

2-week Mindfulness Self-training Intervention

Adapted English Version¹

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References:

- Hülshager, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A., & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: On the role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 98*, 310-325.
- Hülshager, U. R., Feinholdt, A., & Nübold, A. (2015). A low-dose mindfulness intervention and recovery from work: Effects on psychological detachment, sleep quality, and sleep duration. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 88*, 464-489.

The following pages contain a slightly adapted version of the written material used in the 2-week mindfulness self-training intervention (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013; Hülshager, Feinholdt, & Nübold, 2015). The exercises described in this document were integrated into the paper-and-pencil diaries as described in Hülshager and colleagues (2013; 2015). These exercises were accompanied by audiofiles containing the respective guided meditations (in German). The audiofiles we used were adapted and shortened versions of standard guided meditations as available from Jon Kabat-Zinn (<http://www.mindfulnesscds.com/>) or Mark Williams and colleagues (<http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>).

This self-training intervention has been developed on the basis of published work on mindfulness and mindfulness interventions, drawing heavily on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, arguably the leading expert on mindfulness practice. Specifically, we used the following resources to create this self-training intervention:

Harris, R. (2009). *Wer dem Glück hinterherrennt, läuft daran vorbei: Ein Umdenkbuch*. (T. S. Schuhmacher & M. Schuhmacher, Trans.). München: Kösel-Verlag.

¹ We gratefully thank Camille Selhorst, University of British Columbia, Okanagan as well as Lindsey Cameron and Gretchen Spreitzer, University of Michigan, for their help in establishing the English version of this training booklet.

- Heidenreich, T., & Michalak, J. (2011). Achtsamkeit und Akzeptanz. In M. Linden & M. Hautzinger (Eds.), *Verhaltenstherapiemanual* (pp. 55-60). Heidelberg: Springer Verlag.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). *Achtsamkeit für Anfänger*. Freiamt im Schwarzwald: Arbor Verlag.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York: Bantam Books.
- McCown, D., Reibel, D., & Micozzi, M. S. (2010). *Practice Scripts and Descriptions: Teaching Mindfulness*. New York: Springer
- Roemer, L., & Orsillo, S. M. (2009). *Mindfulness- and acceptance-based behavioral therapies in practice*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Siegel, R. D. (2010). *The mindfulness solution: Everyday practices for everyday problems*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Williams, J. M. G., Teasdale, J. D., Segal, Z. V., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). *The mindful way through depression: Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness*. . New York: Guilford Press.

PART I: Introductory material provided before participants start with the actual mindfulness exercises:

What is this Training About?

In the following two weeks we will introduce you to some mindfulness exercises and ask you to integrate these into your daily routine. Given we will only communicate with you through the daily exercise instructions, it is important that you track your own progress and perform the exercises described here as thoroughly and regularly as possible. This requires about ten minutes of your time once a day to practice the exercises (preferably in the morning). Research has shown that the positive effects of mindfulness are most powerful when practiced daily. If you wish to practice twice a day or for longer periods of time, that is optional but not required. We are asking for a one a day, ten minute commitment at a minimum.

Being mindful is not easy. Especially at the beginning, you may find it difficult not to be distracted during the mindfulness exercises. Do not get frustrated; it will get easier with regular practice. Consider the journey and not the destination as the goal. You are likely to be surprised with how every small step can improve your experience of mindfulness.

Some of the exercises might feel funny or silly to you at first. Nonetheless we are asking you to practice earnestly and without judgment. Only if you follow the proposed program as accurately and completely as possible can we evaluate the effectiveness of this training rigorously.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the non-judgmental and conscious perception of the present moment. It involves becoming aware of your mind and body intentionally and accepting your experiences as they are. It is not about trying to get anywhere or achieve anything in particular; rather it is about allowing yourself to be where you already are and becoming familiar with your actual experiences in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2009; 2013).

Mindfulness, originates in the Buddhist tradition and describes a state of awareness – in which one centers one’s attention in the ‘here and now’ and realizes awareness of everything outside and inside.

Every human has the capability to be mindful. Yet, too many times, because we are busy thinking about the past or the future, we are missing out on being in the present moment.

Through regular exercise we can improve our mindfulness by guiding our attention to the ‘here and now’. Being mindful means switching off our ‘autopilot’ and the constantly bubbling voice inside our head. Through mindfulness, we are no longer a slave to our thoughts and ruminations. Mindfulness allows us to encounter any situation or experience nonjudgmentally and with full attention.

In order to cultivate mindfulness, we recommend the following:

1. Try to gain awareness of the **present moment**; practice to become aware of events, bodily sensations, feelings or thoughts as they arise in the present moment.
2. Seek a **nonjudgmental approach** towards events, other humans, and your own sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Everything we experience tends to lead to a flood of associations and automated thoughts. Being mindful means acting in every situation, even in uncomfortable and fearful ones, with an open and nonjudgmental attitude. This is by no means easy and requires time and practice.
3. Different from many other stress-management techniques, mindfulness is *not about working to become* more relaxed, become a better person, control your pain, or worry less; such an agenda is likely to undermine the cultivation of mindfulness. Rather try to simply pay attention to what is happening. If you are feeling tense or worried or disappointed with yourself, just be aware of those feelings. Try to embrace the experience without getting caught up in your thoughts or trying to change them.

Importantly, this does not mean that you have to like everything you are experiencing or that you passively accept them. It means that you are open to see and experience things as they are.

4. The practice of mindfulness is not limited to formal mindfulness meditation exercises. Try to establish the **pursuit of mindfulness as the basic 'life-policy'** in all areas of your life. Pay greater attention to what you are experiencing from moment to moment. Try to let go of your *thoughts about* what happens, has happened and might happen in the future, in order to really *experience* what happens in this moment. For example, instead of thinking about how you are enjoying a wonderful dinner with a friend, how this reminds you of another dinner you had in another restaurant, and why you haven't done this more often, enjoy the dinner itself, the taste of the meal and the feelings you experience in this very moment. Trying to be mindful is possible in almost any situation: during meals, while taking a shower, driving a car, taking a walk, listening to music, talking to others, and even while working.

Possible Obstacles on your Path to Mindfulness

Appearance of Unpleasant Feelings

Unpleasant thoughts, sensations, and feelings might unexpectedly arise during the mindfulness exercises. Try to resist stopping the exercise if this happens. See these unpleasant feelings as a challenge and train yourself to become aware of unpleasant thoughts and feelings and then let them go again. Learn to observe them from a distance, then let them go and engage in the present moment again.

That said, if you find that feelings and thoughts are overwhelming to you, you should end the exercise. If this happens, we welcome you contacting the principal investigator of this study and ask for advice.

Suppressing Unpleasant Thoughts, Feelings, or Sensations

Sometimes during meditation you may feel inclined to suppress unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or sensations. However, the goal of the path to achieving mindfulness is to not only welcome positive thoughts but also negative thoughts, feelings, and sensations, to become aware of them, to observe them from a distance and finally to let them go. The ultimate goal is to widen

our awareness and to be open to the thoughts and feelings that arise during mindfulness practice without losing yourself in them. Try to embrace them all, acknowledge them, experience them and then let them go.

Practicing Mindfulness Takes Time and Discipline

Mindfulness requires practice. In order to reap its benefits, you need to cultivate it systematically in your life through regular practice. Because time is scarce, you might feel you do not have (enough) time to meditate. You may also feel too tired and exhausted to focus during your mindful practice. Nevertheless, attempt at least a few minutes. Be aware that the times in which we feel too exhausted and stressed to do the practice may be the times in which we need it the most.

Raisin/Nut Exercise

Our first exercise doesn't take long and will prepare you for the follow-on exercise. Please select a little object – preferably a nut or a raisin – and choose a room where nobody will disturb you.

Take the object into your hand

Imagine you are seeing a nut for the first time in your life. You do not know how it feels, how it smells or how it tastes. Explore the color and the surface of the nut for a few moments. Pay attention to the round parts of the nut, to its shell and how the light reflects on it. Rotate the nut in between your fingers and appreciate how many different details you discover. Close your eyes and feel the texture of the nut again. Do you see a difference? If so, what kind of difference?

Hold the nut in front of your nose

Do you feel the sensation in your arm while you hold the nut in front of your nose? While breathing pay attention while breathing the nut has an aroma. Pay attention to how you feel and what kind of body reaction you experience when you smell the aroma.

Bring the nut to your mouth

Guide the nut slowly to your lips and concentrate on how your hand and your arm are moving. Place the nut carefully on your tongue. Sense the weight of the nut on your tongue. Roll the nut

around in your mouth and pay attention to how your tongue moves. Take the nut between your teeth and slowly move your teeth towards each other. As you begin to chew, take in the range of unfolding experiences - the changing of taste and consistency of the dissolving nut. Notice how you chew and when you start swallowing.

Observe the sensation in your mouth after you have finished swallowing the nut. Notice the after-taste. How do you feel now? Did it make a difference if you do something being fully aware and attentive? If you felt a difference, you have achieved mindfulness.

The Essence of mindfulness is to be aware of your actions while you are doing them.

Part II: Introduction of the formal daily mindfulness practices

In the following days we will introduce you to a number of formal mindfulness exercises that we ask you to perform daily, according to the practice plan (see last page). For your formal mindfulness practice, try to find a quiet place where you are unlikely to be disturbed. We advise you to do your formal mindfulness practice in the morning. We find individuals experience the most benefit when they start their day with a mindful attitude. If doing your mindfulness practice in the morning is not possible, you can also choose any other time of the day that suits you best.

The Body Scan

The following mindfulness exercise takes between eight and ten minutes. Choose a position that is comfortable and stable for you, either lying or sitting down. Whichever position you choose, it may be helpful to imagine a string attached to your head, which gently lengthens your entire body.

The exercise can be found on the CD titled 01/MP3 “01 Body scan”

3–Minutes Breathing Space

In the following section we are going to introduce an exercise (3–Minute Breathing Space) which you will be doing daily along with other mindfulness exercises.

Our attention is like a spotlight, rapidly moving between the past and future. Rarely do we tend to focus on the present moment – the ‘here and now’ When we are standing under the shower in the morning we rarely take in the impression of the water hitting our body or the tile underneath our feet. Instead we are busy thinking about what might happen during the day or what happened last night.

Often, we cannot fully experience our life as we are only partly present in life’s everyday moments. Most of the day we are focusing on ‘thinking itself’ and it is our ‘inner voice’, which occupies our awareness. This inner voice is primarily busy with the past or the future. While the ability to think, plan and reflect is important these same actions may also create emotional problems and tensions. Often we are unable to stop thinking or planning even when it is no longer necessary. We are thinking more about life than actually experiencing it.

Worries about the future, remorse about the past, comparisons with others, and thoughts about how things could be better are examples which every one of us knows all too well. This constant thinking keeps us from enjoying life’s moments to the fullest extent, such as everyday experiences of falling asleep, enjoying a meal, or listening to music. This never ending thought process not only distracts us from the present moment, it is also the source of many problems such as anxiety, stress, and anger.

This breathing exercise helps bring you back to the ‘here and now’. It offers you a chance to leave the stream of thoughts behind and to focus on the present moment. The breath is your anchor connecting you to the present moment.

The exercise consists of three elements, which we recommend you review before beginning the Breathing exercise:

1. Awareness

Ask yourself the question: How do I feel right in this moment?

Focus your attention inside and consciously observe what you are experiencing. Take note of your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations.

Notice your thoughts, but do not judge them. For example, you might say to yourself : “These are self-critical thoughts” or “ I realize I am tense” and just let the thoughts float away

What do you feel in your body? Allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling in this very moment. Accept this feeling. Remind yourself that it is okay to have these feelings. Try not to judge these thoughts and feelings as good or as bad. Just take note of them. Thank your mind for the thought and then return with your attention to the ‘here and now’ and your breathing.

2. Breathing

Now turn your attention to your breathing. Pay attention to how your stomach lifts and lowers and how the air is moving through your lungs. From time to time a thought will grasp your attention and your mind will wander. This is normal. Once you recognize your mind has wandered, congratulate yourself for being mindful and return your attention to your breathing.

3. Expansion of Awareness

Allow your attention to expand to your whole body. Feel how your breathing is moving your whole body. While you inhale you may feel how your body expands itself and while you exhale you can feel how your body contracts.

Before you get started with the breathing exercise find a space for yourself where you will not be disturbed. Choose a comfortable position: you may choose to sit straight on a chair or to lie flat on your back. See this exercise as a chance to spend time with yourself without being interrupted. For you to be able to do the exercise more easily and to concentrate fully on your breathing we have recorded the exercise. Please insert the CD into the recorder and play the track 02 or play the **MP3–File “02 3-minutes breathing space”**. When you are ready to begin, close your eyes or you may leave them half open.

Loving Kindness for Self

The Loving Kindness Mindfulness practice helps to create feelings kindness, friendliness and compassion for oneself and for others. The feeling, which the Loving Kindness Meditation

induces is similar to the love a mother feels for her child, a deep selfless love full of empathy and goodwill.

The following ‘Loving Kindness-Self/Me’ can be found on **CD title 04/MP3-04 Loving Kindness-SELF**.

Loving Kindness for Friend

In the next few days we will introduce three variations of the “Loving Kindness for Self” mindfulness practice. Today we would like to concentrate the Loving Kindness mindfulness practice towards another person close to you. You can find the exercises on the **CD 05/MP3 “05 Loving Kindness-Friend”**. The 3-minute breathing space has also been integrated into this audiofile.

Loving Kindness for Neutral Person

Now, we will expand the Loving Kindness mindfulness practice to somebody you know but for whom you do not have any particular feelings (neither positive nor negative ones). The following exercise can be found on **CD 06/MP3 “06 Loving Kindness – Neutral”**.

Loving Kindness for a Person with whom you have a difficult relationship

The two Loving Kindness mindfulness practices of the last few days will be further expanded. Today, you will focus on somebody you know and who you have a difficult or tense relationship with. As in the the other exercises the 3-minute breathing space is integrated. The exercise can be found on **“07 CD/MP3 “Loving Kindness-Negative”**

Part III: Introduction of the informal mindfulness practice

Bringing Mindfulness to Our Everyday Life

The following exercise can be done anytime and anywhere, so we ask you to repeat this exercise on a regular basis. Choose one or more routine activities that you do every day like brushing your teeth, showering, drying yourself after a shower, driving a car, biking home, eating a meal,

washing the dishes or taking a walk. Or maybe try choosing an activity during which you tend to get lost in thoughts. Start with only one activity; later you might extend this exercise to many more activities and integrate it anywhere into your daily routine.

Once you have chosen an activity, try to perform this activity with your fullest and undivided attention. While doing so, you may get distracted by thoughts. For example, you may get distracted by a thought like, “What a dumb exercise”, or “It is difficult, I am not able to do it”. You may also get distracted by thoughts of upcoming tasks or hearing other sounds. This is absolutely normal and nothing to worry about. Simply realize that your mind has wandered and gently bring your attention back to the mindfulness practice. Be kind to yourself; everyone gets caught up in thoughts from time to time. Our minds are like an inner radio which is constantly playing and does not have an “off” button. Gradually, we can find this “off” button with regular mindfulness practices and can more and more easily return to the present moment. Please make your personal mindfulness plan now.

My Mindfulness Plan

Decide on the activity that you will mindfully experience in the coming days. It is helpful to write this activity on a notepad and hang the note up in a place where it will constantly remind you (e.g. the mirror in your bathroom or on your computer screen). Once you have chosen an activity, please write it down on the bottom of this page. If you can't think of an activity, you might choose from the suggestions below:

- Showering
- Going to work
- Eating breakfast or lunch
- Cleaning dishes
- Cooking
- Listening to music
- Brushing your teeth
- Looking out of the window
- Listening to birds singing
- Walking up and down the stairs
- Taking a walk

- Drinking a cup of coffee or tea

Now make a contract with yourself. In the coming days I would like to be mindful when I am:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Part IV: Overview of when which exercises were introduced and conducted over the 10-day study period

Daily Practice Plan

	Morning	Evening
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raisin/Nut Exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Scan
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Mindful Routine Activity
Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Self
Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Self
Day 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Friend
Day 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Neutral Person
Day 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Disliked Person
Day 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Loving Kindness-Disliked Person
Day 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-Minute Breathing Space • Body-Scan