

Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation

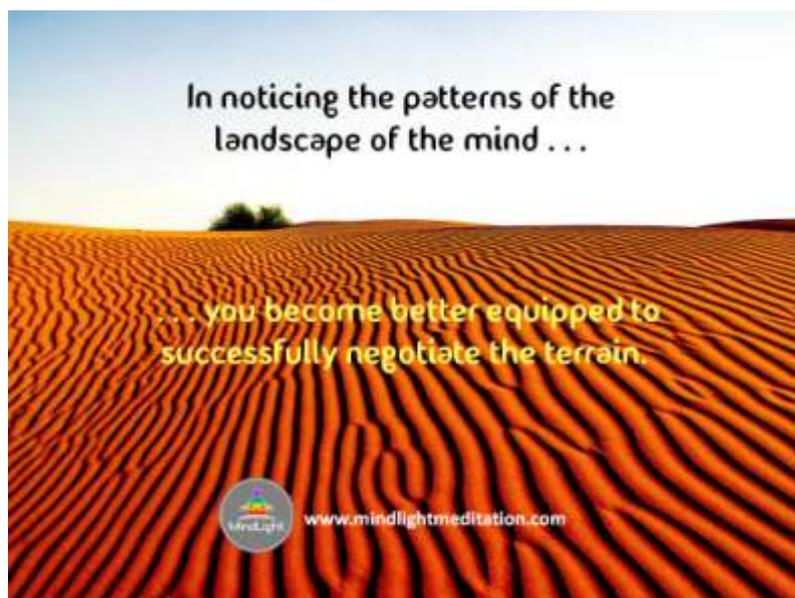
Session 3 - Mindful Movement

So far we have learned to focus on our breath and have explored the connection between the mind and body. This week we will starting to explore thought and thinking in a little more depth and carry out some mindful movements.

Seeing thoughts as just thoughts

The human mind is constantly trying to make sense of the world, it tries to, 'make meaning'. Our minds tend to create a picture of what we think is happening based on a few partial scraps of information and a result we rarely create a 'true picture'.

Thoughts are not facts, but merely fleeting mental events in the mind and in keeping our minds open we can see all the different possibilities that might arise from those thoughts. In keeping the mind open we give ourselves a greater choice of how to respond.



Cultivating new habits and new ways of thinking

The brain is surprisingly easy to train. Richard Davidson, Psychologist and Neuroscientist has found that '*neuroplasticity*' (the brain's ability to modify and change its structure and function) can happen over a period of just 7 hours with regular meditation training

The Old Lady and the Fish Basket



There's a story in the Buddhist tradition about a woman who carries her basket of fish to and from market. It's a long journey and one day it takes longer for her to sell her fish. Due to it getting dark and the dangers of the road a friend in a nearby flower shop offers for her to spend the night on the floor of her shop. That way she can walk home safely the following day.

But she cannot sleep, the sweet smell of the flowers is overpowering and so finally, she puts her head into her fish basket and drops off into contented slumber.

- ② We take comfort from the familiar – the familiar patterns of thinking, behaving and moving.
- ② We are like the fish seller; often we are offered the sweetness of a better way of living, yet our old habits draw us back to what is known; what we feel comfortable with.
- ② It is our habits that restrict us and meditation assists us move from our unhelpful ones and towards more positive ones.

The Benefits of Mindful Movement

- ② Helps us grow in awareness by taking note of the positioning of our bodies in the space we occupy.
- ② Exercise is a great way to keep our bodies healthy but we don't always connect to our bodies during exercise, except maybe to feel the pain of it. Mindful movement allows us to connect with our bodies during exercise.
- ② Mindfulness can be used during any sort of exercise - Running/swimming etc.
- ② However, slower types of exercise allow for a deeper connection - tai chi/pilates/yoga/qui gong etc. even walking.
- ② Connecting with the body first thing in the morning can help keep you focussed and calm throughout the day.
- ② Anxiety and trauma is held within the body but moving your body regularly can help release the tension and anxiety that is stored within it.

What is Qigong?

For our practice today we are going to try some qui gong

- ② Qui means Life Energy (also referred to as prana in some traditions such as yoga)
- ② Gong means to work or gather.



Qui Gong helps to stimulate flow of energy throughout the body and works with the same energy meridians within the body used in Chinese Medicine (acupuncture).

Qigong can be described as a mind-body-spirit practice that improves one's mental and physical health by . . .



Homework

- Engage in some mindful movement every morning over the next week – notice how you feel after each session, does it change through the week?
- Journal your experiences.