

HANDOUT 5-F

SIMPLE MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS

The key element in mindfulness is the willingness to be an observer of our inner thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations without taking any of them too seriously. Our minds are continuously presenting us with thoughts and feelings, many of which are random and not of much use to us. We need to consider it data that we can use or discard as it suits us. Another way to see it is to imagine that your thoughts and feelings are going past you like a train. You can observe the train but you don't have to jump on board.

Here are a few simple mindfulness exercises that were adapted from a number of sources. As you did with the relaxation techniques, you might want to record these meditations and listen to one or two of them on a daily basis.

Mindful Breathing: "Start by getting into a comfortable position and allow your eyes to close. For the next few moments, focus your attention on your breathing. Notice how it feels as you breathe in and breathe out. Notice how your chest and stomach rise and fall as you breathe. There is no need to change your breathing in any way. Just notice it. The goal is to just be aware. At some point you may notice that your mind has drifted away from your breathing to other thoughts and feelings. This is not a mistake; this is just what minds do. When you become aware that your mind has drifted to something else, just take note of it, and gently guide your awareness back to your breathing. Try to adopt an attitude of kindness and acceptance toward your experience. If you notice critical or judgmental thoughts, take note of them as well, and then gently escort your awareness back to your breathing. Try to gently accept whatever thoughts and feelings arise. There is no goal, no right or wrong way to do this. The goal is to just be aware. When you are ready, open your eyes. Make a decision to bring this same attitude of kind acceptance to the rest of your day."

Mindfulness of Sounds: "Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. For the next few moments, allow your awareness to focus on any sounds around you. Do not try to make yourself hear anything; just take note of any sounds that you experience. You may notice sounds that you hadn't noticed before. Take note of the different kinds of sounds. Some may be close; some may be far away. From time to time, you may notice that your awareness has shifted to other thoughts and feelings. If you notice this, congratulate yourself for being mindful and gently escort your mind back to the sounds around you. As best you can, accept your thoughts and feelings without judgment. But if you find yourself being judgmental, congratulate yourself for being mindful and gently guide your awareness back to the sounds around you. Do this for as long as you feel comfortable, and when you are ready, open your eyes and make a decision to bring kindness and compassion to whatever you experience for the rest of your day."

Mindful Walking: "Take a few moments to go for a walk. As you do, allow yourself to take note of anything you experience. Notice how your body feels as you walk. Notice the rhythm of your walking. Take note of what you see as you walk. Take it all in as if you have never seen these things before. Take note of what you hear. Take these sounds in as if you have never heard them before. Also be aware of any thoughts and feelings that arise as you walk. Accept whatever comes to your mind. As best you can, just notice these thoughts and feelings without judgment. But if you notice judgmental thoughts, just take note of them and gently guide your awareness back to your walking. There is no goal; no right or wrong way to do this. Be kind to yourself and accept whatever you experience. Continue walking for as long as you wish. As you finish your walk, encourage yourself to maintain this attitude of kindness and self-acceptance for the rest of your day."

Clouds: "Imagine that you are outside on a lovely day. The sky is mostly clear but there are a number of clouds that are gently and slowly passing overhead. As best you can, focus your attention on the clouds as they pass by. Do not

try to make the clouds move slower or faster, just let them pass over as they may. As you observe the clouds, take note of any thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations that you experience. As best you can, avoid judging yourself for whatever you experience. Instead, imagine these thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations are in the clouds that are slowly passing overhead. Observe each thought, feeling, and physical sensation as it slowly drifts out of sight. When new thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations arise, place each of them on a cloud and watch as they drift away as well. As you finish this exercise, make a decision to adopt an attitude of kind acceptance to whatever you experience during the rest of your day.”