvement.
- Be a silent observer.

Challenges

The main challenge faced during mindful sitting is still ensuring your attention is not diverted away from the primary object. The same techniques of dealing with challenges, as detailed in the mindful walking section above, can be applied here. i.e. either bring the attention back to the primary object or breath and failing which, your new primary object becomes the ‘disturbance’.

MINDFUL LIVING

You can easily experience the cascading effects from mindful walking and sitting into everyday activities. Mindful walking provides the basis for cascading effect because it teaches the *art of being aware while doing something*.

Daily life is filled with things to do; and with enough practice, the skill developed through mindful walking will naturally flow into these other activities as well.

It is not imperative that you go to a cave, a temple or a monastery and wear white clothes or shave your head and wear saffron robes to engage in this highest spiritual practice.

In our mindfulness retreats, we consistently encourage participants to be mindful in all their daily activities such as washing, cleaning, eating, drinking, brushing your teeth, urination and defecation etc. You simply have to

maintain your attention on the body and observe details such as ‘how it is happening’ and ‘what sensations I am feeling’. This way, you will not be able to differentiate between mindfulness and living your daily life.

Mindful eating- receiving food



Mindful eating- mixing food



Mindful eating- moving to the mouth



Mindful eating- tasting food



PATH TOWARDS HAPPINESS



Mastering the practice of mindfulness improves harmony between the physical process and mental process. The physical and mental processes of someone who doesn't practice mindfulness will be fragmented, with their mental process never in the same place as the physical. When the two processes of a living-being are disjointed in this manner, living is frictional, tense, annoying, and hence, suffering.

Harmonious operation of the two processes happens when the attention is directed towards 'right here and now' of one self.

Therefore, practicing mindfulness paves the way for a composed life and as a result increases happiness. This sense of internal composure and happiness will lead to efficiency in everything you do because you can remain mindful of the task at hand. Increased efficiency will

improve productivity at work, home and in relationships. These changes ultimately mean an improved quality of life.

Quality of life cannot be improved just by acquiring material things such as the best food, best air, best water etc. These material ingredients are necessary but not sufficient, which is evident all over the self-proclaimed 'developed' countries. What is the point of these material ingredients, if you have to suffer, compete, scream, fight and kill each other to get it. No matter how much wealth we have, and what our per capita income is, people will remain suffering until such time the mind is trained not to react. Someone who is practicing mindfulness may not have physical wealth, but they can gain a tremendous amount of mental wealth which nobody else can touch, steal, tax or assign a value to.

Therefore, ***mindfulness provides the missing ingredients necessary to improve your quality of life.*** It takes away the reactionary mentality and reduces the internal friction. When you are sensitive to internal frictions and reactions, you will find that you naturally avoid transferring those negative vibrations to the outside world and society at large.

This is why the Buddha said "Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokapariddavānaṃ samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthagamāya". Meaning - this is the one and only way for the

purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief.

Only beautiful minds will create a beautiful world. That begins with the individual. If an individual is mindful, their interaction with the world becomes frictionless and stress-free. This bliss emits positive energy to the people around them and to the rest of the world.

Sometimes people can look silent, regimented and very restrained in appearance and speech, but they may be suffering tremendously inside because they are reacting mentally. Others (or even the person him/herself) may not see this until it reaches a boiling point and end up losing work, relationships or having permanent impacts on their health. Mindfulness not only helps to rein in the negative physical and verbal deeds, but it also takes away the negative energies in physical and verbal activities. This happens due to voluntary, honest, and sheer neutral observation and acceptance of the self in the present moment.

All beings are looking for happiness, which is a mental state. To improve happiness, we must understand that life is not just our bodies. It is not only a physical process, but also a mental process, that should not be ignored. The Blessed One found a way to tap into the mind and taught an effective way to overcome the corruptions that exist in the mental processes.

Keeping it up - Consistent and constant practice

In my life before being ordained as a monk, I was an accountant. My colleagues often asked me how I remained so calm after heated meetings. I used to tell them that I was only silent on the outside but internally, I was in a lot of turmoil. However, since I was able to observe my feelings and internal turmoil, I was able to avoid the negative energy taking over me and spreading to those around me. My colleagues were impressed and wished to know how I did this. Although they understood my explanation there was no dedication of time or energy in training and practicing the skill.

Unfortunately, this is a common outcome. Society has trained people to seek instant gratification, a quick fix. ***Mindfulness is not an overnight remedy.*** Cleansing a mind that has been corrupted by so many years of existence requires consistent and constant practice. ***To experience the true benefits of mindfulness, the techniques should be practiced every day.*** This will allow a greater monitoring of your mental process and other people will not be able to easily drag you down to negativities.

Better me, better you

In today's world, fluctuations in a person's mental process can have a significant impact on their surroundings and the people around them. For instance, for many of us,

decisions made by some of the world leaders in business and politics can cause great distress and fluctuations in our mental process. Imagine if those in power had greater command over their physical, verbal, and mental processes! Challenging decisions would still need to be made; however, decisions would be guided by the best interest of the people and the environment rather than their own self-interest and greed.

It is often a criticism that mindfulness has little place in the chambers of commerce and politics. However, I believe that is because mindfulness has been commodified for its capitalistic value and not given the opportunity to flourish in the current societal structure. It is a radical idea, however ***if the essence of mindfulness is truly applied to decision making, our society will be greatly improved for everyone.***

A criticism against mindfulness is that people become anti-social. While societal norms may dictate that the generation of true positive vibrations is counter-social, practitioners are never actually anti-social. They simply have a more refined ability to distinguish between positive and negative vibrations. As a lay person, for many years I was a very active participant in all my social circles, however, the more I practiced mindfulness, the more selective I became with my social activities. Many of my friends started seeing the difference in me. For some, it was very important for them to change themselves as well, as they saw that the change in me

was for my betterment. However, for some others, my change in attitude towards a variety of socially acceptable and encouraged activities was a reason to keep me away from their circles. I happily received and accepted both types of friends. Now I have more noble friends who are like minded and socialise in mindful ways that encourage and align with the practice of mindfulness.

The choiceless observer

Practicing mindfulness, being a choiceless observer, ***will bring non-reactional attention to your physical and mental manifestations.*** This is a revolution in the mental process. The elevation and evolution of humanity is driven by the pursuit of continuous betterment of mental processes. ***This is a primary human right,*** because we are the only species that have the bravery and capability to do this. There is a Sanskrit saying,

*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca
sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇām
dharmo hi teṣām adhiko viśeṣo
dharmaṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*

This means that food, sleeping, living in fear and producing one's own kind is common to both human beings and other animals. The distinction between human

life and that of other animal species is the “Dhamma”. Dhamma is the skill of being mindful continuously.

If one does not follow the Dhamma, there is no difference between man and animal.

We cannot entirely get rid of our animal behaviour overnight because we have developed them for such a long time. However, mindfulness helps to introduce this great *human* quality, at least for one thought moment, which will shed light on an alternative way of living.

You will begin to see the difference between the animalistic and human way of living. Seeing the positivity in the human way of life in just one thought moment will encourage you to translate it into two moments, two moments into four moments, four into eight, and so on. As you keep going, there will be a day when you will see more human qualities than animal ones, and you can be certain that this will brighten your life and that of those around you.

Mindfulness provides a path for people to see their own unacceptable behaviours and change themselves. Doesn't matter who you are, until such time you can accept that there are inner unacceptable behaviours, no amount of lectures, consultations, seminars, and preaching by others can work. I have met drug addicts who began their practice by being mindful while taking drugs, and it led to their complete recovery from drug addiction. I have had friends who were addicted to alcohol, and they were able

to recover by being mindful while consuming alcohol. The point I am making is that it is not necessary to be the most virtuous person on the planet, to start the practice. Start from where you are now, and let your developing mindfulness bring out the better side of yours and the resulting positive changes. ***Over time, the practice not only makes the practitioner a virtuous person, but also a superhuman.*** The human mental process possesses the potential to recycle any mental corruption into good vibrations. That's the shining light that mindfulness brings to life. If you have the right monitoring system within; your inner antivirus is renewed consistently; and the firewall is strong, then no viruses from outside can cause harm. Anyone with a clear system will also be able to help others to make their systems clearer as well.

SKY IS THE LIMIT. ARE YOU
READY?



So, if mindfulness is so beneficial, it is reasonable to wonder why more people aren't practicing and/or engaged in it. The answer is, what I like to call, 'excuses'. There are some common excuses - family and official commitments, sickness, responsibilities, duties, not observing precepts etc. The Buddha said that people are intoxicated by sensual pleasure, youth, fame, position etc. So, they are not awake enough to understand mindfulness. Some die intoxicated and unfortunately waste this valuable human life. It is important to understand that whatever your situation, the present moment, and the self, are *always* there. So, you can be mindful irrespective of your situation. People think that mindfulness must have pre-decided conditions; but if you are serious about happiness, now is the time, here is the place and you yourself are the person. No excuses can take that away. No limiting factors are applicable.

Practice does not require anything. It only requires humanity and the willingness to better yourself. If you have got that, then sky is the limit. This has been proven repeatedly. The practice of mindfulness is the way to happiness. Consider the story of Angulimala (refer to the Angulimala discourse) who not only became a purified being but also one of the most revered; even after starting as an extremely dangerous serial killer. After learning the skill of observation, even such a person was able to become one of the most virtuous, accepting and kind-hearted being.

Let the Journey Begin

So, practice every day, with whatever time that is available to you. If you only have 30 minutes, then practice 15 minutes of walking mindfulness and 15 minutes of sitting mindfulness. And over time, every month or 2 months, you might be able to add an extra 5 minutes to your daily practice. When you can increase your dedicated mindfulness practice time to 1 hour of walking and 1 hour of sitting daily, ***you will feel like you are completely accepting things happily and honestly.*** When that happens, it doesn't matter whether you are a layperson or wearing robes, you will be a child of the Buddha, holding the Blessed One's little finger walking the path to liberation. Buddha is the most superior noble friend to the mankind. However, we can see him only in the light of Dhamma.

He recommends associating a noble friend to see the Dhamma.

A noble friend is a person who can teach, encourage, inspire and advice you on the path to happiness, which is the state of unbiased non-reactional acceptance. This journey is different to the normal way of living and may lead to physical and mental confusions, questions, doubts etc. Practitioners may require clarifications and explanations to these novel experiences of the journey. The association of a noble friend is very vital here. They not only provide clarifications and explanations but also guide, uplift and support you along this elevated journey. Constant reporting and discussion with a noble friend will help you to strengthen your mindfulness practice. Be in touch with Sama Hitha Mindfulness Group once you start the practice and let us support you on this journey. Details are on the back page.

Sama Hitha - The Equipoised Mind

“Sama Hitha” means ***“equipoised mind.”*** It doesn’t mean that there are no fluctuations, but that the fluctuations will be minimal and observed. Even in situations that cause high fluctuation, you will be able to quickly regain balance. ***This is what I am trying to help people achieve through my group, which we have called the “Sama Hitha Group”.***

We have this gem called human life. Please don't waste it. Improve it to the highest level possible.

In summary, the practice of mindfulness is simply the observation of physical and mental manifestation, which will lead to the eradication of friction and suffering.

Absence of suffering is happiness. Now you know that there is a way. Do you have the will?

May all beings be mindful and happy!
Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem!!!

*We will meet soon in the next part of the series when the
practice deepens...*