

Mindfulness in Daily Life



¹ achtsames spüren

² mind wandern

³ glückliches

Mindfully wash the dishes.

- ¹ mindful dishwashing
- ² mind-wandering
- ³ happy

The main purpose of mindfulness is the conscious experience of the present moment from an authentic inner attitude, observing it with detachment rather than cognitively evaluating what is happening.

In order to clarify the meaning of mindfulness, I begin the lesson with a practical exercise – introduced to me by my colleague Niko Kohls during a guest lecture – and I have incorporated it into my teaching ever since. The exercise is called: “Drawing/painting your own face with the opposite hand” and is performed as follows:

Moderator: “Take out a piece of paper and a pencil to write.”
 Moderator: “Who is right-handed? Who is left-handed? Those who are right-handed draw with their left hand and those who are left-handed draw with their right hand.
 What you are going to draw is your own face.”

*In order to really be in contact with our here and now –
wherever it may be – we have to pause in our perception
until the present moment can sink into us –
until we really feel the present moment,
until we see it in its full extent until we become aware of it
and thereby get to know and understand it better.*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

There's usually a little laughter and giggling at first, but this is followed by a deep concentration among the participants and it becomes very quiet in the room.

At some point the first students finish, and it gets louder again.

After a while the exercise ends.

Moderator: "Are you satisfied with your work of art? If you wish, you can show it to your neighbor."

[Students laugh]

Moderator: "What have we actually been doing just now? Did you notice how quiet it suddenly was in the room? Why was that?"

Respondent 1: "One really had to concentrate."

Respondent 2: "It was something new."

Moderator: "Did you think about anything else during the exercise? How concentrated were you?"

This is followed by a transition to a description of mindfulness. I present, among others, a definition by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of the mindfulness movement. At this point, I also touch upon the subject of the wandering mind (see KNA interview, p. 123, and section "Research", p. 46 f.).

Mindfulness in everyday life can be practiced, for example, by reminding or asking yourself from time to time whether you *are present in this moment*. In class, I sometimes brought in this aspect of being present in everyday life at the beginning: "What did you see or perceive today that you otherwise would not have paid attention to?"

There are so many activities that we can do more consciously, such as eating, cooking, washing dishes, tidying up, cleaning, walking, brushing teeth, ironing and much more. If we reduce mind-wandering, we are more present in the moment and the quality of the experience becomes more intense. At this point I often refer to Bronnie Ware's book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying* and why it is so important, here and now, to maintain this alert presence.

In the following, further mindfulness exercises are presented in separate text modules:

Primary literature used for the lessons

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam Books.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are. Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life*. London: Piatkus.

Marti, Lorenz ((2016). *Mystik an der Leine des Alltäglichen*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder GmbH.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2014). *The Mindfulness Survival Kit. Five Essential Practices*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.



To be
in the moment
means
to create space.

¹ space

Punkt zwischen meinen Augenbrauen zu konzentrieren. Hier merke ich allerdings, dass der Druck nach einer Weile immer stärker wird. Den Rest der Zeit sitze ich nur da und lasse die Gedanken schweifen. Danach fühle ich mich trotzdem entspannter und beruhigter. Ich merke jedoch, dass es wichtig für mich ist einen Wecker zu haben, da nur die Zeit vorgibt

Ich meditiere in der S-Bahn auf der Strecke von Pasing an den Hauptbahnhof. Dabei meditiere ich mit der Atemmeditation. Ich merke, dass mir die Meditation zu Beginn gut gelingt. Ich kann mich auf meine Nasenflügel konzentrieren und meine Gedanken bewirke schießen. Dann beginne ich mich aber auf die Ansagen in der S-Bahn zu

Übungen beschrieben habe. Ich fühle mich jedes Mal nach Durchführung dieser Meditationsform ruhiger und gelassener, deshalb versuche ich die Übung immer abends durchzuführen, damit mich die Ereignisse des Tages nicht mehr beschäftigen.

15. Meditation

23.11.2014, 19.05Uhr

Diesmal rezitierte ich das Maranatha Mantra, als ich im Zug auf dem Weg zu meiner Freundin saß.

Ich habe den ganzen Tag mein Mathematik Übungsblatt bearbeitet und war deshalb noch sehr in Gedanken an Mathe versunken. Durch die Meditation wollte ich aus diesen Gedanken "herauskommen".

Im Zug zu meditieren fiel mir relativ schwer. Es war sehr laut durch die Gespräche der Mitreisenden und durch das Poltern des Zuges auf den Schienen, aber diese Geräuschkulisse hat mich wider Erwarten nicht besonders gestört. Mein größtes Problem, um mich in die Meditation zu versenken war, dass ich mich von den Mitreisenden beobachtet gefühlt habe und dadurch konnte ich nicht vollkommen von meinen Gedanken loslassen.

Nach der etwa 12-minütigen Übung fühle ich mich dennoch besser und befreiter, jedoch bei weitem nicht so gut wie nach den anderen Übungen in meinem Zimmer. Allerdings denke ich, dass man es trainieren kann, im Zug zu meditieren und es dann immer besser funktioniert.

16. Meditation

24.11.2014, im Seminar

In dieser Sitzung vom Seminar haben wir die Übung Bodyscan durchgeführt. Dabei lagen wir auf Matten auf dem Boden und Herr de Bruin hat uns durch die Übung geführt, indem er vorgegeben hat, auf welchen Körperteil wir uns fokussieren sollen. Mir fällt es wesentlich leichter mich auf die einzelnen Stationen beim Bodyscan zu konzentrieren, wenn eine Person dies vorgibt. Ich kann die Übung dann sehr konzentriert durchführen und werde dadurch sehr gelassen, auch dieses Mal bin ich nach der Übung sehr entspannt und müde gewesen. Was noch auffällig

18.05.2019 → Dusche

- schon den ganzen Tag Kopfschmerzen...
- beim Duschen fällt mir ein, ACHTSAM zu sein
- Bewusstes Ausdrücken der Shampoo-Flasche
- Shampoo in der Hand spüren
- riechen, auf dem Kopf fühlen
- Bewusstes Einmassieren in die Haare
- kreisende Bewegungen in verschiedenen Richtungen mit unterschiedlichem Druck
- ↳ Massage & Achtsamkeitsübung entspannen mich total

Journal Notes

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H. V.

Meditating in the church

It is Easter. I was in church, but there was no service. I was alone there. It was beautiful. As I sat down on the bench, I felt very comfortable.

I closed my eyes and meditated for a few minutes with Maranatha. It was one of my most successful attempts to meditate. I was totally with myself, not distracted, and I had the feeling that I was additionally supported by the environment.

When I came out of the church, I felt so fulfilled and it was coming from within myself! I don't often feel this way.

J. H.

When: 5/15/17

Where: a friend's apartment

What: washing the dishes

How long: 15-20 min

Today was my chance! I was invited to a friend's house and we actually wanted to cook. But his kitchen [sink] was still full of unwashed dishes. At first, for a short time, everyone complained – but then I said that I would take care of it and that I would wash them mindfully. They looked at me as though very surprised, but of course they didn't mind, because they then didn't have to do it. Of the mindfulness exercises in the household, I have to say that I like the washing up best. At some point, one of them asked me if I was seriously still engaged with it. But one gets totally lost in it! And what I like best is that it's possible to observe a "direct" effect. At the end you see what you've "done" when the dishes are clean.

Everybody was satisfied, and then we started cooking and made the dishes dirty again ;-)

L. J.

5/18/19, shower

- Headaches all day long.
- While showering I remember to be mindful.
- Consciously squeezing the shampoo bottle.
- Feeling the shampoo in [my] hand, smelling it, feeling it on [my] head.

- Consciously massaging into the hair.
- Circling movements in different directions with different pressure.
- Massage and mindfulness exercises relax me completely.

L. K. M.

I meditate on the S-Bahn [commuter train], on the route from Pasing to the main station. I meditate using the breath meditation. I notice that the meditation works well in the beginning. I can concentrate on my nostrils and push my thoughts aside.

But then I start to concentrate on the announcements on the S-Bahn [train] so that I don't miss my exit. From then on my concentration is gone. Here I again realize that I need to consciously set a specific time for meditation. Nevertheless the short focus on myself already calms me down.

M. H.

11/23/14, 7:05 p.m.

This time I recited the Maranatha mantra while I was on the train on my way to [see] my girlfriend.

I worked on my math exercise sheet all day long and was therefore still very much absorbed in math thoughts. Through meditation I intended to "get out of" these thoughts.

It was relatively difficult for me to meditate on the train. Due to the conversations of fellow passengers and the rumbling of the train on the rails, it was very loud, but contrary to my expectations this background noise didn't bother me very much. My biggest problem in immersing myself in meditation was that I felt observed by my fellow passengers and therefore I couldn't completely let go of my thoughts.

After the 12-minute exercise I still felt better and more liberated, but not nearly as good as after the other exercises in my room. However, I think that you can train yourself to meditate on the train and it then works better and better.