

# **STRESS REDUCTION THROUGH DYNAMIC MINDFULNESS**

An MBSR-inspired meditation program  
integrating Interpersonal Neurobiology

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in collaboration with  
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*To my sister Marianne,  
whose knack for saying exactly what I need to hear at the right time is legendary,  
and my son Izzy,  
who has an unfailing talent to say exactly what I don't want to hear at the right time.*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual underwent 6 revisions over the past 15 years. The last most radical revision occurred about 6 years ago, when I introduced Interpersonal Neurobiology into the teaching. About 3 years ago Dr. Linda Macdonald joined me as a teacher of these programs. Since then she has not only taken over as the main teacher, but has chaperoned several students, who have job-shadowed her and learned from her wisdom. Some of these students have since become members of our team at The Mindfulness Centre.

In the process of becoming acquainted with this complex material, Dr Macdonald first studied these handouts in-depth and developed many ideas that have contributed to the improvement of this text and the program. By teaching, she has developed her own style, which is different from mine. These differences in approach have become a fruitful collaboration that has resulted in the idea of completely rewriting this manual, which was admittedly too complex, and written in too scientific and inaccessible a language. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Macdonald for her uncompromising, dedicated, passionate and wise guidance on our common path as teachers and students of mindfulness. She has gone through the text with a fine-tooth comb and spent many hours pointing out discrepancies, irrelevances, unintelligible passages and superfluous ballast that needed correction. Her expertise has been influential in shaping this manual in a way that I would call more integrated than it was before.

I would also like to thank the many students of mindfulness, who have studied at our Mindfulness Centre. They are our real teachers, who with their open vulnerability, genuine interest in growth and challenging questions ensure that we teachers never remain stagnant and complacent. It is through their presence that I am constantly reminded of my student status in the exploration of mind, and that so many worthwhile ideas emerge from.

I extend my gratitude to the other members of my team, Jennifer Stone, Marlene Van Esch and Dr. Alison Kelford, who in one way or another have been involved in shaping this new edition of the program with new and thoughtful ideas.

A special thanks goes to Marlene Van Esch, who has spent a lot of energy and countless hours designing and formatting the manual, and getting it to print. More importantly, she ‘holds the team fort’. When we are all busy writing, reviewing, battling wrong ideas and (mindfully?!) fretting about deadlines and other things, she has everything under control. Not only is she one of the most efficient and organized persons I know, through her calm presence she always manages to provide the right perspective at the right time to calm the waters of the circumstance.

Dr. Stéphane Treyvaud

Oakville, March 2019



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# GUIDED MEDITATION RECORDINGS

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## SESSION 5

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## SESSION 6

S6-Allowing and Letting Be.mp3

## SESSION 7

S7-Thoughts Are Not Facts.mp3

## SESSION 8

S8-Exteroception and Choiceless Awareness.mp3  
S8-Mindful Walking Meditation.mp3

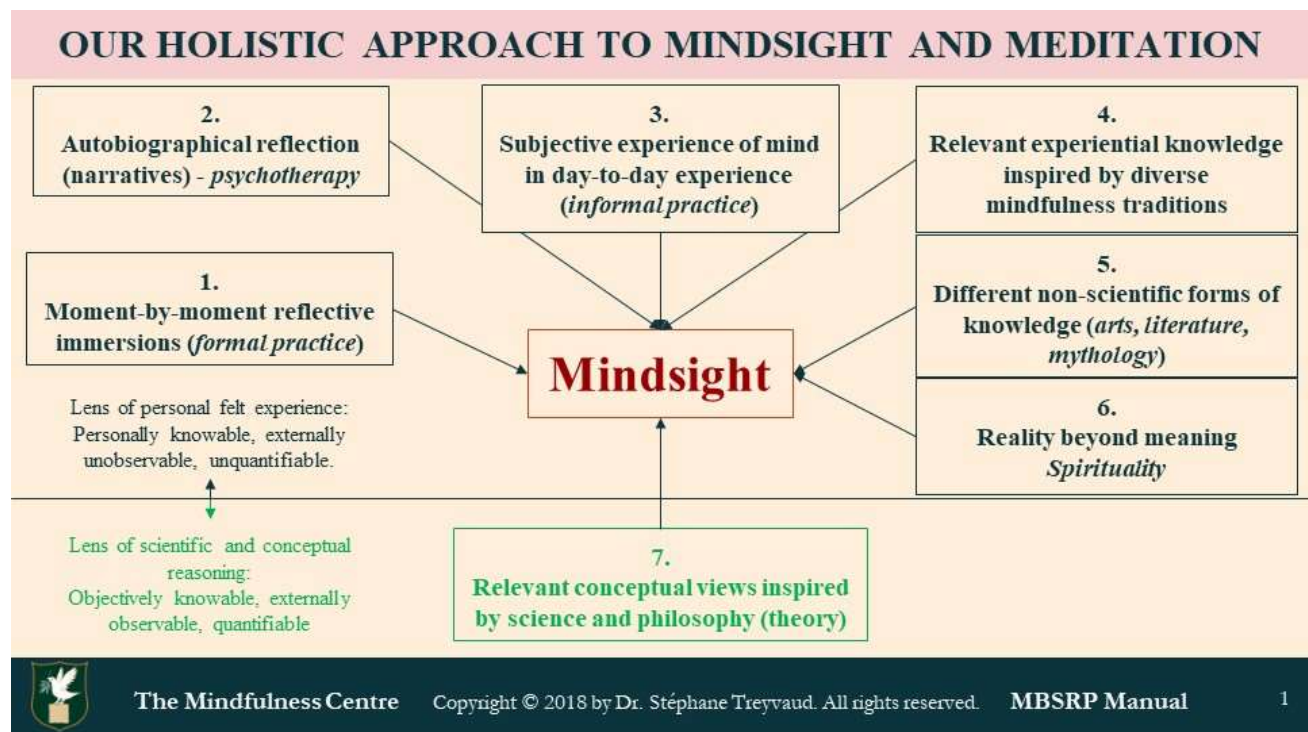
# **PREAMBLE**

## 1. MINDSIGHT – OUR HOLISTIC APPROACH

As much as this seems to be a program in mindfulness meditation, it much more accurately should be described as a training in **mindsight**. Daniel Siegel defines **mindsight** as the capacity to see our mind clearly, providing insight into the mind within, empathy for the mind of others, and integration of both. Through **mindsight** we develop the capacity to monitor our own energy flow both in the body and in our relationships, and then modify that flow towards greater harmony. The way we live our lives, everything hinges on our relationship to our minds. If you know your mind, your mind will be your friend, and life will be fulfilling, meaningful and less tortured by suffering. If you are ignorant about your mind, your mind will be your foe, and life will be a struggle, devoid of meaning and tortured by suffering.

In a simplified way we can say that our brain has nine neurocircuitry clusters, all of which need to be balanced for us to experience mental and physical health. Through **mindsight** we harmonize all nine clusters, but the means by which we achieve **mindsight** are varied, because no one method addresses all nine circuitries. Meditation only directly addresses seven, at most eight of them, the ones which are not about the content of the stories we tell. The remaining ones regarding our stories and how we make sense of our lives, require a different technique to be balanced, such as psychotherapy. In addition, our mind has access to aspects of reality beyond meaning, which for lack of a better concept will be referred to as spirituality.

Because to be healthy we need to be whole, and to be whole we need to address the complexities of the mind, our course touches on all these important elements that contribute to **mindsight**.



## 2. WHAT IS STRESS REDUCTION THROUGH DYNAMIC MINDFULNESS?

This program is a group program that focuses upon the progressive acquisition of mindful awareness or mindfulness, which can be defined as moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness. Like MBSR, this program has its roots in Buddhist and Yogic spiritual teachings, but is in content and method entirely secular. Stress Reduction Through Dynamic Mindfulness (SRDM?) has its roots in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), from which it has evolved. Originally devised by Jon Kabat-Zinn on scientific principles of behavioural medicine, MBSR uses the psychological concept of mindfulness to help people cope better and be more at ease in their life. It is thought to have potential for helping people cope with stress and chronic illness, and research has shown it having a useful effect on the cultivation of health.

Since the original creation of MBSR, science has progressed immensely as the most modern brain imaging techniques allow us now to have more direct access to what happens in the brain when mindfulness is practiced. A new field of knowledge has emerged, called Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB), which has been systematized by Daniel Siegel. Fueled by the need for more efficient approaches to psychological trauma, a parallel development in psychotherapy has led to the newest theories about the brain to emerge in the form of Sensorimotor Psychotherapy (Pat Ogden). These discoveries have given us more insight into how the brain and the extended nervous system function, allowing us to modify our approaches accordingly for better efficacy.

~~This course~~ Stress Reduction Through Dynamic Mindfulness is an expanded version of the original MBSR program, both in content and course length. In addition to the inclusion of these new scientific insights into the mind, it also presents a more dynamic and somatically grounded approach to meditation. Although there are indeed many different ways of practicing mindfulness, and the interior adventure and potential value of mindfulness training endures timelessly, our new insights into the way the brain functions do modify our approach to meditation. I have therefore expanded on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and MBSR in a way that takes these new developments into account, and developed a new, somatically based approach to mindfulness and mindsight meditation called Dynamic Mindfulness.

The term ‘dynamic’ to characterize mindfulness may need a short explanation. Over the many years teaching meditation students, it became clear to me how overwhelmingly powerful our innate cognitive tendency to create nouns and concepts as a way of grasping reality and our own subjective experience of living is. When we name something by making it into a noun, it becomes defined, circumscribed and malleable. As useful as this is for analysis, a profound truth regarding who we are as human organisms gets lost: Despite what might appear when we name our organs or are subject to seemingly unchanging, fixed experiences, in our most profound essence we are not a thing or a collection of things, but ever-flowing, impermanent energy flow. Ignoring this fact interferes with our progress on our meditative path, which is why in this Dynamic Mindfulness program we emphasize awareness of this inescapable reality.

## 3. HOW TO USE AND READ THIS TEXT

In this first, completely revamped edition of a manual that has survived about 15 past lives, I have not sacrificed depth of knowledge. Although I have (believe it or not!) simplified the

language I use and deleted extreme details of scientific knowledge not relevant for a beginner's audience, this text is written with a generally educated audience in mind. It is my invitation to you to reach out with questions and requests for clarification, should you not understand a passage you read. I consider the process of wrestling with a puzzling text we can't make sense of an essential part of the inquiry into one's mind that contributes to the development of mindfulness. Compared to old versions, I changed the order of the material to create a smoother teaching experience and emphasize practice more. To facilitate the understanding of the material, I have included many slides that hopefully provide helpful visual clarification. You may still think that this material is quite detailed and extensive, and there is no doubt that you will find much more information than you will need as a beginner. The reason for that lies in my attempt at providing precision, context and a reference you can go to when you feel you need to deepen your understanding of mindfulness and mindsight.

Every session is divided into chapters and sub-chapters. Unless there is an introduction, the first part of each session, Part A, is called 'The Technique of Dynamic Mindfulness', the second part B, 'Interpersonal Neurobiology', and the third part C, 'Daily Practice For The Week Following Session X'. The sequencing of part A, B and C follows a flow of learning, which emphasizes the practice of meditation before opening one's context of understanding. The idea is to avoid as much as possible that bad practice habits get ensconced early on, making it later much more difficult to correct them. Proceeding like that also makes walking the walk easier, more precise and more fruitful. Practice, however, is paramount as you familiarize yourself with your own experiences that arise from your own practical engagement. Give yourself some time to refine your practice as you keep re-reading what the instructions say.

Approach part B leisurely, reading as much as you comfortably can without ever compromising the time you need to practice what part A teaches. It doesn't matter if you can't read everything until we meet again next session. You will have the rest of your life to catch up on your reading. What you will never recapture are those moments you were not present in, because you were not practicing and awake. Forever lost, moments of unawareness make it more likely that you will continue to be unaware during the next moment. Don't worry about understanding everything right away. With more extensive practice and greater experience, deeper insights occur, which shed light on those passages in the text you didn't understand the first time around. So make it rule number one: always practice first. If there is time, read up.

For didactic reasons, this text is peppered with images, tables and slides. The hope is that a visual representation of certain important concepts facilitates learning and memorizing. However, please keep in mind that in the brain nothing is as simple and linear as it is sometimes presented in these slides. In the brain everything loops and counterloops in parallel-processing energy flow patterns, everything is connected to everything else, and many functions are widely distributed throughout different brain areas, making it impossible to adequately depict them in images. Nevertheless, certain neuroprocessing patterns assemble into functional units we can usefully describe and approximately locate in ways that help us understand brain functioning and how the mind may correlate with it. Creating visual images as learning aids can be useful, as long as we remember that all such schemata are only very imperfect approximations of the truth.

To keep the text as simple and accessible as possible, I often resort to a simplified language that may give the false impression of undisputable authority. However, knowledge is always relative and temporary, thus lending itself to mindful learning and the use of tentative language

that expresses the relativity of knowledge. We would do well to use expressions such as ‘may’, ‘could possibly’, ‘often’, ‘it seems like’ etc. in order to embody the necessary humility in the face of knowledge’s relativity. But using such language consistently can become tedious and create an overly cautious style that feels heavy and excessively tentative. What we learn from wisdom is that we constantly have to navigate the Scylla of doubt and the Charybdis of certainty. We all know that human knowledge is fallible, temporary and in constant evolution, but we also have to know when to act decisively. In my style I have therefore taken a middle road, assuming that my readers understand the fact that all knowledge is relative.

#### **4. THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY - A WORD OF CAUTION**

We often come to a program like this having lived lives so imbued with the relentless pressure to get things done, that the last thing we want is being told what to do. So many demands impinge on us already, that being told to add yet more ‘to-dos’ onto our list seems overwhelming.

We frequently attribute the reasons why our lives are so busy and driven to external circumstance. Occasionally, external circumstance is indeed responsible for periods of heightened stress, but only occasionally so. More often than not, internal psychological automatisms are the culprit, which means that we live insanely busy lives because we consciously and subconsciously chose to do so. Discovering some of these destructive inner forces will be the task in this program.

In order to discover what psychological mechanisms are at the root of our unhappiness and stress, we have to learn certain attentional and attitudinal techniques, all of which foster the development of mindfulness. Given the enormous complexity of the organism that we are, these techniques have to be learned with great precision, otherwise we get hopelessly lost in the mazes of our clever minds, which endlessly invent ways of creating illusions we mistake for reality. This is the reason why the instructions in this program are detailed, and why it is essential to follow them closely as best you can.

By suggesting to follow instructions closely, course participants occasionally react with defensiveness against authority. The teacher is experienced as coercive and authoritative, because ‘he or she wants me to do things a certain way, and I want to do it my way. I am already under enough pressure that I don’t need anyone telling me what to do and how to do it’.

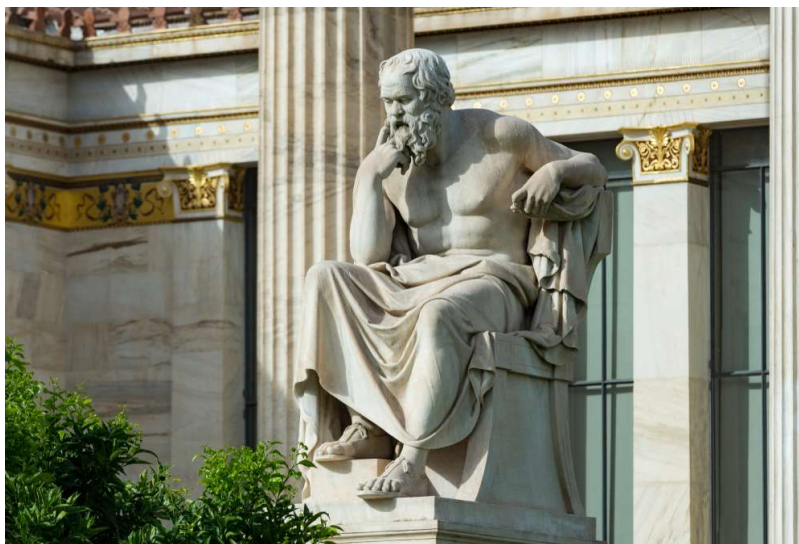
Such defensiveness comes from a confusion about two kinds of authority. There is the coercive, domineering authority, often internalized during a childhood with authoritarian parents, and there is the freeing, educative authority. The word ‘education’ comes from the Latin ‘educatio’. Etymologically it is composed of two words, ‘ex’ meaning ‘out’, and ‘ducere’ meaning ‘to lead, to draw’. In its deepest and benevolent meaning, education is not about putting knowledge into people, but drawing them out, so that they fulfill their potential.

In the context of mindfulness, we can even take it a step further. To be drawn out and fulfill our potential requires us to let go and undo much of what we have ‘learned’, so that we can get out of our own way, become receptive to the greater complexity and context of life and make space for new growth. In this way we become transparent to Truth.

In other words, the first kind of authority is deeply self-interested. Its influence is devised to reinforce its own power, not to empower the people that are influenced. If you don't follow the rules laid out by this authority, you are perceived to directly challenge it and will be harshly punished. Its interest is not the subject matter, but its own power.

The second kind of authority is other-oriented and focused on the subject matter. Its influence is devised to empower people without self-inflation. Here, the power is not in the authority, but in the means and techniques taught and the resulting ways reality speaks for itself.

**It is in the spirit of this second authority that we urge you to follow instructions precisely as best you can. It is not about doing what we say, but using the tools we give you properly; otherwise you will simply get bad results.**



**Wisdom (Socrates) – Giving answers to ask better questions.**

As we practice non-doing, we paradoxically have to learn and practice techniques we are not used to using, which in itself is a new form of doing, but on an entirely different level. So 'do' the practices as precisely as you can, and if the amount of time or home practice seems overwhelming, bring it up during the sessions, so that we can help you find mindful ways of modifying your practice in accordance with your individual, personal needs and circumstances.

## IN A NUTSHELL



Like a surgeon learning to use surgical tools for operations, follow the practice instructions **with diligence and precision** – not to please your teacher or because of any doctrine, but because the **brain is the most complex object in the known universe, and the mind even more complex**. To successfully navigate the changing energy flow fluctuations of your mind, you need to be like an experienced surgeon or sailor, solid and proficient in your ability to use your tools.

### 5. JOURNALING (DIARY NOTES)

You are encouraged to keep a journal of your experiences. Journal writing has been scientifically shown (Pennebaker) to improve health (strengthens immune system), likely in part by fostering narrative integration. Keep daily diary notes on your observations and questions in regards to your daily practices, your reading and your experiences. Never take notes during your formal practice. Wait until after. Use these notes to refer to in the next session as we process our mindfulness practice of the week. These notes are private and yours – your teachers will never look at them.

### 6. HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND WHAT TO BRING TO THE SESSIONS

#### 6.1. What to Prepare and Buy in Advance

1. Reorganized schedule of your life, which allows for about 1 hour of meditation practice 6 days a week, plus a few hours per week for additional home practice. Do you brush your teeth everyday? Why? Now develop the habit of brushing your brain everyday – your life depends on it!





(Image from Daniel Siegel)

2. Have access to a timer that allows for at least 60 minutes timing.
3. Although not necessary, the book by Jon Kabat-Zinn, 'Full Catastrophe Living' is recommended.

## 6.2. What to Bring and Wear

For every session:

1. A skeptical but open mind.
2. Wear comfortable clothing that fits snug but not tight (not too loosely) on the body, allowing a clear view of the body and free body movement. Yoga clothes are ideal, but not too loose sweat top and pants are also OK
3. Mindfulness Centre MBSR manual (provided in session 1)
4. Blanket if you feel you might get cold lying still on the floor.

Yoga Mats and meditation cushions are available at The Mindfulness Centre.

## 6.3. Group Room Guidelines

1. Refrain from wearing any scented products, as some people are allergic to them.
2. Remove your shoes before entering the group room. Indoor footwear at your discretion.
3. To avoid spillage and carpet cleanings, no cups and no other fluids than water are allowed into the group room. Please bring bottle containers.

## 7. COURSE CONTENT

	Theory (IPNB)	Practice	
		Technique	Formal/Informal ( <i>New practices</i> )
<b>Session 1</b>	People introducing themselves. Administrative issues 1. What is mindfulness? 2. 9 attitudinal foundations of mindfulness ----- 3. Energy and information flow (EIF) 4. Handmodel of the brain, incl. 6 levels of processing, processing hierarchy and bottom-up and top-down. 5. The 9 MPC functions	1. Who meditates? 2. STOP 3. Tool: Attention + exogenous/endogenous 4. Attitude (COAL) 5. Ending practice 6. Practice preamble + Formal/informal practice 7. Physical vs somatic body	1. <i>Bodyscan short</i> 2. <i>Casual sitting with attention and COAL</i> 3. <i>Slowing down 30'</i> ----- 1. <i>STOP</i> 2. <i>Somatic attention</i> 3. <i>Slowing down</i>
<b>Session 2</b>	1. Energy flow, illusions and contexts 2. Wheel of awareness 3. Homeostasis – Brain's safety system	1. Details on attention (3-tiered, vocabulary, describe) introduced in both bodyscan and casual sitting → Core Dynamic mindfulness technique 2. Window of tolerance 3. Door of avoidance: Sloppiness 4. Starting situation of the meditator 5. Raisin eating exercise 6. Hierarchy of practice difficulties 7. Meditation pitfalls	1. <i>Bodyscan long</i> 2. <i>Casual sitting with <b>details</b> on attention and COAL</i> 3. <i>Window of tolerance</i> 4. <i>One mindful meal</i> ----- 5. <i>Routine activity</i> 6. <i>Mindful eating</i>

	Theory (IPNB)	Practice	
		Technique	Formal/Informal ( <i>New practices</i> )
<b>Session 3</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open complex systems</li> <li>2. 9 domains of integration, incl. FACES</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mindful movement practice</li> <li>2. The inevitability of obstacles</li> <li>3. Trouble shooting hindrances</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Mindful movement postures</i></li> <li>2. <i>Casual sitting with details on attention and COAL</i></li> </ol> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <i>New routine activity</i></li> <li>4. <i>Do not just do things, but feel them</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Triception, incl. neuroplasticity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sitting meditation with alignment</li> <li>2. Door of avoidance: movement and disembodiment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Mindful movement free</i></li> <li>2. <i>Sitting with alignment (15 min.)</i></li> </ol> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <i>New routine activity</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 5</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The present moment</li> <li>2. The doing and being modes</li> <li>3. YODA mention</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sitting with the breath</li> <li>2. Door of avoidance: interference</li> <li>3. 3-minute stopping and breathing space meditation</li> <li>4. Pleasant events calendar</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Sitting with alignment and breath (30 min.)</i></li> <li>2. <i>3-minute stopping and breathing space 4x/day</i></li> <li>3. <i>Pleasant events calendar</i></li> </ol> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <i>New routine activity</i></li> </ol>

	Theory (IPNB)	Practice	
		Technique	Formal/Informal ( <i>New practices</i> )
<b>Session 6</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotions and feelings (Valence, action tendency, equation, gradient evoke motion,</li> <li>Bare attention and YODA details</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allowing and letting be</li> <li>Door of avoidance: Acting out</li> <li>3-minute breathing space with allowing and letting be</li> <li>Unpleasant events calendar</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sitting with alignment, breath <i>and allowing and letting be</i> (50min.)</li> <li>3-minute breathing space – <i>extended</i> 3x/day</li> <li><i>Unpleasant events calendar</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 7</b>	<p>Conceptual and embodied self-awareness:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How energy becomes information</li> <li>Nature of thoughts</li> <li>Story of self</li> <li>Why thoughts are not facts</li> <li>The body's language</li> <li>Bottom-up/top-down</li> <li>Left/right brain</li> <li>Relating to thoughts</li> </ol>	<p>Sitting meditation with awareness of thoughts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On and off the train</li> <li>Train or stream of thoughts</li> <li>Door of avoidance: Fantasizing, problem-solving</li> <li>Unpleasant events calendar</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sitting with <i>thoughts are not facts</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 8</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The probability of energy flow</li> <li>The 4 major categories of attachment (Self is most intractable)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mindful walking meditation</li> <li>Exteroception</li> <li>Choiceless awareness (hub, knowing)</li> <li>Door of avoidance: Fantasizing, problem-solving</li> <li>3-minute breathing space – <i>extended</i></li> <li>The action step</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Mindful walking</i></li> <li><i>Action step</i></li> <li><i>Exteroception and choiceless awareness</i></li> </ol>

	Theory (IPNB)	Practice	
		Technique	Formal/Informal ( <i>New practices</i> )
<b>Session 9</b>	Participatory medicine, placebo effect, healthy mind platter Review (attention incl. details, COAL, alignment, breath)	Healthy mind platter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Communication calendar</i></li> <li>2. <i>YODA week</i></li> <li>3. <i>Own practice, no recordings</i></li> <li>4. <i>Healthy mind platter</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 10</b>	Attunement, contingent communication and attachment patterns Memory, narrative, interpersonal integration Psychotherapy and the unconscious	Mindful listening exercises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Mindful listening</i></li> <li>2. <i>Vacuuming</i></li> <li>3. <i>Structured mindful dialogue</i></li> <li>4. <i>Journaling/ automatic writing</i></li> <li>5. <i>Continue YODA way of life</i></li> <li>6. <i>Own practice, recordings again</i></li> </ol>
<b>Session 11</b>	Spirituality		<i>Review Attention to emptiness</i>
<b>Session 12</b>	Practice for life	Importance of further training Resources after the program	