

# The Practice of Mindfulness: Survivors of Domestic Violence



## Recovering from Trauma and Getting Help in Their Everyday Lives

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# A Moment in time: Now



# What Activities do you feel like you're naturally in "the flow"



- Gardening
- Swimming
- Reading
- Sailing
- Drawing



# Intentions: Reminder of your Intentions




- Breath      Move      Laugh



# Thich Nan Hanh --Plum Village



- Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing. We bring our body and mind into harmony while we wash the dishes, drive the car or take our morning shower.



‘Keeping one’s  
consciousness alive to  
the present reality’

When we practice  
mindfulness in order to  
build up concentration,  
mindfulness is a seed.  
But mindfulness itself is  
the life of awareness: the  
presence of mindfulness  
means the presence of  
life. Mindfulness enables  
us to live.



Meditation  
is offering your  
*genuine presence*  
to yourself in  
*every moment.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

# Mindfulness



Psychologist and mindfulness meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn has simply defined mindfulness in this way:

"paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

This sounds simple, but mindfulness is a skill that takes practice to cultivate and maintain.



Mindfulness

# Equanimity



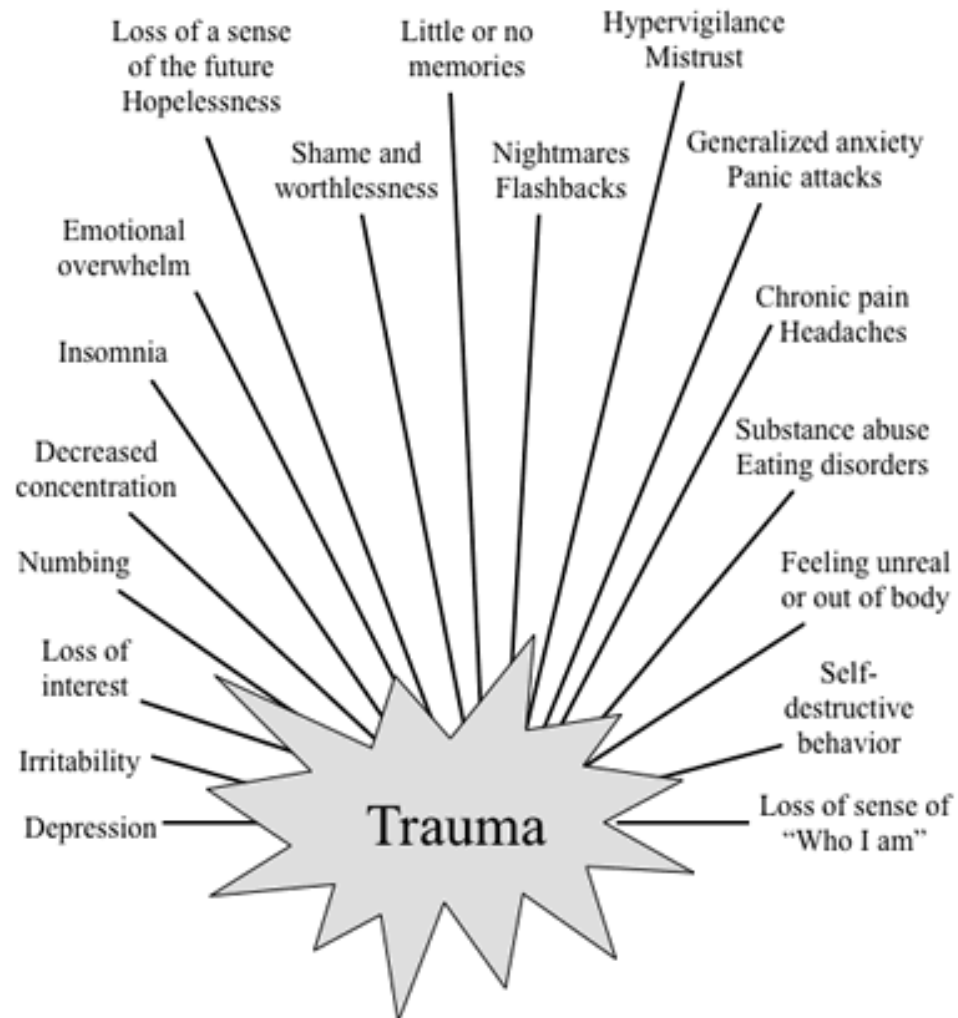
The quality of being calm and even tempered: composure (American Heritage Dictionary)

The state of being calm, stable and composed, especially under stress (Wiktionary)

The quality of equanimity is often so elusive to trauma survivors who are experiencing ongoing triggers to ordinary stress—their nervous system is often on high alert (even if the actual danger is past).

Their systems are always on—hyper-vigilance





*"Trauma survivors have symptoms instead of memories" [Harvey, 1990]*



## Pain Paradox

Mindfulness Oriented  
Interventions for  
Trauma: integrating  
Contemplative  
Practices, edited by  
Victoria M. Follette,  
John Briere, Deborah  
Rozelle, James W.  
Hopper and David I.  
Rome

- “In the face of emotional pain, a common human response is to withdraw, numb, distract, deny, or to otherwise suppress awareness. Yet psychological avoidance may actually prolong or intensify psychological distress. Those who abuse drugs or alcohol, dissociate, externalize through dysfunctional behavior, or suppress upsetting thoughts and memories, for example, are more likely than others to develop intrusive and chronic problems and symptoms.”

Briere, 2015

# Acceptance



- ACT acceptance commitment therapy founder Steven Hayes suggest that a major basis of human suffering is the attempt to avoid or control unwanted thoughts and feelings, whereas mindful acceptance involves an active attempt to embrace one's self and one's experience, including unwanted states, in the her-and now, without judgment.
- Carl Rogers said, “ The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change”

John Briere, Catherine Scott, Principles of Trauma Therapy, 2013 Sage Press

# Benefit of Accepting things as they are



- Increase acceptance of trauma memories by definition makes them less “negative”—thereby potentially requiring less avoidance and allowing more exposure and psychological processing.
- Mindfulness Oriented Interventions for Trauma John Briere 2015



# Group 10 weeks Mindfulness Group



**Co-facilitated: Buddhist Teacher/Chaplin and Social Worker**

**Trauma Survivors invited to engage in Meditation and Group Process**

- Week 1 Introduction
- Week 2 Hyper-vigilance~being in the moment
- Week 3 Depression~ Joy
- Week 4 Anxiety~ calm mind
- Week 5 Feeling numb~ feeling alive~“window of tolerance”

- Week 6 Difficulty in Relationships~intimacy
- Week 7 Fear~ Confidence
- Week 8 Feeling disconnected~making connections
- Week 9 Review
- Week 10 Summary

# Sample structure of the group



Second Session:

Opening meditation

Impact of trauma

Ideas of how mindfulness and meditation can positively combat symptoms of trauma

Being part of a group—listening—check in with members (set amount of time). Structure check weekly

Closing meditation

# How to Meditate



<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/sitting-meditation>



## Jon Kabat-Zinn

This website is the official outlet for three series of guided mindfulness meditation practices, Series 1, Series 2, and Series 3 developed and voiced by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Dr. Kabat-Zinn is internationally known as a meditation teacher, author, researcher, and clinician in the fields of mind/body medicine, integrative medicine, lifestyle change, and self-healing. He is the founder of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and an expert in stress reduction, relaxation, and the applications of mindfulness meditation in everyday living to optimize one's capacity to face stress, pain, and illness across the lifespan. MBSR programs are now offered in over 720 medical centers, hospitals, and clinics around the world.

[Learn More](#)



Pema Chodron: [Pemachodronfoundation.org](http://Pemachodronfoundation.org)





# Breathing



Our breathing is a stable solid ground that we can take refuge in. Regardless of our internal weather- our thoughts, emotions and perceptions- our breathing is always with us like a faithful friend. Whenever we feel carried away, or sunken in a deep emotion, or scattered in worries and projects, we return to our breathing to collect and anchor our mind.

We feel the flow of air coming in and going out of our nose. We feel how light and natural, how calm and peaceful our breathing functions. At any time, while we are walking, gardening, or typing, we can return to this peaceful source of life.

We may like to recite:

“Breathing in I know that I am breathing in.  
Breathing out I know that I am breathing out.”

We do not need to control our breath. Feel the breath as it actually is. It may be long or short, deep or shallow. With our awareness it will naturally become slower and deeper. Conscious breathing is the key to uniting body and mind and bringing the energy of mindfulness into each moment of our life.

<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/breathing/>

# The Benefits of Mindfulness



- Learn skills to settle
- Decreased anxiety
- Increased clarity of mind
- Increased ability to be in the here and now
- Decrease reactivity
- Increased awareness
- Increased capacity to be intentional

# Meditation for Trauma Survivors



- The mindfulness, meditation group for trauma survivors was developed to address some of the difficulties that trauma survivors have in enjoying their life. At times, PTSD symptoms prevent people from living in the moment, which means that life is passing them by, without real connection to the people and activities that they are interacting with.

# Meditation for Trauma Survivors

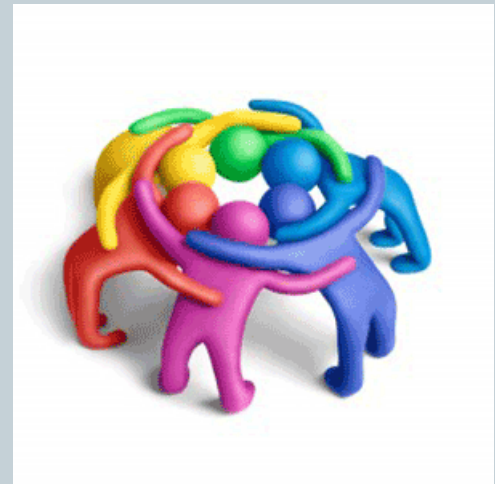


- Hyper vigilance keeps many survivors worried about the future. Additionally, triggers that produce flashbacks or disregulated states keep the survivor of trauma focused on the past or unable to focus.
- With practice in meditation, there is increasing confidence that there are internal resources to calm oneself. With a calm mind, there is an increased ability to think versus reacting to minor threats. The nervous system is calmer more often with the practice of meditation and mindfulness allowing for less activation of traumatic material.

# Meditation for Trauma Survivors



In the Group, meditating together and sharing daily struggles and triumphs, trauma survivors who feel isolated in their pain and trauma, are able to feel like they are ‘in the same boat,’ and that slowly over time can feel that they are in fact part of a larger whole.



# Benefit and Cautions



With practice of meditation and exercises in mindfulness, those who have experienced trauma, have the possibility of being in the here and now. With more moments in the here and now, there is the ability to connect to the people and activities that are happening in their lives right now. Generally, this provides for a more fulfilling life, with more moments of regulated affect, connection to others, and the hope of having more moments of being in the here and now.

There are situations that can trigger survivors of trauma during mediation. Turning inward can amplify issues of pain and suffering, if there isn't sufficient affect regulation and grounding.

See Jim Hopper's Caution about mindfulness practice for trauma survivors ( [www.jimhopper.com](http://www.jimhopper.com) )

# Pre-Survey ( Given at the beginning of group)



- **Please answer these brief screening questions:**

- Due to a specific event/experience in your life, in the past month have you:

- Had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to?

Yes

No

- Tried hard not to think about it or went out of the way to avoid situations that reminded you of it?

No

Yes

- Felt constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?

Yes

No

- Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?

Yes

No

# Pre-Survey Continued



- 
- Please use the below scale to complete the following sentence:  
In the past week, I...
- 3- Most of the time 2- Some of the time 1- Occasionally  
0- Not at all
- I feel tense or wound up:  
3      2      1      0
- I look forward with enjoyment to my regular activities:  
3      2      1      0
- I can sit at ease and feel relaxed:  
3      2      1      0
- I feel cheerful:  
3      2      1      0
-



Thinking about your everyday experience, please use the scale below to indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience:



- 1 Almost Always 2 Very Frequently 3 Somewhat Frequently 4 Somewhat Infrequently 5 Very Infrequently 6 Almost Never
- I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
- It seems I am “running on automatic,” without much awareness of what I'm doing.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
- I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
- I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.  
1      2      3      4      5      6

1 Almost Always

2 Very Frequently

3 Somewhat Frequently 4 Somewhat Infrequently

5

5 Very Infrequently

6 Almost Never



- I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.

1    2    3    4    5    6

- I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.

1    2    3    4    5    6

- I find myself doing things without paying attention.

1    2    3    4    5    6

Adapted from: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Score, Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (2003), and Primary Care PTSD Screen (2003)



Play is an experience... Our Human  
Capacity for Joy...and play gets you there.  
Stuart Brown National Institute for Play

[www.nifplay.org](http://www.nifplay.org)

# “Love After Love”

## By Derek Walcott



“Love After Love”  
By Derek Walcott

The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

*“Meditation is not meant to help us avoid problems or run away from difficulties. It is meant to allow positive healing to take place. To meditate is to learn how to stop—to stop being carried away by our regrets about the past, our anger or despair in the present, or our worries about the future.”*

~ Thich Nhat Hanh ~



be  
beautiful  
be  
yourself

A calligrapher is shown in the process of creating a piece of art. The central focus is a white rectangular sheet of paper held up by two hands. On this paper, the words "be beautiful be yourself" are written in a fluid, cursive script, enclosed within a hand-drawn circular border. The background is a dimly lit room where several people are watching the process. In the foreground, a table is set with various calligraphy tools, including brushes in a white container, a red inkstone, and a glass of yellow liquid. The overall atmosphere is one of a public demonstration or workshop.

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