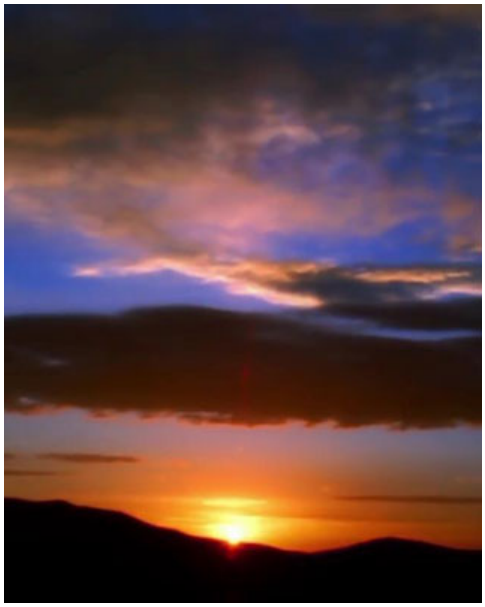
Week 8 - Conclusion

Developing a Practice of Your Own



You are whole and also part of larger and larger circles of wholeness
you may not even know about.
You are never alone.
And you already belong.
You belong to humanity.
You belong to life.
You belong to this moment, this breath.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn -

You are not a drop in the ocean,
You are the entire ocean in a drop.
- Rumi -

Gratefulness is the key to a happy life that we hold in our hands,
because if we are not grateful,
then no matter how much we have we will not be happy
because we will always want to have something else or something more.
- David Steindl-Rast -

The three factors that seem to have the greatest influence on increasing our happiness are
our ability to reframe our situation more positively,
our ability to experience gratitude,
and our choice to be kind and generous.
- Dalai Lama -

Week 8 - Conclusion

Developing a Practice of Your Own

Time to reflect...

This brings us to the final week of the course, and if you have been watching the videos, reading the recommended material, and doing the practices, you have accomplished a lot! As a result of your dedicated learning and practice, it's likely that there have been some changes in you since you began, so now might be a good time to ask: ***What changes have you noticed since you began the course?*** The changes may be different than you expected and they might not be monumental. They could include subtle shifts, such as discovering that you are sometimes able to find space in the middle of a busy day, or that you are a little more resilient in encounters with others, or you're just a little kinder to yourself in difficult situations. It's often the subtle changes that are actually most profound, because they indicate learning that has been integrated, that they come from the inside-out rather than top-down.

Developing a practice of your own

Although there are videos and readings for this week, there are no practice sheets. Sometimes, we say that the eighth week of an MBSR class starts now but does not really have an end. If this course has been useful for you so far, you may want to consider the question: ***How will you continue practicing mindfulness in your daily life, on your own?*** You may decide that you would like to continue the practice in a formal way, incorporating in your schedule a sitting meditation or yoga, for instance, or you may already have an idea of how you would incorporate into your life one or more of the many informal practices (e.g., simple awareness, STOP, "Turning Toward", mindful walking).

Of the people who take the MBSR course and have found ways to incorporate mindfulness into their lives, every one of them does it in a unique way, a way that suits their temperament and needs. One person might continue with a 30-minute per day meditation practice, another might take a regular yoga class, another may have made their daily walk into a meditation using present-moment awareness of their inner and outer worlds as they walk, and yet another may intentionally use one or more of the many informal practices throughout their day. The important thing is not the specific practices you choose, but that you make them yours, and that they resonate with you in a way that they help you to be more alive, engaged and joyful in your daily life.

Videos

There is much evidence that gratitude is key to a happy and fulfilled life so it seems fitting to include **Gratitude**, **Love Letters**, and **The 365 Grateful Project** in the last set of videos for the course. **How My Son Ruined My Life**, by James Baraz's mother is funny but poignant and continues on that theme. Finally, **Listening as an Act of Love** and **Grand Central Station** reinforce the key role that compassion and self-compassion play in this course.

Readings

The readings include two one-page documents by Jon Kabat-Zinn having to do with developing a daily mindfulness practice, an article by Rachel Naomi Remen about serving vs. helping, and **The Rabbi's Gift**, a beautiful story by M. Scott Peck illustrating the transformative power of seeing the goodness in others (and ourselves).

Certificate of completion

If you have completed the practices each week and absorbed the videos and readings, ***Congratulations!*** Completing this course is not a minor accomplishment - it takes significant commitment to do the required practice and study on your own. If you would like a certificate documenting your completion of this online course, see Requesting a Certificate of Completion.

Thanks to the generosity of Mindful Leader, and through a special collaboration with Palouse Mindfulness, in your congratulations letter will be a coupon for a **live one-day online retreat, led by a certified MBSR instructor**. These retreats are provided to new graduates of Palouse Mindfulness **free of charge** and include participants from Mindful Leader's live MBSR courses as well as other Palouse Mindfulness graduates.

Even if you choose not to get a certificate, it might be fun to look at the Graduate Map which has pins in every city for which there is a Palouse Mindfulness graduate.

There's more!

At this point, you may want to take a well-justified rest from videos and readings about mindfulness, but if you find yourself wishing there was more, you're in luck! There are 25 modules in Going Deeper: Graduate Explorations which came from in-person meetings of local graduates with Dave Potter, in which we explored topics in more depth than is possible in the standard 8-week course. Each one of the modules include videos and readings organized similarly to Weeks 1-8 of the Palouse course, and most of them include a video-recording of Dave Potter introducing the topic and guiding a meditation. You can do them in any order, or just choose one or two that look interesting.

Being part of a regular meditation group is a wonderful way to maintain or deepen your practice. Graduates who are not already part of the Palouse Mindfulness Community automatically become members of this vibrant and active community of fellow students and graduates. Members have the option to choose among 15 different weekly zoom meetings.

If you are interested in deepening your learning through an instructor-training program, there are many good training centers, some of which are listed on the Mindfulness Training Centers page. Still another way to keep learning is to look at the Gallery of Learning. There you will find current letters of some of the other graduates (published with their permission) - skimming through those can be like a mini-refresher.

We hope this course has been useful and wish you the best on your journey from here!

If you'd like to help expand the reach of the Palouse Mindfulness course:

If you found the course valuable, you are invited to make a small donation to help make the course even more accessible to people around the world, but this is not expected nor required. ***Please donate only if you feel inspired to do this and are comfortable enough financially to do so.*** *See About Contributions.*

Week 8 Materials

Video List

- ☐ Gratitude - *David Steindl-Rast) [5 min]*
- ☐ Love Letters - *Kaira Jewel Lingo [11 min]*
- ☐ The 365 Grateful Project - *Hailey Bartholomew [12 min]*
- ☐ How My Son Ruined My Life - *Selma & James Baraz [7 min]*
- ☐ Listening as an Act of Love - *Jon Kabat-Zinn [7 min]*
- ☐ Grand Central Station - *Sharon Salzberg [2 min]*

Reading List

- ☐ Deepening a Personal Meditation Practice - *Jon Kabat-Zinn*
- ☐ Suggestions for Daily Practice - *Jon Kabat-Zinn*
- ☐ In the Service of Life - *Rachel Naomi Remen*
- ☐ The Rabbi's Gift - *M. Scott Peck (you can also listen to a beautiful 6 min. audio narration by the author)*

Supplementary materials related to this week's topic *[optional]*

- Sanctuary - *video by Jack Kornfield [19 min]*
- The Habits of Happiness - *video by Matthieu Ricard [20 min]*
- Thanks - How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier - *book by Robert Emmons*
- The Happy Secret to Better Work - *video by Shawn Achor [12 min]*
- Happiness - *video by Tara Brach [20 min]*
- Mindfulness is Not A Crystal Ball - *video by Susan Kaiser Greenland [2 min]*
- Blowing Bubbles - *video by Sharon Salzberg [2 min]*
- Layers of Awareness - *diagram by Dave Potter*

Deepening a Personal Meditation Practice

1. The real meditation is how you live your life.
2. In order to live life fully, you have to be present for it.
3. To be present, it helps to purposefully bring awareness to your moments – otherwise you may miss many of them.
4. You do that by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to whatever is arising inwardly and outwardly.
5. This requires a great deal of kindness toward yourself, which you deserve.
6. It helps to keep in mind that good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, the present moment is the only time any of us are alive. Therefore, it's the only time to learn, grow, see what is really going on, find some degree of balance, feel and express emotions such as love and appreciation, and do what we need to do to take care of ourselves – in other words, embody our intrinsic strength and beauty and wisdom – even in the face of pain and suffering.
7. So a gentle love affair with the present moment is important.
8. We do that through learning to rest in awareness of what is happening inwardly and outwardly moment by moment by moment – it is more a “being” than a “doing.”
9. Formal and informal meditation practices are specific ways in which you can ground, deepen, and accelerate this process, so it is useful to carve out some time for formal practice on a regular daily basis – maybe waking up fifteen or twenty minutes earlier than you ordinarily would to catch some time for ourselves.
10. We bring awareness to our moments only as best we can.
11. We are not trying to create a special feeling or experience – simply to realize that this moment is already very special – because you are alive and awake in it.
12. This is hard, but well worth it
13. It takes a lot of practice.
14. Lots of practice
15. But you have a lot of moments – and we can treat each one as a new beginning.
16. So there are always new moments to open up to if we miss some.
17. We do all this with a huge amount of self-compassion.
18. And remember, you are not your thoughts or opinions, your likes or dislikes. They are more like weather patterns in your mind that you can be aware of – like clouds moving across the sky, – and so don’t have to be imprisoned by.
19. Befriending yourself in this way is the adventure of a lifetime, and hugely empowering.
20. Try it for a few weeks – it grows on you.

source: http://static.oprah.com/download/pdfs/presents/2007/spa/spa_meditate_cultivate.pdf