

If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything, it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few.

First developed for treating borderline personality disorder, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) has proven effective as treatment for a range of other mental health problems, especially for those characterized by overwhelming emotions. Research shows that DBT can improve your ability to handle distress without losing control and acting destructively. In order to make use of these techniques, you need to build skills in four key areas -- distress tolerance, mindfulness, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

This book, a collaborative effort from three esteemed authors, offers straightforward, step-by-step exercises for learning these concepts and putting them to work for real and lasting change. Start by working on the introductory exercises and, after making progress, move on to the advance skills chapters. Whether you are a professional or a general reader, whether you use this book to support work done in therapy or as the basis for self-help, you'll benefit from this clear and practical guide to better managing your emotions.

The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook

volume 2



Mindfulness Skills

Matthew McKay, PhD
Jeffrey C. Wood, PsyD
Jeffrey Brantley, MD

find more zines at



www.littlemouse.fun

CHAPTER 3

Basic Mindfulness Skills

An operational working definition of mindfulness is: the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.

—Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003)

MINDFULNESS SKILLS: WHAT ARE THEY?

Mindfulness, also known as meditation, is a valuable skill that has been taught for thousands of years in many of the world's religions, including Christianity (Merton, 1960), Judaism (Pinson, 2004), Buddhism (Rahula, 1974), and Islam (Inayat Khan, 2000). Beginning in the 1980s, Jon Kabat-Zinn began using nonreligious mindfulness skills to help hospital patients cope with chronic pain problems (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, & Burney, 1985; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, & Sellers, 1987). More recently, similar mindfulness techniques were also integrated into other forms of psychotherapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), including dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a). Studies have shown mindfulness skills to be effective at reducing the odds of having another major depressive episode (Teasdale et al., 2000); reducing symptoms of anxiety (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992); reducing chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1987); decreasing binge eating (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999); increasing tolerance of distressing

situations; increasing relaxation; and increasing skills to cope with difficult situations (Baer, 2003). As a result of findings like these, mindfulness is considered one of the most important *core skills* in dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a).

So what exactly is mindfulness? One definition is offered above by mindfulness researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn. But for the purposes of this book, mindfulness is *the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions—in the present moment—without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience.*

Have you ever heard the expressions “be in the moment” or “be here now”? These are both different ways of saying: “be mindful of what’s happening to you.” But this isn’t always an easy task. At any moment in time, you might be thinking, feeling, sensing, and doing many different things. For example, consider what’s happening to you right now. You’re probably sitting somewhere, reading these words. But at the same time, you’re also breathing, listening to the sounds around you, noticing what the book feels like, noticing the weight of your body resting in the chair, and maybe you’re even thinking about something else. It’s also possible that you’re aware of your emotional and physical states of being happy, sad, tired, or excited. Maybe you’re even aware of bodily sensations, such as your heart beating or the rising and falling of your chest as you breathe. You might even be doing something that you’re completely unaware of, like shaking your leg, humming, or resting your head in your hand. That’s a lot to be aware of, and right now, you’re just reading a book. Imagine what’s happening to you when you’re doing other things in your life, like talking with someone or dealing with people at work. The truth is, no one is 100 percent mindful all the time. But the more mindful you learn to be, the more control you will gain over your life.

But remember, time never stands still and each second of your life is different. Because of this, it’s important that you learn to be aware “in each present moment.” For example, by the time you finish reading this sentence, the moment that you started reading it is gone and your present moment is now different. In fact, *you* are now different. The cells in your body are constantly dying and being replaced, so physically you’re different. Equally important, your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and actions are never exactly the same in every situation, so they’re different too. For these reasons, it’s important that you learn to be mindful of how your experience changes in each individual moment of your life.

And lastly, in order to be fully aware of your experiences in the present moment, it’s necessary that you do so without criticizing yourself, your situation, or other people. In dialectical behavior therapy this is called radical acceptance (Linehan, 1993a). As described in chapter 2, radical acceptance means tolerating something without judging it or trying to change it. This is important because if you’re judging yourself, your experience, or someone else in the present moment, then you’re not really paying attention to what’s happening in that moment. For example, many people spend a lot of time worrying about mistakes they’ve made in the past or worrying about mistakes that they might make in the future. But while they’re doing this, their focus is no longer on what’s happening to them *now*; their thoughts are somewhere else. As a result, they live in a painful past or future, and life feels very difficult.

So to review, mindfulness is the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions—in the present moment—without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience.

You may even want to experiment with noticing the space that contains your thoughts and feelings. Can you relax, observe, and allow thoughts and feelings to arise, change, and leave the space of the present moment?

Exercise: Meditation Practice to Turn Toward Stillness and Silence

Instructions

Take a comfortable position. Establish and steady your attention in the present moment by focusing mindfully on your breath sensations for a few breaths.

When you notice that your attention moves to something else, thoughts or sounds for example, you don't have to fight that and you don't have to follow it. Just let the breath sensations return to your awareness, with patience and kindness.

As you practice mindfulness of your breath, you may begin to notice that a sense of inner stillness arises. It may appear only in brief flashes at first, but don't be discouraged. Just let it come. Continue noticing any feelings of stillness you experience. Relax in them, and allow them to come to you. Initially, you may notice the stillness in your body as a feeling of calm and ease. Then, it will become easier to experience the stillness in your mind when your thoughts quiet down.

Sometimes the stillness appears more clearly as silence. When you notice any sense of silence, between sounds or between thoughts, for instance, let your attention rest there. Let it return there when it wanders.

Listen carefully to all sounds as they come and go. Don't focus on any one sound, but instead focus on the silence and space between the sounds. As your attention steadies, notice how the sounds arise from silence and return to silence. Let your attention rest in the silence as you listen for the next sound.

CONCLUSION

In practicing mindfulness, you are joining a vast and ancient tradition, cultivated by countless human beings for thousands of years. Many teachers have pointed out that practicing mindfulness includes the attitudes of kindness and compassion in the way you pay attention. As you become more mindful, a growing sense of wholeness, including spaciousness and stillness, becomes brighter and can help transform your experience of living. This chapter invites you to draw upon some valuable teachings from the tradition of mindfulness meditation—by focusing on kindness and compassion and spaciousness and stillness—in order to discover more about your own amazing and powerful resources for healing and enriching your life.

A “MINDLESS” EXERCISE

Obviously, mindfulness is a skill that requires practice. Most people get distracted, “zone out,” or spend most of their daily lives being unmindful or running on autopilot. As a result, they then get lost, anxious, and frustrated when a situation doesn't happen as they expect it to. Here are some common ways in which all of us have experienced being unmindful. Check (✓) the ones that you've done:

- While driving or traveling, you don't remember the experience or which roads you took.
- While having a conversation, you suddenly realize that you don't know what the other person is talking about.
- While having a conversation, you're already thinking about what you're going to say next before the other person has even stopped speaking.
- While reading, you suddenly realize that you've been thinking about something else and have no idea what you just read.
- While walking into a room, you suddenly forget what you came to get.
- After putting something down, you can't remember where you just put it.
- While taking a shower, you're already planning what you have to do later and then you forget if you've already washed your hair or some other body part.
- While having sex, you're thinking about other things or other people.

All of these examples are fairly harmless. But for people with overwhelming emotions, being unmindful can often have a devastating effect on their lives. Consider the example of Lee. Lee thought that everyone at work hated him. One day, a new employee whom Lee found attractive approached him in the cafeteria and asked to sit down. The woman tried to be friendly and make conversation, but Lee was more engaged in the conversation in his own head than he was in the one with the woman.

“She's probably just stuck up like the rest of them,” he thought. “Why would someone like her be interested in me anyway? Why would she want to sit with me? It's probably just a joke someone else put her up to.” From the moment the woman sat down and tried to talk with him, Lee just became angrier and more suspicious.

The woman did her best to make small talk. She asked Lee how he liked working at the company, how long he'd been there, and she even asked him about the weather, but Lee never noticed. He was so wrapped up in his own conversation, and in paying attention to his own self-critical thoughts, that he never even recognized that the woman was trying to be friendly.

After five minutes of unsuccessfully trying, the woman finally stopped talking to Lee. Then a few minutes later, she moved to a different table, and when she did, Lee congratulated himself. “I

knew it,” he thought, “I knew she wasn’t really interested in me.” But at the expense of being right, Lee’s unmindfulness and self-criticism had cost him another opportunity to meet a potential friend.

WHY ARE MINDFULNESS SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Now that you have a better idea of what mindfulness is—and isn’t—it’s probably easy to see why this skill is so important. But for the purposes of this workbook, let’s be very clear about why you need to learn mindfulness skills. There are three reasons:

1. Mindfulness skills will help you focus on one thing at a time in the present moment, and by doing this you can better control and soothe your overwhelming emotions.
2. Mindfulness will help you learn to identify and separate judgmental thoughts from your experiences. These judgmental thoughts often fuel your overwhelming emotions.
3. Mindfulness will help you develop a skill that’s very important in dialectical behavior therapy called *wise mind* (Linehan, 1993a).

Wise mind is the ability to make healthy decisions about your life based on both your rational thoughts and your emotions. For example, you’ve probably noticed that it’s often difficult—or impossible—to make good decisions when your *emotions* are intense, out of control, or contradict what’s rational. Similarly, it’s often difficult to make informed decisions when your *thoughts* are intense, irrational, or contradict how you feel. Wise mind is a decision-making process that balances the reasoning of your thoughts with the needs of your emotions, and it is a skill that will be discussed further in chapter 4.

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

Throughout this chapter and the next, you’ll be presented with exercises to help you become more mindful of your moment-to-moment experiences. This chapter will introduce you to beginning mindfulness exercises to help you observe and describe your thoughts and emotions more carefully. In dialectical behavior therapy, these are called “what” skills (Linehan, 1993b), meaning they’ll help you become mindful of *what* you’re focusing on. Then in the next chapter, you’ll be taught more advanced mindfulness skills. In dialectical behavior therapy, these are called “how” skills (Linehan, 1993b), meaning they’ll help you learn *how* to be both mindful and nonjudgmental in your daily experiences.

The exercises in this chapter will teach you four “what” skills:

1. To focus more fully on the present moment
2. To recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations

Choosing *space* and *stillness* (or *silence*) as your objects of mindfulness can be a very potent practice for gaining this flexibility and freedom from the habits of identifying with the “waves” of your mind (thoughts or feelings that are deep and intense).

Exercise: Meditation Practice for Mindfulness of Space, Inside and Outside of You

The following two meditation practices offer you a means to cultivate awareness of space (inner and outer) and of stillness and silence.

Try these practices with a sense of curiosity and playfulness. You don’t have to make anything special happen or become anyone or anything other than who you already are!

In fact, it is helpful to consider the possibility that *you actually already have vast spaciousness and stillness available to you (like the vast ocean depths) and all that is required is to allow space and stillness to reenter your awareness.* Let the spaciousness and stillness within you “come back in,” so to speak. There is no work you have to do—none whatsoever! Just bring kind attention to what is already here.

Instructions

Take a comfortable position. Collect attention by focusing mindfully on your breath sensations for a few breaths.

When you feel steady and focused, widen the focus to include all sounds, letting them come to you without adding or subtracting anything. Focus on the direct experience of sound without being caught in the name or story about any sound.

Practice mindfulness of breath sensations and sounds for a few more breaths.

Now bring your attention to the spaces between the breaths, there between in-breath and out-breath, and there, at the end of the out-breath before the next in-breath. Let your attention rest there, in the spaces between each breath. Come back to the space whenever your attention wanders.

When you notice that sounds draw your attention, first notice the sound, then notice the spaces between the sounds. Notice how one sound is louder, another softer, one closer, one farther, and how all have space between and around them. Notice how all the sounds exist within a larger container of space. Let your attention rest in the space that holds all the sounds, allowing them to come and go.

When you wish, open your eyes. Look around at what is before you. What do you see? Objects, of course, but do you see the space between the objects? Look more closely. See the space and the shape of the space between objects near and far. Can you see the vast space that holds all the objects you are viewing? Relax and look deeply.

Whenever you like, practice noticing space, either as a formal meditation practice (as suggested above with breath sensations, sounds, or viewed objects) or more informally, just paying attention in different situations as you go about your day.

When you like, you can shift your attention and focus to a friend or someone you know who is troubled. You can also focus on groups of people, such as “all my friends” or “all my brothers and sisters.”

When you wish, you can experiment with difficult people in your life. Try sending them kindness and your wish that they might be happy, and watch your inner response. In doing loving-kindness for a difficult person, you are *not* allowing them to abuse or hurt you but are making an attempt to see that they, too, are human beings who seek happiness. This can change your relationship to the situation and release you from resentment you may be holding.

Please note that in doing lovingkindness meditation, you are likely to experience many different feelings! Some may even be disturbing, such as sadness, grief, or anger. If this happens, you have *not* made a mistake. It is common for deeply held feelings to be released as one practices lovingkindness. This release is actually a kind of healing in itself. Just pay attention to all of your feelings, honoring each one, and continue your practice.

ATTENTION TO SPACIOUSNESS AND STILLNESS DEEPENS MINDFULNESS

The core dialectical behavior therapy skill of mindfulness includes the “what” skill of observing and the “how” skill of nonjudging. But old habits of attention can often make it difficult to observe fully or to really be nonjudging. When it seems especially difficult to be mindful, observe closely, or be nonjudging, you simply may not be relaxing enough or resting in your wholeness. Instead, you are very likely overly identified with some active and present smaller part or parts of yourself.

Meditation teachers often use the metaphor of an ocean when illustrating your wholeness compared to identification with a smaller part of yourself (your thoughts and judgments or your feelings of anger or fear, for example). In this metaphor, it is noted that the waves and the ocean are not separate. Although the waves are varied and can be intense and dramatic, they still are made of water and are part of the greater ocean, even down to the deepest depths. It is said that your wholeness (sometimes called *big mind* or some similar term) is like the ocean, while the parts (feelings, thoughts, stories in your mind) are like the waves—constantly rising and falling, appearing and disappearing, while their essence, the ocean, is always present.

The tendency to *identify* with the wave and to lose your feeling of connection with the larger ocean of who you are is very strong. Practicing mindfulness, learning to recognize the reasoning mind and the emotional mind when they arise, can offer freedom from rigid identification with your smaller parts, as you have discovered.

And by shifting your focus at times, on purpose, to experiences often not noticed or taken for granted, you can become much more flexible in your attention, more mindful, and more able to break the habitual identification with old habits of thinking and feeling.

3. To focus on your moment-to-moment stream of awareness
4. To separate your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations

As you read the following exercises, it's important that you practice them in the order in which they're presented. The exercises in this chapter are grouped according to the four “what” skills, and each exercise builds on the previous exercise.

Exercise: Focus on a Single Minute

This is the first exercise that will help you focus more fully on the present moment. It's simple to do, but it often has an amazing effect. Its purpose is to help you become more mindful of your own sense of time. For this exercise, you'll need a watch with a second hand or, preferably, a stopwatch.

Many people feel that time goes by very quickly. As a result, they're always in a rush to do things and they're always thinking about the next thing they have to do or the next thing that could go wrong. Unfortunately, this just makes them more unmindful of what they're doing in the present moment. Other people feel that time goes by very slowly. As a result, they feel like they have more time than they actually do and they frequently find themselves running late. This simple exercise will help you become more mindful of how quickly or slowly time actually does go by.

Instructions

To begin this exercise, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes and turn off any distracting sounds. Begin timing yourself with your watch or stopwatch. Then, without counting the seconds or looking at the watch, simply sit wherever you are. When you think that one minute has passed, check the watch again, or stop the timer. Note how much time really has passed.

Did you allow less than a full minute to pass? If so, how long was it—a few seconds, twenty seconds, forty seconds? If it wasn't a full minute, consider how this affects you. Are you always in a rush to do things because you don't think you have enough time? If so, what does the result of this exercise mean for you?

Or did you allow more than a minute to pass? If so, how long was it—one-and-a-half minutes, two minutes? If so, consider how this affects you. Are you frequently late for appointments because you think that you have more time than you really do? If so, what does the result of this exercise mean for you?

Whatever your results were, one of the purposes of learning mindfulness skills is to help you develop a more accurate awareness of all your moment-to-moment experiences, including your perception of time. If you'd like, return to this exercise in a few weeks after you've been practicing your mindfulness skills and see if your perception of time has changed.

Exercise: Focus on a Single Object

Focusing on a single object is the second mindfulness skill that will help you concentrate more fully on the present moment. Remember, one of the biggest traps of being unmindful is that your attention wanders from one thing to the next or from one thought to the next. And as a result, you often get lost, distracted, and frustrated. This exercise will help you focus your attention on a single object. The purpose of this exercise is to help you train your “mental muscle.” This means you will learn to maintain your focus on whatever it is you’re observing. And with practice, you’ll get better at focusing your attention, just like an athlete who exercises certain muscles to become stronger.

During this exercise, you will eventually become distracted by your thoughts, memories, or other sensations. That’s okay; this happens to everyone who does this exercise. Do your best not to criticize yourself or stop the exercise. Just notice when your mind wanders and return your focus to whatever object you’re observing.

Pick a small object to focus on. Choose something that can rest on a table, is safe to touch, and is emotionally neutral. It can be anything, such as a pen, a flower, a watch, a ring, a cup, or something similar. Don’t choose to focus on something that could hurt you or on a picture of someone you don’t like. These will stir up too many emotions for you right now.

Find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for a few minutes, and put the object on a table in front of you. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you have a stopwatch or an alarm clock, set the timer for five minutes. Do this exercise once or twice a day for two weeks, choosing a different object to focus on each time.

You can photocopy the instructions if you want extra copies to refer to, or you can record the instructions in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device and play them while you’re exploring the object.

Instructions

To begin, sit comfortably and take a few slow, deep breaths. Then, without touching the object, begin looking at it and exploring its different surfaces with your eyes. Take your time exploring what it looks like. Then try to imagine the different qualities that the object possesses.

- What does the surface of the object look like?
- Is it shiny or dull?
- Does it look smooth or rough?
- Does it look soft or hard?
- Does it have multiple colors or just one color?
- What else is unique about the way the object looks?

affective (or “heart”) dimension of mindfulness. The five “heart” qualities they name are: *gratitude*, *gentleness*, *generosity*, *empathy*, and *lovingkindness* (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000, pp. 253–273).

Lovingkindness deserves special mention. It has been popularized by the meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg (1995; 1997; 2005). As health-care professionals learn more about lovingkindness, this form of meditation is gaining popularity in a variety of health-care settings as a meditation practice that supports mindfulness and also carries healing potential of its own.

Lovingkindness is variously described as deep friendliness and welcoming or as a quality embodying compassion and cherishing, filled with forgiveness and unconditional love. It is a deep human capacity, always present, at least potentially. It can be seen when one observes a mother tenderly caring for her child.

Lovingkindness can be a powerful aid to your mindfulness practice. All you need to do is to admit and allow feelings of kindness and compassion into your way of paying attention mindfully. Resting in kindness this way, *with compassion and affection embedded in your attention*, can protect you from the deep habits of judging and criticism and support you in the “how” dialectical behavior therapy skill of being truly nonjudgmental.

Exercise: Meditation Practice for the Lovingkindness of Yourself and Others

The following is a brief meditation practice to cultivate lovingkindness for yourself and for others. Practice it whenever and for as long as you like. Try it as a “lead-in” to any of your formal mindfulness practices.

Instructions

Take a comfortable position. Bring your focus mindfully to your breath or body for a few breaths. Open and soften as much as feels safe to you as you allow yourself to connect with your natural inner feelings of kindness and compassion for others.

Now shift your attention to yourself. It could be a sense of your whole self or some part that needs care and attention, such as a physical injury or the site of an illness or a feeling of emotional pain.

Imagine speaking gently and quietly to yourself, as a mother speaks to her frightened or injured child. Use a phrase like “May I be safe and protected” or “May I be happy” or “May I be healthy and well” or “May I live with ease” or make up one of your own. Let the phrase you pick be something anyone would want (safety, ease, joy, and so on). Pick one that works for you. It can be a single phrase. Then put all your heart into it each time you speak to yourself. Let kindness and compassion come through you.

Practice by repeating your phrase to yourself silently as if singing a lullaby to a baby. Practice for as long as you like. It may help to practice for just a few minutes at a time at first and later build up to a longer practice.

Although many (like Linehan) have drawn upon these older traditions for guidance, the actual practices used for purposes of health and healing do not require adherence to any specific faith or religious beliefs, nor do they carry any specific cultural requirements. The practice of mindfulness is truly something for all human beings. The practices you will find in this chapter also apply equally to any interested person.

First, you will learn about the role of “heartful” qualities of kindness and compassion and how they are actually embedded attitudes in any activity of mindfulness.

Next, you will learn how mindfulness can deepen, breath by breath in the present moment, by attention to and the support of the dimensions of spaciousness and stillness.

Kindness, compassion, spaciousness, and stillness—this chapter invites you to bring attention more consciously to these qualities and discover their power to support and deepen your practice of mindfulness.

ENHANCING YOUR MINDFULNESS SKILLS USING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

In dialectical behavior therapy, a core “how” skill is being nonjudgmental. In mindfulness-based stress reduction, a mindfulness approach to stress reduction developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and others, *nonjudging* is the first of seven attitudes considered to be the foundation of mindfulness practice. The others are *patience, beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 33).

Yet you may have noticed that it is *not* always so easy to be nonjudging. In fact, the habits of judging and criticizing are deeply ingrained in nearly everyone, for a wide variety of reasons.

Because of this deep-habit energy of judging, meditation teachers have long taught the importance of building a foundation for mindfulness upon attitudes of kindness and compassion.

For example, the well-respected meditation teacher Christina Feldman has observed that “attention, awareness, understanding, and compassion form the basic skeleton of all systems of meditation.” She goes on to say, “Compassion is a fundamental principle of meditation. Meditation is not a narcissistic, self-interested path. It provides the foundation for love, integrity, compassion, respect and sensitivity” (Feldman, 1998, p. 2).

In recent years, health psychologists have begun to look more deeply at “positive” emotions and attitudes and their role in promoting health. The rich tradition of positive mental health inquiry builds on the work of psychologists Gordon Allport and Abraham Maslow in the 1960s and continues strongly today. It is motivated in large part by an interest in developing an expanded vision of human capacity and potential. Of particular interest on this theme is that expanded human potential has been one of the primary goals of meditation training since ancient times.

Contemporary health psychologists and researchers Shauna L. Shapiro and Gary E. R. Schwartz have written about the positive aspects of meditation. They point out that mindfulness is about *how* one pays attention. In addition to the seven attitudinal qualities identified by Kabat-Zinn, Shapiro and Schwartz suggest that an additional five qualities be incorporated to address the

Take your time observing the object. Now hold the object in your hand or reach out and touch the object. Begin noticing the different ways it feels.

- *Is it smooth or is it rough?*
- *Does it have ridges or is it flat?*
- *Is it soft or is it hard?*
- *Is it bendable or is it rigid?*
- *Does the object have areas that feel different from each other?*
- *What does the temperature of the object feel like?*
- *If you can hold it in your hand, notice how much it weighs.*
- *What else do you notice about the way it feels?*

Continue exploring the object with both your sight and your sense of touch. Continue to breathe comfortably. When your attention begins to wander, return your focus to the object. Keep on exploring the object until your alarm goes off or until you have fully explored all the qualities of the object.

Exercise: Band of Light

This is the third exercise that will help you focus more fully on the present moment. It will help you become more mindful of the physical sensations in your body. Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the process. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you’re doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device and play them while you’re observing the sensations in your body.

As with the other exercises in this chapter, most likely your focus will begin to wander while you’re doing this exercise. That’s okay. When you recognize that your focus is drifting, gently return your attention to the exercise and do your best not to criticize or judge yourself.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths and then close your eyes. Using your imagination, envision a narrow band of white light circling the top of your head like a halo. As this exercise progresses, the band of light will slowly move down your body, and as it does, you will become aware of the different physical sensations you’re feeling beneath the band of light.

As you continue to breathe with your eyes closed, continue to see the band of white light encircling the top of your head and notice any physical sensations you feel on that part of your body. Perhaps you will notice your scalp tingling or itching. Whatever sensations you notice are okay.

- *Slowly the band of light begins to descend around your head, passing over the tops of your ears, your eyes, and the top of your nose. As it does, become aware of any sensations you feel there, even small sensations.*
- *Notice any muscle tension you may be feeling on the top of your head.*
- *As the band of light slowly descends over your nose, mouth, and chin, continue to focus on any physical sensations you might be feeling there.*
- *Pay attention to the back of your head where you may be having sensations.*
- *Notice any sensations you may be feeling in your mouth, on your tongue, or on your teeth.*
- *Continue to watch the band of light in your imagination descend around your neck, and notice any feelings in your throat or any muscle tension on the back of your neck.*
- *Now the band widens and begins to move down your torso, across the width of your shoulders.*
- *Notice any sensations, muscle tension, or tingling you might be feeling in your shoulders, upper back, upper arms, and upper chest area.*
- *As the band of light continues to descend down around your arms, notice any feelings you're aware of in your upper arms, elbows, forearms, wrists, hands, and fingers. Become aware of any tingling, itching, or tension you might be holding in those places.*
- *Now become aware of your chest, the middle of your back, the side of your torso, your lower back, and stomach. Again, notice any tension or sensations, no matter how small they might be.*
- *As the band continues to move down your lower body, become aware of any sensations in your pelvic region, buttocks, and upper legs.*
- *Be sure to pay attention to the backs of your legs and notice any feelings there.*
- *Continue to watch the band of light descend around your lower legs, around your calves, shins, feet, and toes. Notice any feelings or tension you're experiencing.*

Then as the band of light disappears after completing its descent, take a few more slow, long breaths, and when you feel comfortable, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

Exploring Mindfulness Further

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

The mindfulness skills that are at the core of the dialectical behavior therapy approach are actually linked directly to a much larger and more ancient tradition of meditation. In that larger tradition is a significant body of experience and wisdom related to developing and practicing mindfulness. This experience and wisdom has much to offer anyone interested in mindfulness, whether they seek improved psychological or physical health, personal enrichment, or even spiritual growth.

This chapter invites you to explore mindfulness further by trying some additional practices adapted from the ancient tradition of meditation and now appearing in many clinical settings that teach mindfulness-based approaches for a variety of health-related conditions.

The intention and hope is that you will develop an even deeper appreciation for the power of mindfulness to support you, promote your happiness, and lead you increasingly to rest in wise mind.

Marsha Linehan, who developed dialectical behavior therapy, has noted this larger context for mindfulness in commenting that the mindfulness skills central to dialectical behavior therapy are “psychological and behavioral versions of meditation practices from Eastern spiritual training.” Linehan goes on to say that in developing dialectical behavior therapy, “I have drawn most heavily from the practice of Zen, but the skills are compatible with most Western contemplative and Eastern meditation practices” (Linehan, 1993b, p. 63).

In the past twenty-five years or so, many health care professionals have become interested in mindfulness and its applications in treating a wide variety of health-related conditions ranging from stress to chronic pain to anxiety and depression to cancer. In bringing mindfulness forward in Western health care settings, the ancient teachings and wisdom of various contemplative and meditative traditions have provided much valuable insight.

- *For doubt, especially when your mind is racing everywhere, it can help to concentrate attention in the present moment with some resolve and steadiness.* Other remedies for doubt can be conversation with mindfulness teachers and others who follow this path, and inspirational readings related to how others handle doubt.

Finally, remember to take a kind and interested nonjudging attitude toward the hindrances when they appear. When you can treat them as teachers, not obstacles, they will cease to be hindrances!

Exercise: Inner-Outer Experience

Now that you've practiced being mindful of both an object outside of yourself and your internal physical sensations, the next step is to combine the two experiences. This is the first exercise that will teach you how to recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. This will be done by teaching you to shift your attention back and forth in a mindful, focused way between what you are experiencing internally, such as your physical sensations and thoughts, and what you are experiencing externally, such as what you notice using your eyes, ears, nose, and sense of touch.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you're doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device so that you can listen to them while you practice shifting your focus between your internal and external awareness.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths and relax.

Now, keeping your eyes open, focus your attention on an object in the room. Notice what the object looks like. Notice its shape and color. Imagine what that object would feel like if you could hold it. Imagine what the object must weigh. Describe the object silently to yourself, being as descriptive as possible. Take a minute to do this. Keep breathing. If your focus begins to drift, simply return your attention to the exercise without criticizing yourself. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished describing the object, return your focus to your body. Notice any physical sensations that you might be experiencing. Scan your body from your head to your feet. Notice any muscle tension you might be holding, any tingling you might be experiencing, or any other sensations of which you are aware. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear. Notice sounds you hear coming from outside your room and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished listening to the sounds that you can notice, return your focus to your body. Again, notice any physical sensations. Become aware of the weight of your body resting in the chair. Notice the weight of your feet resting on the floor. Notice the weight of your head resting on top of your neck. Notice in general how your body feels. If you become distracted by your thoughts, just notice what they are and refocus your attention as best you can on your physical sensations. Take a minute to

do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise. If you don't notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished using your sense of smell, once again return your focus to your physical sensations. Notice any sensations that you might be feeling. Once again, scan your body from your head to your feet and become aware of any muscle tension, tingling, or other physical feelings. If your thoughts distract you, do your best to return your focus to your physical sensations. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, finally, redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Reach out with one of your hands to touch an object that is within reach. Or, if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you're sitting on or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it's smooth or rough. Notice if it's pliable or rigid. Notice if it's soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you're touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you've finished, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room.

Exercise: Record Three Minutes of Thoughts

This is the second exercise that will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. In this exercise, you will identify the number of thoughts you have in a three-minute period. This will allow you to become more mindful of just how quickly your mind really works. This exercise will also help you prepare for the next exercise, Thought Defusion.

The instructions for this exercise are simple: set a timer for three minutes and begin writing down every thought you have on a piece of paper. But don't try to record the thought word for word. Just write down a word or two that represents the thought. For example, if you were thinking about a project you have to complete at work by next week, simply write "project" or "work project." Then record your next thought.

See how many of your thoughts you can catch in three minutes, no matter how small the thoughts are. Even if you start thinking about this exercise, write "exercise." Or if you start thinking about the paper you're writing on, write "paper." No one else ever has to see this record, so be honest with yourself.

When you've finished, count the number of thoughts you had in three minutes and multiply that number by twenty to get an idea of how many thoughts you might have in an hour.

- *Sleepiness* means just that—feeling sleepy, heavy, and dull. It is important to note that the causes of sleepiness can include physical fatigue, but, also, a second kind of sleepiness is actually a resistance to something happening in mind and body that may be frightening or painful. Learning to distinguish between these two is very helpful.
- *Restlessness* is the opposite of sleepy. It can be very uncomfortable. It is a "storm" of thoughts, feelings, and sensations that demand movement and are quite distracting.
- *Doubt* is that inner voice that says, "I can't handle this. I don't know how to do it. What good is this? This definitely is *not* for me." Doubt is often expressed as words in your mind and feelings of fear and resistance to what is happening.

Working Wisely with the Hindrances

The first and most potent way to handle any of the hindrances is to make the *experience* of the hindrance itself a focus for your mindfulness. Acknowledge what is happening without fighting it. Gently place attention on desire, aversion, sleepiness, restlessness, or doubt, and look deeply, allowing the energy to reveal itself in all of its forms. Patiently return your soft and curious attention time and again, as often as necessary, to the hindrance energy, naming it and learning what it has to teach you. The lessons can come in many ways, including thoughts, memories, feelings, and body sensations.

In addition, you may find benefits in the following specific suggestions for each hindrance:

- *For desire*, recall that no matter how many times you get what you desire, you always want more. Let this wisdom empower you to resist the temptation of desire and learn from it instead. Keep noticing and naming desire without acting on it.
- *For aversion*, recognize anger and ill will as some of your strongest teachers. Resolve to learn from them. At times, it also helps if you can work to balance them by developing thoughts of compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.
- *For sleepiness*, know it as a powerful condition that demands your full attention. It can help to sit up straight, even stand. Splash water on your face. Take a break and do something active, walking mindfully, for example.
- *For restlessness*, besides making it the object of mindfulness, it can be very helpful to sharpen your concentration. Take a more narrow or smaller focus, for example, placing attention at the tip of your nose for practicing mindful breathing, or relaxing and counting your breaths from one to ten and back to one until the restlessness subsides.

For the week of _____

Day	Mindful Breathing	Wise-Mind Meditation	Doing Tasks Mindfully	Doing Tasks Mindfully	Other Mindful Exercise	Other Mindful Exercise
Monday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Tuesday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Wednesday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Thursday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Friday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Saturday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		
Sunday	Time:	Time:	What: Where:	What: Where:		

Exercise: Thought Defusion

This is the third exercise that will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. *Thought defusion* is a technique borrowed from acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), which has proven to be a very successful treatment for emotional distress.

When distressing thoughts keep repeating, it's often easy to get "hooked" on them, like a fish biting on a bait hook (Chodron, 2003). In contrast, thought defusion will help you mindfully observe your thoughts without getting stuck on them. With practice, this skill will give you more freedom to choose which thoughts you want to focus on and which thoughts you want to let go of instead of getting stuck on all of them.

Thought defusion requires the use of your imagination. The object of this skill is to visualize your thoughts, either as pictures or words, harmlessly floating away from you without obsessing about them or analyzing them. Whichever way you choose to do this is okay. Here are some suggestions that other people have found helpful:

- Imagine sitting in a field watching your thoughts float away on clouds.
- Picture yourself sitting near a stream watching your thoughts float past on leaves.
- See your thoughts written in the sand and then watch the waves wash them away.
- Envision yourself driving a car and see your thoughts pass by on billboards.
- See your thoughts leave your head and watch them sizzle in the flame of a candle.
- Imagine sitting beside a tree and watch your thoughts float down on leaves.
- Picture yourself standing in a room with two doors; then watch your thoughts enter through one door and leave through the other.

If one of these ideas works for you, that's great. If not, feel free to create your own. Just be sure that your idea captures the purpose of this exercise, which is to visually watch your thoughts come and go without holding on to them and without analyzing them. Remember to use the concept of radical acceptance while doing this exercise. Let your thoughts be whatever they are and don't get distracted fighting them or criticizing yourself for having them. Just let the thoughts come and go.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the instructions in a slow, even voice so you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you are first using thought defusion, set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes and practice letting go of your thoughts until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like

eight or ten minutes. But don't expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, three to five minutes is a long time to use thought defusion.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, relax, and close your eyes.

Now, in your imagination, picture yourself in the scenario that you chose, watching your thoughts come and go, whether it's by the beach, near a stream, in a field, in a room, or wherever. Do your best to imagine yourself in that scene. After you do, start to become aware of the thoughts that you're having. Start to observe the thoughts that are coming up, whatever they are. Don't try to stop your thoughts, and do your best not to criticize yourself for any of the thoughts. Just watch the thoughts arise, and then, using whatever technique you've chosen, watch the thoughts disappear. Whatever the thought is, big or small, important or unimportant, watch the thought arise in your mind and then let it float away or disappear by whichever means you've chosen.

Just continue to watch the thoughts arise and disappear. Use pictures to represent the thoughts or words, whatever works best for you. Do your best to watch the thoughts arise and disappear without getting hooked into them and without criticizing yourself.

If more than one thought comes up at the same time, see them both arise and disappear. If the thoughts come very quickly, do your best to watch them all disappear without getting hooked on any of them. Continue to breathe and watch the thoughts come and go until your timer goes off.

When you've finished, take a few more slow, long breaths and then slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

Exercise: Describe Your Emotion

This is the fourth exercise that will help you recognize and focus on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. So far, the exercises in this chapter have helped you learn to be more mindful of your physical sensations and thoughts. This next exercise will help you become more mindful of your emotions. As with some of the other exercises, the instructions for this exercise might sound simple, but the results can be powerful. This exercise will ask you to choose an emotion and then to describe that emotion by drawing it and exploring it.

So, to begin, pick an emotion. It can be either a pleasant or an unpleasant emotion. Ideally, you should choose an emotion that you're feeling right now, *unless that emotion is overwhelmingly sad or self-destructive*. If it is, you should wait until you feel more in control of your emotions before beginning this exercise. On the other hand, if you can't identify what you're feeling now, choose an emotion that you were feeling recently, something that you can easily remember. But, whichever you choose, try to be specific about what the emotion is. For example, if you got into a fight with your spouse or partner recently because he or she did something to you, that's the situation, not the

Under the headings of "Mindful Breathing" and "Wise-Mind Meditation," record the length of time you spend doing each exercise. This will help you keep track of your improvement doing these exercises. Under the headings of "Doing Tasks Mindfully," record what it was that you did mindfully and where you were when you did it.

Then, under the headings labeled "Other Mindful Exercise," record any further mindfulness exercises that you do during the week.

Remember, these mindfulness skills are "core" skills in dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a). So continue to use them even as you move on to using the other skills in this workbook.

RESISTANCES AND HINDRANCES TO MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

It is common to encounter inner resistance and difficulties as you practice mindfulness and develop skills. What many people do not know is that there are some hindrances to mindfulness that are so common that they have been recognized by meditation teachers and practitioners for thousands of years!

This final section of the chapter will help you identify five common hindrances to mindfulness meditation and suggest ways you can work skillfully with each one.

The Five Hindrances

Desire, aversion, sleepiness, restlessness, and doubt are the five hindrances long recognized as common obstacles to meditation (and mindfulness) practice.

These energies appear as obstacles when they take you out of the present moment or cause you to become lost in thoughts and feelings that interfere with your mindfulness practice of observing accurately and without judgment. However, they do not have to be obstacles. In truth, they can become your wisest teachers if you are willing to recognize, observe, and learn from them.

- *Desire* refers to the wish for things to be different—right now! This can be a wish for a different sense experience (to "feel better" or "feel happy or peaceful," for example) or to become someone or something different than what you experience yourself as now (become the "perfect person" or "perfect meditator," for example).
- *Aversion* means having anger for or ill will toward what is here. Aversion includes other forms of resistance to present-moment experience, such as feeling bored or afraid. Often, the very activity of judgment or judgmental thinking is an expression of aversion.

they loved. Immediately, Laura began pressuring Claire to buy it. “Don’t worry about how much it costs,” Laura said. Claire looked at herself in the mirror and fell in love with the dress, regardless of the price tag. Claire was about to buy the dress when she remembered to use wise mind to help her make her decision. Her emotion mind loved the dress, but her reasonable mind reminded her that she already had a hefty credit card bill and this dress was far too expensive. In the dressing room, Claire took a few slow, deep breaths and put her hand on her center of wise mind. Her abdomen felt very nervous, not happy and excited. Instantly, she knew it was a very bad idea to buy the expensive dress, so she gave it back to the salesclerk and left the store.

Claire was proud of herself for making the right decision, but the drama didn’t end there. Laura began making fun of Claire for being “too cheap” to buy the dress. Again, Claire’s mind began to fill with judgments about Laura. She did her best to let them go, but as Laura continued to ridicule her, Claire’s only goal became leaving the mall and dropping Laura at home. Internally, Claire wanted to scream at Laura, but she knew that would end up in a big fight. Claire thought about doing what was effective in that moment. She knew that she just had to get home as quickly and safely as possible without getting into a fight that she might later regret.

Claire drove home silently, listening to Laura’s criticisms. She was relieved when she finally let Laura off at her house. Later, when Claire was feeling less angry, she even found the courage to call Laura to discuss what happened. Claire did a great job using mindful “I” statements such as “I felt hurt when you teased me.” Laura understood and said she was sorry. Claire was proud of herself for handling the situation in a new, healthier way.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

Obviously, it will take lots of practice to become as mindful as Claire was in that situation. But hopefully, you see the benefits of using mindfulness in all of your daily tasks.

In the beginning of chapter 3, Basic Mindfulness Skills, you learned that there were three main reasons why you should learn mindfulness skills:

1. They will help you focus on one thing at a time in the present moment, and by doing this you can better control and soothe your overwhelming emotions.
2. They will help you learn to identify and separate judgmental thoughts from your experiences.
3. They will help you develop wise mind.

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut to becoming instantaneously and permanently mindful. But as Dr. Charles Tart said, learning how to be mindful isn’t a strenuous activity; you simply have to remember to do it. So, however you need to remember to be mindful, we hope it works for you. One way is to use the Weekly Mindfulness Activities Record on page 112. This will help you remember to follow your daily mindfulness regimen. Make photocopies of this page for each week to record how often you use mindful breathing, wise-mind meditation, and do tasks mindfully.

emotion. Maybe this situation made you feel angry, hurt, sad, stupid, or something else. Be specific about how you feel. Here’s another example. Maybe someone recently gave you a gift. That’s the situation. Your emotion would depend on how you felt about the gift. If it was something you’ve always wanted, you might feel elated. If the gift came from someone you don’t know very well, you might feel anxious about its purpose. Be specific about how you feel.

To help you choose an emotion, use this list of some commonly felt emotions.

LIST OF COMMONLY FELT EMOTIONS

Adored	Empty	Irritated
Afraid	Energetic	Jealous
Angry	Enlightened	Joyful
Annoyed	Enlivened	Lively
Anxious	Enraged	Lonely
Apologetic	Enthusiastic	Loved
Ashamed	Envious	Loving
Blessed	Excited	Mad
Blissful	Exhausted	Nervous
Bored	Flirtatious	Obsessed
Bothered	Foolish	Pleased
Broken	Fragile	Proud
Bubbly	Frightened	Regretful
Cautious	Frustrated	Relieved
Cheerful	Glad	Respected
Confident	Guilty	Restless
Content	Happy	Sad
Curious	Hopeful	Satisfied
Delighted	Hopeless	Scared
Depressed	Horrorified	Scattered
Determined	Hurt	Secure
Disappointed	Hysterical	Shy
Disgusted	Indifferent	Smart
Disturbed	Infatuated	Sorry
Embarrassed	Interested	Strong

Surprised	Tired	Vulnerable
Suspicious	Unsure	Worried
Terrified	Upset	Worthless
Thrilled	Vivacious	Worthy

When you finish identifying the emotion you want to explore, write it down at the top of the Describe Your Emotion form (on the next page) or use a blank piece of paper.

Then, using your imagination, draw a picture of what your emotion might look like. This might sound hard to do, but just do the best you can. For example, if you are feeling happy, maybe a picture of the sun expresses how you feel or maybe a picture of an ice-cream cone would do better. The picture doesn't have to make sense to anyone else but you. Just give it a try.

Next, try to think of a sound that would further describe the emotion. For example, if you are feeling sad, maybe the sound of a groan would describe how you feel, such as "ugh." Or maybe a certain song expresses your emotion better. Describe the sound as best you can, and write it near your drawing.

Then describe an action that "fits" your emotion. For example, if you are feeling bored, maybe the action would be to take a nap. Or if you are feeling shy, maybe the action would be to run away and hide. Do your best to describe the action, and write it near your drawing.

The next step of this exercise is to describe the intensity of the emotion on which you're focusing. This will require some thought. Do your best to describe the strength of this emotion. Feel free to be creative and use metaphors if you need to. For example, if you are feeling very nervous, you might write that the feeling is so strong that your "heart feels like a drum at a rock concert." Or if you are only feeling a little angry, you might write that the intensity is like a "mosquito bite."

After describing the intensity of the emotion, briefly describe the overall quality of what the emotion feels like. Again, feel free to be as creative as you need to be in your description. If you are nervous, maybe it makes you feel like your "knees are made of jelly." Or if you are getting angry, it might make you feel like "water that's about to boil." Be as accurate as you can in your description and be as creative as you need to be in order to convey your feelings.

Finally, add any thoughts that arise due to your emotion. But be clear that what you describe is a thought and not another emotion. For example, don't choose any of the words in the list above to describe your thoughts. Those are emotions, not thoughts. Your thoughts should be able to finish the following sentences: "My emotion makes me think that..." or "My emotion makes me think about..." It's important that you begin separating your thoughts and your emotions because this will give you better control over both of them in the future. Here are some examples of thoughts that can arise from emotions. If you are feeling confident, a related thought might be that you think you can ask your boss for a raise, or it makes you remember other times in your life when you felt confident and were successful. Or if you are feeling fragile, a related thought could be that you think you can't handle any more stress in your life, or it makes you think about how you're going to struggle with future problems if you don't get stronger.

similar experiences with other activities. When she washed the dishes, she paid attention to how the water felt and to the smell of the dish soap. While she was cooking, she was very aware of the heat from the stove, the sensation of hunger in her stomach, the sound of the water boiling, and her distracting judgments, which usually concerned whether or not her husband would like the meal. She did her best to let those judgments go and to be as fully present in the moment of cooking as she could be.

Similarly, Scott did his best to be mindful throughout the day. As he walked, he focused his attention on how his feet felt as they touched the pavement. Sometimes, he was even aware of how his feet felt moving in his socks. Then he would shift his focus to what he was seeing. He visually scanned what was around him as he walked, and he made mental notes to himself: "Right now, I'm seeing a woman, a tree, a building," and so on. When distracting thoughts arose, he imagined the thoughts coming in one door and leaving through another. If he saw someone on the street whom he didn't like and judgments arose, he would also let those judgments go. Similarly, if positive judgments arose about people or places he liked, he did his best to let those go too. For example, once he caught himself thinking "Oh look, there's Mike. He's the guy that loaned me twenty dollars that time. He's the greatest guy in the world. I wish I could be more like him." Scott knew that he couldn't stop those judgments from arising, but instead of getting stuck on them, he would let them go. And if the judgments came back, he would let them go again.

But clearly, the greatest challenge to using mindfulness skills is when you are interacting with someone else. Talking or arguing with someone and being mindful at the same time is often difficult. But it is also the most important time to be mindful, especially for someone struggling with overwhelming emotions. Here's an example.

Claire had been practicing her mindfulness skills for a few weeks when she went shopping for a new dress with her friend Laura. Sometimes, Claire worried that Laura really didn't like her. As a result, when Laura made suggestions, Claire did whatever Laura wanted because she was afraid of losing Laura's friendship. However, Claire didn't like the fact that Laura pushed her into doing things.

On the way to the store, Claire drove and she did her best to remain mindful of what she was doing. She felt the steering wheel in her hands. She felt the weight of her body resting in the seat. She felt her breath rising and falling as she breathed. She was also very aware of what she was seeing, especially the other cars. But she was also very aware of Laura talking to her as she drove. Naturally, judgments about Laura came up while Claire was driving, and she did her best to just let them go. However, some judgments were easier to let go of than others.

When they got to the shopping mall, Claire also had opportunities to use radical acceptance. There were certain stores she liked and certain stores she didn't like. At first, she was positive that she would find the "perfect" dress in the store she really liked because they always had the "best" clothes. But quickly, Claire recognized the positive judgments she was making, and she let them go. That was lucky too, because none of the stores she liked had the dress she was looking for. In the past, she would have been crushed and gotten upset. But because of radical acceptance, her neutrality and her nonjudgmental attitude allowed her to cope with the situation in a healthier way.

Later, the two women found themselves in a higher-end store looking at dresses that were more expensive than what Claire could afford. However, both she and Laura found a dress that

And finally, your daily mindfulness regimen will include doing tasks mindfully. This might sound like a new skill to you, but you've already practiced doing all the steps that are necessary. Doing tasks mindfully means doing all the things you normally do in your life, like talking, walking, eating, and washing, while also staying focused on your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions in the present moment, and without judging what is happening. In effect, this is the exercise where all the skills you've learned in the last two chapters finally come together.

To do tasks mindfully, you need to do the following:

- Focus and shift your attention between your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and actions in order to be mindful of your present-moment experience.
- Let go of distracting thoughts and judgments by allowing them to float past without getting stuck on them so that you don't get distracted from what's happening in the present moment.
- Use radical acceptance to remain nonjudgmental.
- Use wise mind to make healthy decisions about your life.
- Do what's effective in order to accomplish your goals.

Some people find it helpful to use the following memory device to remind themselves to do tasks mindfully:

“Mindfulness is like a FLAME.”

Focus and shift your attention to be mindful of the present moment.

Let go of distracting thoughts and judgments.

Use radical **A**ceptance to remain nonjudgmental.

Use wise **M**ind to make healthy decisions.

Do what's **E**ffective to accomplish your goals.

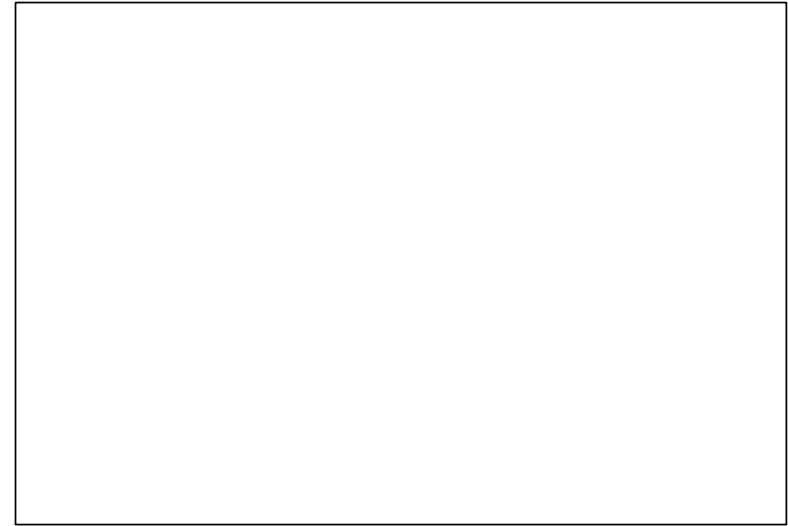
Let's look at some examples of doing tasks mindfully, using all the skills you've learned in chapters 3 and 4.

After reading these two chapters, Loretta began approaching many of her tasks mindfully. At night, she would even brush her teeth mindfully. First, she focused her attention on how the toothbrush felt in her hand and how the tube felt as she squeezed out the paste. She was also aware of how her body felt, standing in front of the bathroom mirror, and how the weight of her body felt as she stood in front of the sink. Then, as she began to brush, she became aware of the taste in her mouth, the feel of the bristles on her gums, and the movement of her arm as she brushed. When distracting thoughts arose, such as things she did earlier in the day, she imagined the thoughts floating down a river on a leaf. If judgments arose about people she knew, she did the same thing and watched the judgments float away. Then she continued to shift her focus every few moments to her breathing, feeling it rise and fall. Loretta did a good job being as aware as possible of simply brushing her teeth in that moment. At other times throughout the day, she had

DESCRIBE YOUR EMOTION

Name the emotion: _____

Draw a picture of your emotion



Describe a related action: _____

Describe a related sound: _____

Describe the intensity of the emotion: _____

Describe the quality of the emotion: _____

Describe thoughts related to the emotion: _____

Exercise: Focus Shifting

This next exercise will teach you the third “what” skill, which is learning to identify what you are focusing on in your moment-to-moment stream of awareness. Now that you’ve practiced being mindful of both your emotions and your sense experiences (seeing, hearing, touching), it’s time to put the two experiences together. This exercise is similar to the Inner-Outer Experience exercise because it will also help you shift your attention back and forth in a mindful, focused way. However, this Focus Shifting exercise will address the shift between your emotions and your senses and help you differentiate between the two.

At some point in our lives, we all get caught in our emotions. For example, when someone says something insulting to you, maybe you feel upset all day, think poorly of yourself, get angry at someone else, or look at the world in a much gloomier way. This “emotional trap” is a common experience for everyone. But for someone struggling with overwhelming emotions, these experiences happen more frequently and intensely. Mindfulness skills will help you separate your present-moment experience from what’s happening inside you emotionally, thereby giving you a choice as to which one you’ll focus on.

Before starting this exercise, you’ll also need to identify how you are currently feeling. If you need to refer to the list of emotions in the previous exercise, go ahead. Do your best to be as accurate as possible about how you feel. Even if you think that you’re not feeling anything, you probably are. A person is never completely without emotion. Maybe you’re just feeling bored or content. Do your best to identify what it is.

Read the instructions before beginning this exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you’re doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device so that you can listen to them while you practice shifting your focus between your emotions and your senses.

If you need to, set a timer for five to ten minutes for this exercise.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, and relax.

Now close your eyes and focus your attention on how you are feeling. Name the emotion silently to yourself. Use your imagination to envision what your emotion might look like if it had a shape. The image doesn’t have to make sense to anyone but you. Just allow your imagination to give your emotion a form or shape. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now open your eyes and put your focus on an object in the room where you’re sitting. Notice what the object looks like. Notice its shape and color. Imagine what that object might feel like if you could

exercise in this section, we have designed a simple daily mindfulness regimen to help you continue practicing your skills. It’s very important that you continue to use these skills, and to practice other mindfulness exercises that you think are necessary, even as you move on to learning other dialectical behavior skills in this workbook. Mindfulness skills are so important to the overall effectiveness of dialectical behavior therapy that they have been labeled “core” skills (Linehan, 1993a).

DAILY MINDFULNESS REGIMEN

Your daily mindfulness regimen will consist of three skills that you’ve already learned:

1. Mindful breathing
2. Wise-mind meditation
3. Doing tasks mindfully

Mindful breathing is a skill you learned in chapter 3, Basic Mindfulness Skills. Remember, to breathe mindfully, you need to focus on three parts of the experience:

1. You must count your breaths. This will help you focus your attention, and it will also help you calm your mind when you’re distracted by thoughts.
2. You need to focus on the physical experience of breathing. This is accomplished by observing the rising and falling of your breath as you slowly inhale and exhale.
3. You need to be aware of any distracting thoughts that arise while you are breathing. Then you need to let the thoughts float past without getting stuck on them, as you did in the Thought Defusion exercise. Letting go of the distracting thoughts will allow you to refocus your attention on your breathing and help you further calm yourself.

Practice breathing mindfully for three to five minutes a day at a minimum. But if you want to practice it longer, do it for as long as you can. Remember, the more frequently you practice mindfulness skills, the calmer you will feel and the more control you will have over your present-moment experiences. Refer to the Mindful Breathing exercise in chapter 3 if you need to review the instructions.

The wise-mind meditation is a skill you learned earlier in this chapter. It will help you focus your attention on your center of wise mind, which is also sometimes called your center of intuition or “gut feelings.” Remember, wise mind is just one decision-making process that many people find helpful. It incorporates using both your emotion mind and your reasonable mind, meaning that wise-mind decisions require you to reflect on how you feel as well as the facts of a situation. This skill also helps you make intuitive decisions that “feel” right to you. Wise-mind meditation will help you make decisions based on the way your body reacts to a decision and your own inner knowledge (what you know to be “true” for you). Again, practice the wise-mind meditation for at least three to five minutes a day, or longer if you want to.

an example: Judith had a math teacher who assigned homework that Judith thought was too hard. “This is ridiculous,” she thought to herself. “How unfair of him to give us these assignments. This is wrong; he shouldn’t be allowed to do this. I’m not going to do the homework.” So she didn’t. But as a result, she failed the class. Judith’s judgments about what was “right” and “wrong” prevented her from doing what was effective. Clearly, it would have been more beneficial to her if she had remained mindful of her thoughts and feelings, avoided judging the assignments, and just done the best that she could.

Doing what’s effective is doing what is necessary in a given situation in order to get a resolution to a problem. Doing what’s effective *isn’t* “selling out,” “giving up,” or “caving in.”

Doing what’s effective is a skill, just like acting. Sometimes in order to get what you want, you have to behave in a certain way. Sometimes you have to act as if you are competent, skilled, or satisfied in order to reach your goal, even if you don’t feel that way. And that’s what effective actions are designed to do—help you reach your goals. In the example above, Judith’s goal was to get a satisfactory grade in her math class. But she allowed her judgments and feelings to prevent her from reaching that goal.

Remember, in order to do what’s effective, you have to do the following:

- Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings.
- Avoid judging the situation or your actions.
- Choose actions that are appropriate and necessary to reach your goal.
- Do the best you can.

BEING MINDFUL IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

Now that you’ve almost completed these two chapters on mindfulness skills, you probably recognize the benefits of being mindful in your daily life. But to be realistic, no one is mindful all the time. There will certainly be moments in your life when you’ll forget to be mindful. So what should you do?

In his book *Living the Mindful Life: A Handbook for Living in the Present Moment*, psychologist Charles Tart (1994, p. 13) remarks: “It does not take a really strenuous effort to make yourself become mindful and more present. The effort is very small. The problem is remembering to do it! We forget all the time. It is not hard, but we just do not remember to do it.” So how should you remember to be mindful? Throughout his book, Dr. Tart uses a bell that rings at random times to remind the reader to be mindful of how he or she is thinking and feeling. But if you don’t want to use a random bell, there are other ways to remind yourself. In some of the exercises in this chapter, you might have used a special ring or bracelet to remind yourself. Or maybe you used sticky notes. If those tools helped you, continue to use them to remind yourself to stay mindful.

However, the best way to continue to stay mindful in your daily life is to practice being mindful. The more you practice, the more you will remember to stay mindful. As part of the last

hold it. *Imagine what the object must weigh. Describe the object silently to yourself, being as descriptive as possible. Take a minute to do this. Keep breathing. If your focus begins to drift, simply return your attention to the exercise without criticizing yourself.* [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you’ve finished describing the object, close your eyes and return your focus to your emotion. Think of a sound that might be related to your emotion. The sound can be anything that you think describes your emotion. It can be a noise, a song, or whatever. When you’re done describing the sound to yourself, think of an action related to your emotion. Again, it can be anything that further enhances your understanding of your emotion. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, keeping your eyes closed, redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear. Notice sounds you hear coming from outside your room and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished listening to the sounds that you can notice, return your focus to your emotion. Keeping your eyes closed, silently describe the intensity and quality of your emotion to yourself. Again, feel free to be creative and use comparisons if you need to. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise. If you don’t notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished using your sense of smell, once again return your focus to your emotions. Notice any thoughts you might be having that are related to your emotion. Be as specific about the thought as you can, and make sure your thought isn’t really another emotion. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, finally, redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Reach out with one of your hands to touch an object that is within reach. Or if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you’re sitting in or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it’s smooth or rough. Notice if it’s pliable or rigid. Notice if it’s soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you’re touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you’ve finished, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room.

Exercise: Mindful Breathing

This Mindful Breathing exercise will help you learn the fourth “what” skill, which is learning to separate your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations. (You already learned the basics of mindful breathing in chapter 2, *Advanced Distress Tolerance Skills*, but this exercise will give you an additional understanding of the skill.) Very often, when you’re distracted by your thoughts and other stimuli, one of the easiest and most effective things you can do is to focus your attention on the rising and falling of your breath. This type of breathing also causes you to take fuller, deeper breaths, which can help you relax.

In order to breathe mindfully, you need to focus on three parts of the experience. First, you must count your breaths. This will help you focus your attention, and it will also help you calm your mind when you’re distracted by thoughts. Second, you need to focus on the physical experience of breathing. This is accomplished by observing the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. And third, you need to be aware of any distracting thoughts that arise while you’re breathing. Then you need to let the thoughts go without getting stuck on them, as in the previous Thought Defusion exercise. Letting go of the distracting thoughts will allow you to refocus your attention on your breathing and help you further calm yourself.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you first start this technique, set a timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes, and practice breathing until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique to help you relax, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like ten or fifteen minutes. But don’t expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, three to five minutes is a long time to focus and breathe. Later, when you become more accustomed to using this style of breathing, you can also begin using it while you’re doing other daily activities, like walking, doing the dishes, watching television, or having a conversation.

When using mindful breathing, many people feel as if they become “one” with their breathing, meaning that they feel a deep connection to the experience. If that happens for you, that’s great. If not, that’s okay, too. Just keep practicing. Also, some people feel light-headed when they first begin practicing this technique. This may be caused by breathing too fast, too deeply, or too slowly. Don’t be alarmed. If you begin to feel light-headed, stop if you need to, or return your breathing to a normal rate and begin counting your breaths.

This is such a simple and powerful skill that, ideally, you should practice it every day.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for as long as you’ve set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you feel comfortable closing your eyes, do so to help you relax.

doing, especially if you struggle with overwhelming emotions. Here are some other examples of doing what’s effective:

- You’re in the grocery store shopping for your weekly supply of food, but unfortunately, so are many other people. After shopping for an hour and waiting in line for fifteen minutes, you feel exhausted. You’re so tired and annoyed that you think about leaving your shopping cart and just walking out. But if you did walk out, then you’d be without groceries for a week or you’d just have to start all over again at some other supermarket. So you stay in line and just get it over with.
- You’re driving down the freeway and the car in front of you is driving below the speed limit in the left-hand lane. You feel so angry that you think about smashing into the car to push it out of the way. But if you did, you and the other driver would be seriously injured, and chances are you’d also get arrested. So you patiently wait for a chance to pass the driver, or you wait for your exit and then get off the freeway.
- You and your romantic partner get into a big argument. Both of you are yelling. You feel so hurt and upset that you think about walking out the door and ending the relationship. But in the back of your mind, you also recognize that this is the best relationship you’ve had in a long time, and you wish that it would work out. So, instead of leaving, you take a deep breath and use mindful “I” statements to let your partner know how you’re feeling.
- Your boss gives you a new task even though you’re already burdened with more work than you have time for. You feel insulted, angry, and taken advantage of. You’re so mad that you think about screaming at your boss, telling him off, quitting, and walking out the door. But if you did, then you’d be without a paycheck for a long time. So you decide to bite your tongue for now until you can speak to your boss more calmly at some point in the near future, and you do the best you can.
- You ask your friend to take you shopping because she has a car and you don’t. But your friend says she can’t because she’s busy doing something else. You feel annoyed and angry because you help her all the time when she asks you. You want to yell at her and tell her what a lousy friend she is. But if you did, you might lose her friendship completely. So instead of yelling, you call a different friend to ask for a ride.

As you can see, doing what’s effective sometimes means *not* doing what you feel like doing or *not* doing what you’ve been habitually doing for many years. This is why mindfulness is such an important part of doing what’s effective. If you’re going to change the way you behave in the present moment, you have to be aware of what you’re thinking, feeling, and doing in the present moment so that you can choose to do what’s effective.

Doing what’s effective also depends on not making judgments. You already know that making both positive and negative judgments can lead to disappointment and suffering. But making judgments about situations and your actions can also prevent you from doing what’s effective. Here’s

In the fourth sentence, the speaker feels insulted or foolish. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be “I feel like an idiot when you do that.”

In the fifth sentence, the speaker feels anxious, tired, or angry. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be “I feel anxious/tired/angry when you tease me like that.”

In the sixth sentence, the speaker feels insulted, unheard, and ignored. But he or she also probably feels upset about being ignored. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be “I feel upset when you ignore me.”

In the seventh sentence, the speaker might feel many things. Usually, when you ask someone to stop doing something, it’s because the action hurts. So maybe the speaker feels hurt, and an alternative mindful “I” statement could be “I feel hurt when you do that.”

The eighth sentence is trickier. The speaker calls the other person some insulting expletive. This also usually indicates that the speaker’s feelings have been hurt. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be similar to the last sentence: “I feel very hurt when you do that.”

The ninth sentence is phrased as a question, but it’s really a statement about how the speaker feels. Again, the implication is that the speaker feels hurt, insulted, belittled, or something similar. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be any version of these: “I feel very hurt (or insulted, or whatever) when you do that to me.”

And lastly, the tenth sentence is the trickiest because the speaker uses the word “feel.” Maybe you were tricked into thinking that this sentence didn’t need to be changed. But this sentence is really a hidden judgment about the other person. What the speaker really means is “I *think* you’re too inflexible.” But people often exchange the word “think” for “feel” in order to hide their criticism or make their judgment sound less harsh. However, now you know better, so don’t fall into the same trap. In this case, something about the other person’s inflexible actions make the speaker feel uncomfortable or trapped. Maybe the other person never considers other points of view before he or she makes decisions. So an alternative mindful “I” statement could be “I feel uncomfortable when you don’t consider my point of view.”

Mindful “I” statements are clearly a more effective way of communicating how you feel and what you need, but they depend on your mindful awareness of your own feelings. Hopefully, after practicing the exercises in the last two chapters, you’ve become more skilled at recognizing your own emotions and you can start using mindful “I” statements to let others know how you feel.

DOING WHAT’S EFFECTIVE

Using successful communication skills, such as mindful “I” statements, is a part of what dialectical behavior therapy calls “doing what’s effective” (Linehan, 1993b). This means that you do what’s appropriate and necessary in the present moment—to resolve a problem, cope with a situation, or reach your goal—even if what you do feels unnatural, uncomfortable, or it goes against what you are experiencing emotionally. For example, you’re probably not comfortable making statements like the ones you made in the last exercise, where you speak directly to the other person about how you feel. But sometimes in order to get what you want, you have to modify what you feel like

To begin, take a few slow, long breaths, and relax. Place one hand on your stomach. Now slowly breathe in through your nose and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils, and then feel your breath blowing out across your lips. As you breathe, notice the sensations in your body. Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body resting on whatever you’re sitting on. With each breath, notice how your body feels more and more relaxed.

Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breaths each time you exhale. You can count either silently to yourself or aloud. Count each exhalation until you reach “4” and then begin counting at “1” again. To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Count “1.” Again, breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Count “2.” Repeat, breathing in slowly through your nose, and then slowly exhale. Count “3.” Last time—breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count “4.” Now begin counting at “1” again.

This time, though, as you continue to count, occasionally shift your focus to how you’re breathing. Notice the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. Again, feel the breath moving in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. If you want to, place one hand on your stomach and feel your breath rise and fall. Continue counting as you take slow, long breaths. Feel your stomach expand like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Continue to shift your focus back and forth between counting and the physical experience of breathing.

Now, lastly, begin to notice any thoughts or other distractions that remove your focus from your breathing. These distractions might be memories, sounds, physical sensations, or emotions. When your mind begins to wander and you catch yourself thinking of something else, return your focus to counting your breath. Or return your focus to the physical sensation of breathing. Try not to criticize yourself for getting distracted. Just keep taking slow, long breaths into your belly, in and out. Imagine filling up your belly with air like a balloon. Feel it rising with each inhalation and falling with each exhalation. Keep counting each breath, and with each exhalation, feel your body relaxing, more and more deeply.

Keep breathing until your alarm goes off. Continue counting your breaths, noticing the physical sensation of your breathing and letting go of any distracting thoughts or other stimuli. Then, when your alarm goes off, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

Exercise: Mindful Awareness of Emotions

This is the second exercise that will help you learn to separate your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Mindful awareness of your emotions starts with focusing on your breathing—just noticing the air moving in through your nose and out through your mouth, filling and emptying your lungs. Then, after four or five slow, long breaths, shift your attention to how you feel emotionally in the present moment. Start by simply noticing if you feel good or bad. Is your basic internal sense that you are happy or not happy?

Then see if you can observe your emotion more closely. What word best describes the feeling? Consult the list of emotions from the Describe Your Emotion exercise if you’re having trouble finding the most accurate description. Keep watching the feeling, and while you do, continue

describing to yourself what you observe. Notice the nuances of the feeling or perhaps the threads of other emotions woven into it. For example, sometimes sadness has veins of anxiety or even anger. Sometimes shame is intertwined with loss or resentment. Also notice the strength of your emotion and check to see how it changes while you watch it.

Emotions invariably come as a wave. They escalate, then they reach a crest, and finally they diminish. You can observe this, describing to yourself each point in the wave as the feeling grows and passes.

If you have difficulty finding an emotion that you're feeling in the present moment, you can still do this exercise by locating a feeling that you had in the recent past. Think back to a situation during the last several weeks when you had a strong emotion. Visualize the event—where you were, what was happening, what you said, how you felt. Keep recalling details of the scene until the emotion you had *then* is being felt again by you *right now*.

However you choose to observe an emotion, once the emotion is clearly recognized, stay with it. Keep describing to yourself the changes in quality, intensity, or type of emotion you are feeling.

Ideally, you should observe the feeling until it has significantly changed—in quality or strength—and you have some sense of the wave effect of your emotion. While watching your feeling, you'll also notice thoughts, sensations, and other distractions that try to pull your attention away. This is normal. Just do your best to bring your focus back to your emotion whenever your attention wanders. Just stay with it until you've watched long enough to observe your emotion grow, change, and diminish.

As you learn to mindfully observe a feeling, two important realizations can emerge. One is the awareness that all feelings have a natural life span. If you keep watching your emotions, they will peak and gradually subside. The second awareness is that the mere act of describing your feelings can give you a degree of control over them. Describing your emotions often has the effect of building a container around them, which keeps them from overwhelming you.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. If you record the directions, pause between each paragraph so you can leave time to fully experience the process.

Instructions

Take a long, slow breath and notice the feeling of the air moving in through your nose, going down the back of your throat, and into your lungs. Take another breath and watch what happens in your body as you inhale and let go. Keep breathing and watching. Keep noticing the sensations in your body as you breathe. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now turn your attention to what you feel emotionally. Look inside and find the emotion you are experiencing right now. Or find an emotion that you felt recently. Notice whether the emotion is a good

Let's look at the third sentence. Instead of saying "Sometimes you make me so upset I just want to end it all," say "I feel so upset and hopeless sometimes that I get very depressed."

And finally, look at the last sentence. Instead of saying "I know that you did that to me on purpose just to hurt me," say "I felt very hurt when you did that."

Again, mindful "I" statements are more accurate about how you feel, they are less judgmental, the other person will probably be more willing and able to listen to you if you use them, and most importantly, you are more likely to get your needs met if you use them.

Exercise: Mindful "I" Statements

Now let's look at some more judgmental "you" statements and have you practice turning them into mindful "I" statements. Write your alternative mindful "I" statement in the space to the right of the judgmental statement.

1. "You make me feel horrible." _____
2. "I know you're doing this on purpose to make me go crazy." _____
3. "Why do you keep making me feel so angry?" _____
4. "You're being insulting." _____
5. "Stop fooling around; you're getting on my nerves." _____
6. "If you don't listen to what I'm telling you, I'm not going to talk to you anymore." _____
7. "You're being a jerk, stop it." _____
8. "You're such a @%&!*#!, I can't believe it." _____
9. "Why do you keep doing that to me?" _____
10. "Sometimes I feel like you're being too inflexible." _____

How did you do? Did it get harder to think of mindful "I" statements as the exercise progressed? Some of the later sentences probably required extra thinking. Let's look at some possible answers.

The first sentence was easy. The message is that the speaker feels horrible. So an alternative mindful "I" statement could be "I feel horrible" or "I feel horrible sometimes, when you (say that, do that, and so on)."

In the second sentence, the speaker feels crazy, anxious, or upset. So an alternative mindful "I" statement could be "I feel crazy/anxious/upset when you do that."

In the third sentence, the speaker feels angry. So an alternative mindful "I" statement could be "I feel angry right now."

MINDFUL COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS

As you continue to practice mindfulness skills by yourself, it's also very important that you begin to incorporate these skills into your interactions with others. Mindful communication is often the key to a successful relationship. If you're constantly making judgmental statements to someone, the chances are good that you'll lose that relationship. In the chapters on interpersonal effectiveness skills, you will learn how to ask others for what you need in a healthy way. But for now, let's look at how to be more mindful of the messages you send to other people.

Consider the following statements:

- “You make me mad.”
- “You're such a jerk, I could scream.”
- “Sometimes you make me so upset I just want to end it all.”
- “I know that you did that to me on purpose just to hurt me.”

What do all of these statements have in common? It's true that they all express some kind of emotion, such as anger, distress, and sadness. But more importantly, they're all judgments of the other person. Each of the statements blames the other person for the way the speaker feels. Now consider how you would feel if someone said one of these statements to you. What would you do? Maybe you would say something just as angry back to the person, which would lead to a big fight. The result would be that nothing gets resolved. Or maybe you would just shut down emotionally, stop listening, or walk away. Again, nothing would get resolved. Judgmental statements like these stop any form of effective communication. So what can you do instead?

One of the solutions is to turn “you” statements into mindful “I” statements.

- Mindful “I” statements are based on your own mindful awareness of how you feel.
- Mindful “I” statements are a more accurate description of how you feel.
- Mindful “I” statements let a person know how you feel in a nonjudgmental way.
- Mindful “I” statements evoke greater empathy and understanding from the other person, which allows the person to meet your needs.

Let's look at the four previous examples and turn them from “you” statements into mindful “I” statements.

Instead of saying “You make me mad,” say “Right now, I feel very mad.” Doesn't that sound less judgmental and blaming? If someone said the alternative statement to you (“I feel very mad”), wouldn't you be more willing to discuss the situation? Wouldn't you feel less angry?

Look at the second sentence. Instead of saying “You're such a jerk, I could scream,” say “I feel so angry right now I could scream.” Do you hear the difference it makes to change a “you” statement into an “I” statement? The other person no longer feels blamed and will be more willing to listen.

or a bad feeling. Notice whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Just keep your attention on the feeling until you have a sense of it. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now look for words to describe the emotion. For example, is it elation, contentment, or excitement? Or is it sadness, anxiety, shame, or loss? Whatever it is, keep watching and describing the emotion in your mind. Notice any change in the feeling and describe what's different. If any distractions or thoughts come to mind, do your best to let them go without getting stuck on them. Notice if your feeling is intensifying or diminishing, and describe what that's like. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Keep observing your emotion and letting go of distractions. Keep looking for words to describe the slightest change in the quality or intensity of your feeling. If other emotions begin to weave in, continue to describe them. If your emotion changes into an altogether new emotion, just keep observing it and finding the words to describe it. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Thoughts, physical sensations, and other distractions will try to grab your attention. Notice them, let them go, and return your focus to your emotion. Stay with it. Continue observing it. Keep going until you've observed your emotion change or diminish.

CONCLUSION

You've now learned some basic mindfulness skills. Hopefully, you have a better understanding of how your mind works and why these skills are important to learn. You should continue using them on a daily basis. In the next chapter, you will build on these skills and learn more advanced mindfulness skills.

Now, once again, redirect your attention. This time, put your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise. If you don't notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you are finished noticing any smells, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercises. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Notice the sensation of whatever your hands are resting on. Or, keeping your eyes closed, reach out with one of your hands to touch an object that is within reach. Or, if there is no object within reach, touch the chair you're sitting in or touch your leg. Notice what the object feels like. Notice if it's smooth or rough. Notice if it's pliable or rigid. Notice if it's soft or solid. Notice what the sensations feel like on the skin of your fingertips. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you're touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you are finished noticing any touch sensations, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercises. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now, slowly, open your eyes. Keep breathing slow, deep breaths. Take a few minutes to focus your visual attention on the room you're sitting in. Notice the objects that are in the room. Notice how light or dark the room is. Notice the different colors that are in the room. Notice where you are in the room. Move your head to look around. Take in all the visual information that you can. If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the room you're looking at. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you have finished noticing any visual sensations, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. But this time, keep your eyes open. Pick a few objects in the room to focus on. But in your mind, continue to notice any thoughts and judgments that arise, and when they do, allow them to float away. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. If you need to close your eyes to do this, that's okay. But open your eyes once the thoughts have floated away, and return your focus to the room you're in. Continue to monitor your thoughts and judgments and continue to let them go without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you've finished, if you still have time left, continue to switch your focus between your thoughts and judgments and what you notice visually. Then, when your timer goes off, take three to five slow, long breaths and return your focus to the room.

Advanced Mindfulness Skills

disappointment and suffering. As you continue to practice your mindfulness skills in your life, it will continue to be important to recognize and separate your judgments and fantasies from what's really happening in the moment. One of the easiest ways to do this is to become mindful of your physical senses—what you notice using your eyes, ears, nose, and senses of touch and taste. Often, people refer to this as *grounding* themselves. Grounding yourself in your physical sensations can stop you from obsessing over your judgments, and by doing so it will also help you become more mindful of what's happening in the present moment.

Read the following instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. Then you can either keep these instructions near you if you need to refer to them while you're doing the exercise, or you can record them in a slow, even voice on an audio-recording device so that you can listen to them while you practice shifting your focus between your judgments and your present-moment awareness.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for ten minutes. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, close your eyes, and relax.

Now, keeping your eyes closed, focus your attention on the weight of your body as it rests on the seat in which you're sitting. Notice the weight of your feet and legs resting on the ground. Notice the weight of your hands and arms resting. Notice the weight of your head resting on top of your neck. Mentally scan your body from head to toe and notice any sensations that you feel. Take your time. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now notice any tension you might be feeling anywhere in your body, and imagine the tension melting away like wax in the hot sun. Again, take your time to scan your body for any tension, and keep taking slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you are finished scanning your body, move your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Just notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercises. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, long breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

Now redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear coming from outside your room, and note to yourself what they are. Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room, and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

When you are finished noticing any sounds, once again redirect your focus to your thoughts and judgments. Notice any thoughts or judgments that arise in your mind, and when they do, allow them to float away by whichever means you found successful in the last exercises. Allow the thoughts and judgments to leave you without getting stuck on them. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. [Pause here for one minute if you are recording the instructions.]

In the previous chapter, you learned what mindfulness is and you also learned the basic “what” skills of dialectical behavior therapy. This means that you learned to become more mindful of *what* you are focusing on by using these methods:

- Focusing more fully on the present moment
- Recognizing and focusing on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations
- Focusing on your moment-to-moment stream of awareness
- Separating your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

Now, in this chapter, you'll be introduced to the more advanced “how” skills of mindfulness (Linehan, 1993a). These skills will help you learn *how* to be both mindful and nonjudgmental in your daily experiences. In this chapter, you will learn five “how” skills:

1. How to use wise mind
2. How to use radical acceptance to acknowledge your daily experiences without judging them
3. How to do what's effective
4. How to create a mindfulness regimen for yourself in order to live your life in a more aware, focused way
5. How to overcome the hindrances of your mindfulness practice

As in the last chapter, it is important that you do the exercises in this chapter in the order that they're presented. Each of these exercises builds on the one before it.

WISE MIND

As stated in the last chapter, wise mind is the ability to make healthy decisions about your life based on both your rational thoughts and your emotions. This sounds easy to do, but let's consider the traps that many people often fall into.

For example, Leo was a successful salesman with a new company. He had a happy family and a fairly good future ahead of himself. However, Leo frequently became upset when he couldn't close a deal, and so he often felt depressed and thought of himself as a person who would never be able to fully succeed in his life. Despite the positive feedback he received from his supervisors, Leo couldn't shake the feelings of failure that came from deals he couldn't close. As a result, a few months after starting his job, Leo quit, just like he had quit similar jobs in the past. He went on to take a new job, but similar feelings of failure followed him wherever he went, and he never felt fully satisfied with himself.

Similarly, Takeesha was a popular college professor who always received high ratings from her students and other faculty members. But after a few unsuccessful personal relationships, Takeesha felt very lonely. She eventually stopped trying to meet new people because she anticipated that those relationships would just end in failure too. As a result, she felt unworthy of anyone's love and resigned herself to spend the rest of her life living alone.

Unfortunately, both Leo and Takeesha were overcome by what dialectical behavior therapy calls *emotion mind* (Linehan, 1993a). Emotion mind occurs when you make judgments or decisions based solely on how you feel. But keep in mind that emotions themselves are not bad or problematic. We all need emotions to live healthy lives. (You'll learn more about the role of emotions in chapters 6 and 7.) The problems associated with emotion mind develop when your emotions *control* your life. This trap is especially dangerous for people with overwhelming emotions because emotion mind distorts your thoughts and judgments and then these distortions make it hard to formulate healthy decisions about your life. Consider what happened to Leo and Takeesha: despite their successes, their emotions overwhelmed their lives and led them to make unhealthy decisions.

The balancing counterpart to emotion mind is *reasonable mind* (Linehan, 1993a). Reasonable mind is the part of your decision-making process that analyses the facts of a situation, thinks clearly about what is happening, considers the details, and then makes rational decisions. Obviously, rational thinking helps us solve problems and make decisions every day. But again, as with emotions, too much rational thinking can also be a problem. We all know the story of the very intelligent person who didn't know how to express his or her emotions and, as a result, lived a very lonely life. So here too a balance is needed in order to live a fulfilling, healthy life. But for people with overwhelming emotions, balancing feelings and rational thought is often hard to do.

Now, in your imagination, picture yourself in the scenario that you chose in order to watch your judgments come and go, whether it's by a stream, in a field, in a room, or somewhere else. Do your best to imagine yourself in that scene. After you do, start to become aware of the judgments that you're having, just like in the last exercises in which you wrote down your judgments. Start to observe the judgments that are coming up, whatever they are. Don't try to stop your thoughts, and do your best not to criticize yourself for any of the judgments. Just watch the judgments arise, and then, using whatever technique you've chosen, watch the judgments disappear. If you need to refer to any of the records from the past exercises to remind yourself of recent judgments, feel free to do that. But then close your eyes and watch those judgments float away.

Whatever the judgment is, big or small, important or unimportant, watch the judgment arise in your mind and then let it float away or disappear by whichever means you've chosen. Just continue to watch the judgments arise and disappear. Use pictures to represent the thoughts or words, whatever works best for you. Do your best to watch the judgments arise and disappear without getting hooked into them and without criticizing yourself. If more than one judgment comes up at the same time, see them both arise and disappear. If the judgments come very quickly, do your best to watch them all disappear without getting hooked on any of them. Continue to breathe and watch the judgments come and go until your timer goes off.

When you've finished, take a few more slow, long breaths, and then slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

NONJUDGMENT AND YOUR DAILY EXPERIENCES

The purpose of the previous exercise is to help you let go of your judgments, and the more you practice it, the easier it will get. Then, after you've been practicing it regularly for at least a few weeks, it will become easy for you to let go of your judgments in the present moment. Hopefully, there will come a day, very soon, when a judgment will arise in your thoughts, either positive or negative, and you'll simply let it go. Maybe you'll need to close your eyes for a few seconds, if you're in a place where that's safe, and visualize the thought floating away. Or maybe you'll be in a conversation with someone when a judgment arises in your thoughts, and you'll simply be able to let it go. That is when you will truly be using radical acceptance.

Exercise: Judgments vs. the Present Moment

Now that you've practiced being mindful of your thoughts, feelings, and senses in the previous chapter, and you've practiced being mindful of your judgments in this chapter, the next step is to combine the two experiences. In this exercise you will learn to shift your attention back and forth in a mindful, focused way between your judgments and your physical sensations.

When you spend a lot of time obsessing over your thoughts and judgments, it's easy to get lost in your own fantasies about how the world *should* be. But again, these fantasies often lead to

Exercise: Judgment Defusion

The following Judgment Defusion exercise is designed to help you release or “let go” of your judgments and other obsessive thoughts. In the last chapter, you practiced using the thought defusion technique as a basic mindfulness exercise. This exercise is very similar. Again, the object is to watch your judgments arise and then to let go of them without getting stuck on them.

Like thought defusion, judgment defusion also requires the use of your imagination. The object of this exercise is to visualize your judgments, either as pictures or words, harmlessly floating away from you without obsessing about them or analyzing them. Whichever way you choose to do this is okay. If you used a technique in the last chapter that worked, use it again here. If you need a new visualization technique, here are just a few suggestions that other people have found helpful:

- Imagine sitting in a field watching your judgments float away on clouds.
- Picture yourself sitting beside a stream watching your judgments float past on leaves.
- Picture yourself standing in a room with two doors; then watch your judgments enter through one door and leave through the other.

If one of these ideas works for you, that’s great. If not, feel free to create your own. Just be sure that your idea captures the purpose of this exercise, which is to visually watch your judgments come and go without holding on to them and without analyzing them.

Before you begin this exercise, review the records you filled out for the Negative Judgments exercise and the Beginner’s Mind exercise, in order to refamiliarize yourself with some of the judgments you’ve made over the last few weeks. You can even keep these records near you so you can refer to them if you have trouble remembering any of your recent judgments. During the exercise, you will close your eyes and imagine whichever visualization technique you’ve chosen. Then you’ll watch your past judgments (and any new judgments) come into your thoughts and float away, without you getting stuck on them.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the instructions in a slow, even voice so you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you are first using judgment defusion, set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes and practice letting go of your thoughts until the alarm goes off. Then, as you get more accustomed to using this technique, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like eight to ten minutes.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won’t be disturbed for as long as you’ve set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, relax, and close your eyes.

The solution is to use wise mind to make healthy decisions about your life. Wise mind results from using both emotion mind and reasonable mind together (Linehan, 1993a). Wise mind is a balance between feelings and rational thoughts. Again, let’s consider the examples of Leo and Takeesha. Both of them were being controlled by their emotion minds. If Leo had been making decisions with wise mind, before quitting his job he would have balanced his decision with reasonable mind. He should have reminded himself of the facts of the situation: he was already a successful salesman, and he only became upset when he couldn’t close a deal. Therefore, was it reasonable that he should quit? Definitely not. What about Takeesha? She received great feedback from both her students and fellow faculty members. So was it reasonable to stop meeting new people after a few failed relationships? Definitely not. This is why using wise mind is so important.

You can develop wise mind by using the mindfulness skills you have already been practicing in chapter 3. Remember that part of what these exercises did was to help you recognize and separate your thoughts from your emotions. So you’ve already been using both your emotion mind and reasonable mind. And by practicing those mindfulness skills even more, it will become easier to make healthy decisions based on a balance of what your emotions and your rational thoughts tell you.

WISE MIND AND INTUITION

According to dialectical behavior therapy, wise mind is similar to intuition (Linehan, 1993b). Often, both intuition and wise mind are described as “feelings” that come from “the gut” or the stomach area. The exercise that follows will help you get more in touch with your gut feelings, both physically and mentally. This exercise will help you locate the center of wise mind in your body. This is the spot from which many people report making sensible, wise-mind decisions about their lives.

Interestingly, this phenomenon of gut feelings might be supported by scientific evidence. Researchers have discovered that a vast web of nerves covers the area of the stomach. This web of nerves is second in complexity only to the human brain, so some researchers have referred to this area as the *enteric brain*, meaning the brain in the stomach.

Exercise: Wise-Mind Meditation

When you begin using this technique, set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes and practice this exercise until the alarm goes off. Then, as you get more accustomed to using this technique, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like ten or fifteen minutes. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you feel comfortable closing your eyes, do so to help you relax.

Now locate the bottom of your sternum on your rib cage. You can do this by touching the bone at the center of your chest and then following it down toward your abdomen until the bone ends. Now place one hand on your abdomen between the bottom of your sternum and your belly button. This is the center of wise mind.

Take a few slow, long breaths and relax. Now slowly breathe in through your nose and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Feel your abdomen rise and fall as you breathe. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils and then feel your breath blowing out across your lips. As you breathe, notice any sensations in your body. Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body as it rests on the seat in which you're sitting. With each breath, notice how your body feels, and allow your body to become more and more relaxed.

Now, as you continue to breathe, let your attention focus on the spot underneath your hand. Let your attention focus on the center of wise mind. Continue to take slow, long breaths. If you have any distracting thoughts, just allow those thoughts to leave you without fighting them and without getting stuck on them. Continue to breathe and focus on the center of wise mind. Feel your hand resting on your stomach.

As you focus your attention on your center of wise mind, notice what appears. If you've had any troubling thoughts, problems, or decisions that you have to make in your life, think about them for a few seconds. Then ask your center of wise mind what you should do about these problems or decisions. Ask your inner intuitive self for guidance, and then notice what thoughts or solutions arise out of your center of wise mind. Don't judge whatever answers you receive. Just note them to yourself and keep breathing. Continue to focus your attention on your center of wise mind. If no thoughts or answers come to your questions, just continue breathing.

Now continue to notice your breath rising and falling. Keep breathing and returning your focus to the center of wise mind until the timer goes off. Then when you've finished, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

HOW TO MAKE WISE-MIND DECISIONS

Now that you've had practice locating your wise-mind center, you can "check in" with that area of your body before you make decisions. This can help you determine if a decision is a good one. To do this, simply think about the action you are about to take and focus your attention on your center of wise mind. Then consider what your wise mind tells you. Does your decision feel like a good one? If so, then maybe you should do it. If it doesn't feel like a good decision, then maybe you should consider some other options.

BEGINNER'S MIND RECORD

When?	Where?	What?

EXAMPLE: BEGINNER'S MIND RECORD

When?	Where?	What?
Friday, 12 P.M.	Lunch with Laura	<i>I thought: "Laura is an incredibly talented person who never makes any mistakes."</i>
Friday, 2:30 P.M.	Work	<i>I called myself "incompetent," since I'm not going to be able to finish all my paperwork before five o'clock.</i>
Friday, 2:45 P.M.	Work	<i>After talking with my mother on the phone, I thought about what a lousy job she did raising me.</i>
Friday, 5:30 P.M.	At the bar, after work	<i>I was thinking that the bartender looked really nice and was probably the type of person who would make a really good husband.</i>
Friday, 7:30 P.M.	Home	<i>At first I told my boyfriend that he was sweet for making dinner, but when he put too much salt on my food, I told him he was an idiot.</i>
Saturday, 2:30 P.M.	Shopping mall	<i>I found the "perfect" pair of jeans that are going to make me look fantastic.</i>
Saturday, 3:00 P.M.	Shopping mall	<i>I was thinking about how ugly one of the guys in the store looked.</i>
Saturday, 4:15 P.M.	Home	<i>I got upset and called myself an idiot when I realized that the jeans didn't fit.</i>
Saturday, 9 P.M.	Home	<i>I got mad at my boyfriend for not helping me get all my chores completed today.</i>
Saturday, 10:30 P.M.	Home	<i>I was thinking about what a perfect day tomorrow is going to be.</i>

Learning to make reliably good decisions about your life is a process that evolves as long as you are alive, and there is no single way to do this. Checking in with your center of wise mind is simply *one* way that often works for some people. However, some words of caution are needed here. When you first use wise mind to make decisions about your life, it will probably be difficult to tell the difference between an intuitive gut feeling and a decision made the old way with emotion mind. The difference can be determined in three ways:

1. *When you made your decision were you being mindful of both your emotions and the facts of the situation?* In other words, did you make the decision based on both emotion mind and reasonable mind? If you haven't considered the facts of the situation and are being controlled by your emotions, you're not using wise mind. Sometimes we need to let our emotions settle and "cool off" before we can make a good decision. If you've recently been involved in a very emotional situation, either good or bad, give yourself enough time for your hot emotions to cool down so that you can use reasonable mind.
2. *Did the decision "feel" right to you?* Before you make a decision, check in with your center of wise mind and notice how it feels. If you check in with your center of wise mind and you feel nervous, maybe the decision you're about to make isn't a good one or a safe one. However, maybe you feel nervous because you're excited about doing something new, which can be a good thing. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference, and that's why using reasonable mind to make your decision is also important. Later, when you have more experience making healthy decisions for your life, it will be easier to tell the difference between a good nervous feeling and a bad nervous feeling.
3. *You can sometimes tell if you've used wise mind by examining the results of your decision.* If your decision leads to beneficial results for your life, chances are you used wise mind to make that decision. When you start using wise mind, keep track of your decisions and the results in order to determine if you're *really* using wise mind. Remember, wise mind should help you make healthy decisions about your life.

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Another very important part of wise mind, and mindfulness in general, is a skill called radical acceptance (Linehan, 1993a). (You already explored radical acceptance in chapter 2, Advanced Distress Tolerance Skills, but the following description will help you understand how it relates to mindfulness skills.) Radical acceptance means tolerating something without judging it or trying to change it. Remember the definition of mindfulness that we gave you in the last chapter? Mindfulness is the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions—in the present moment—*without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience*. Radical acceptance is a very important piece of being mindful because if you're judging yourself, your experience, or someone else in the present moment, then you're not really paying attention to what's happening

in that moment. In many ways, judgment is the royal road to suffering, because when you judge others you get angry and when you judge yourself you get depressed. So in order to be truly mindful in the present moment, and in order to be fully centered in wise mind, you must practice being nonjudgmental.

Radical acceptance might sound like a difficult skill to master, but it's definitely worth the effort. Consider this example. Thomas struggled with a problem that's very common for people with overwhelming emotions. He divided everyone and everything into two categories: they were either all good or all bad. There was no in-between for him. When people treated him nicely, they were good, but when someone disagreed with him, he considered them to be bad, even if the person had just been on his good side a few minutes before. This quick fluctuation between good and bad led Thomas to make a lot of judgments and critical remarks about himself and others. Over the years, the accumulation of fluctuations and judgments made Thomas very sensitive to situations that could go wrong. He always expected that other people would make mistakes, insult him, or betray him in some way. One time his sister said that she couldn't help him take his car to the repair shop, and Thomas blew up at her. He criticized her for being ungrateful and selfish. However, the truth was that she had to take her own daughter to the doctor, but Thomas never heard her reasoning. He was too wrapped up in his own judgmental thinking to really listen to anyone else. In truth, Thomas had created a pattern in his life where all of his judgments and critical thinking became realities, and this led to a very lonely and distressing life.

When Thomas was finally introduced to the skill of radical acceptance, he was critical of it too. "This is ridiculous," he thought, "This stupid idea isn't going to help me. I don't need this. How can anyone not be critical?" But with the urging of his family, Thomas decided to try using radical acceptance. At first, it was very difficult for him to not make judgments about himself and other people, but he continued using the exercises in this workbook, and, with practice, radical acceptance became easier. Slowly his thinking began to change. Thomas spent less time obsessing over judgmental thoughts and critical remarks, and he spent less time anticipating that other people would insult or betray him. He also no longer thought of people as either just good or bad. He began to recognize that everyone makes mistakes, and that's okay. He also became more mindful of his thoughts, feelings, sensations, and actions in the present moment, which helped him focus better on his daily experiences and make healthier choices for his life.

As you can see from this example, one of the hardest parts of using radical acceptance is recognizing when you're being judgmental of yourself or others. This takes practice, and the skills in the workbook will help. But recognizing when you're being judgmental also takes time. You're going to make mistakes. When you're first learning to be nonjudgmental, there will be times when you *will* be judgmental. Then you'll recognize what you're doing, and you'll be further critical of yourself for being judgmental. But that's okay too. That's part of the learning process. Learning how to use radical acceptance is a lot like the story of a man who's walking down a city street and falls through an open manhole to the sewer. He climbs out, looks in the hole, and says, "I better not do that again." But the next day, walking down the same street, he steps into the same open manhole, climbs out, and says, "I can't believe I did it again." Then on the third day, he's about to step into the same open manhole when he suddenly remembers what happened on the two previous days, so he avoids the fall. On the fourth day, the man remembers to walk around the

As with the last exercise, make photocopies of the Beginner's Mind Record if you need to, and keep one folded in your pocket so that you can record your judgments as soon as you recognize that you're making them. The more quickly you record them after they occur, the sooner radical acceptance will become a regular part of your life. Use the example of the Beginner's Mind Record on the following page to help you. The blank Beginner's Mind Record for your use is on the page after that.

(NOTE: When you have completed a Beginner's Mind Record, keep it to use in the Judgment Defusion exercise later in this chapter.)

JUDGMENTS AND LABELS

Hopefully, after the last exercise, it's easy to see how putting labels on people, thoughts, and objects—making them either good or bad—can later lead to disappointment. In order to move closer to using radical acceptance, the next exercise will continue to help you monitor the judgments that you make and then it will help you let go of those judgments.

So far in this chapter, you've already recognized many of the problems associated with making judgments:

- Judgments can trigger overwhelming emotions.
- Judgments can often lead to disappointment and suffering.
- Judgments prevent you from being truly mindful in the present moment.

Obviously, one of the problems with judgments and criticisms is that they occupy your thoughts. In many cases, it can become very easy to start obsessing on a single judgment. Perhaps you've even had the experience of a single judgment occupying your thoughts all day. Maybe it was something bad about yourself or someone else. Or maybe it was something good about yourself or someone else. We've all had this experience. So when your thoughts are occupied by something that happened in the past or by something that might happen in the future, how mindful are you being about the present moment? Probably you're not being very mindful. And when those obsessive thoughts are judgments about yourself or someone else, how easy is it for your emotions to get triggered? Probably it's very easy, especially if you struggle with overwhelming emotions.

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE AND BEGINNER'S MIND

Now that you've recognized many of your negative judgments, you're closer to using full radical acceptance. Remember, radical acceptance means that you observe situations in your life without judging or criticizing yourself or others. In the previous exercise, you focused on recognizing your *negative* judgments because they are usually the easiest ones to spot. But positive judgments can also be problematic.

Remember the example of Thomas we recently gave you? He divided everyone into two categories: either all good or all bad. He liked people when they were good, but when they did something to upset him, he got angry and labeled them "bad." So do you see how making even positive judgments about people or things can be problematic? When you think of someone (or something) with a rigid and predetermined idea of how that person is going to treat you, then it's easy to become disappointed, because no one (and nothing) is perfect. Presidents sometimes lie, religious people sometimes gamble, things that we like sometimes break, and people we trust sometimes hurt us. As a result, when you put someone into a category of being 100 percent good, trustworthy, saintly, wholesome, or honest, it's very easy to get disappointed.

But this doesn't mean that you should never trust anyone. What radical acceptance says is that you should approach people and situations in your life without judging them to be good or bad, positive or negative. In some forms of meditation, this is called *beginner's mind* (Suzuki, 2001). This means that you should enter every situation and every relationship as if you were seeing it for the very first time. This reoccurring newness prevents you from bringing any old judgments (good or bad) into the present moment, which allows you to stay more mindful. Plus, by keeping the situation fresh, it also helps you stay in better control of your emotions. As a result, it's easy to see why one of the goals of dialectical behavior therapy is to help you stop making any judgments at all, either positive or negative (Linehan, 1993b).

Exercise: Beginner's Mind

In the following exercise, you'll practice using radical acceptance and beginner's mind. This exercise is similar to the last one, but now you will need to be aware of both the positive and negative judgments that you make. Again, if you need to use visual reminders to help you remember to write down your judgments, use whatever works for you: a bracelet, a ring, a sticky note with the word "judgment" on it, and so on.

Do this exercise for at least one week or until you recognize that you're starting to catch yourself in the moments when you're making both positive and negative judgments. Keep track of *when* you made the judgment, *where* you were, and *what* the positive or negative judgment was.

open manhole as soon as he starts walking down that street. And on the fifth day, he chooses to walk down a different street in order to avoid the problem completely. Obviously, learning how to use radical acceptance will take you longer than five days, but the process of falling into the same judgmental traps will happen in a very similar way.

Below are several exercises to help you develop a nonjudgmental attitude and to use the skill of radical acceptance. But before you start, let's clarify radical acceptance a little more, because it can often be a confusing concept for many people. To use radical acceptance *does not* mean that you silently put up with potentially harmful or dangerous situations in your life. For example, if you are in a violent or abusive relationship and you need to get out, then get out. Don't put yourself in harm's way and simply tolerate whatever happens to you. Radical acceptance is a skill that is supposed to help you live a healthier life; it is not a tool to fill your life with more suffering.

However, there's no doubt that it will be tough to start using radical acceptance because it will require you to think about yourself, your life, and other people in a new way. But once you start using radical acceptance, you'll find that it actually gives you more freedom. You'll no longer spend as much time judging yourself and others, and so you'll be free to do many other things instead. Radical acceptance is one of the most important tools to learn in dialectical behavior therapy, and it's definitely worth the effort.

Exercise: Negative Judgments

The first step to changing a problem is to recognize when that problem occurs. So to begin changing your judgmental thinking, the first step is to recognize when you're being judgmental and critical. On page 87 is a Negative Judgments Record. For the next week, do your best to keep track of all the negative judgments and criticisms that you make. This includes those you make about things you read in the newspaper or see on television, judgments you make about yourself and other people, and so on. Make photocopies of the Negative Judgments Record if you need to, and keep one folded in your pocket so that you can record your judgments as soon as you recognize that you're making them. If you decide that you're only going to write down your negative judgments once a day, such as before you go to sleep, the process of learning radical acceptance will take longer. At the end of the day, you might forget many of the negative judgments that you've made.

In order to remind yourself to write down your negative judgments, it might help to give yourself visual reminders. Some people have found that wearing something special to remind them, like a new ring or a bracelet, prods their memories to write down their judgments. Other people put up sticky notes around their home and office with the word "judgments" written on them. Use whatever works best for you. Do this exercise for at least one week, or until you recognize that you're starting to catch yourself in the moment when you're making negative judgments. Keep track of *when* you made the judgment, *where* you were, and *what* the negative judgment was. Use the following example to help you.

(NOTE: When you have completed a Negative Judgments Record, keep it to use in the Judgment Defusion exercise later in this chapter.)

EXAMPLE: NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS RECORD

When?	Where?	What?
Sunday, 2 P.M.	Home	I thought: "I hate Sundays; they're always so boring."
Sunday, 6:30 P.M.	Home	I told my girlfriend I didn't like the shirt she was wearing.
Monday, 8:30 A.M.	In the car pool on the way to work	I thought about how much I hate the people on the road who always drive like idiots.
Monday, 11 A.M.	Work	I thought about how stupid my coworkers are for asking me the same questions every day.
Monday, 12:30 P.M.	Work	I thought about how much I hate my boss for buying me a computer that's not fast enough to do my work.
Monday, 1:45 P.M.	Work	I got mad at myself for making a mistake and called myself an "idiot."
Monday, 2:30 P.M.	Work	I got mad at the president after reading about his views on foreign policy in the newspaper.
Monday, 4:15 P.M.	Work	I thought about the ugly color they painted the room I'm sitting in.
Monday, 5:15 P.M.	In the car pool on the way home	I told Sandra she was being rude for keeping her car radio turned up too loud.
Monday, 11:30 P.M.	Home	I got upset with myself for staying up so late and not getting enough sleep.

NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS RECORD

When?	Where?	What?