MBSP Handout 2.4

Session 2:

Character Strengths Breathing Space

While this exercise can be expanded to much longer time frames or contracted to briefer periods, the intention is that it provides a meaningful brief "space" to generate an awareness of the present moment and a connection with the breath while using character strengths. This brief mindfulness meditation builds directly from the 3-minute breathing space exercise used in MBCT (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002).

Participants may view the following three categories as three steps that flow together. Take about one minute for each step.

Awareness [Curiosity]

Take notice of your present moment. Open yourself to it. Observe the details. Take an interest in this moment. Notice what you can sense right now – aware of sounds rising and falling, the contact your body makes with your seat. Allow your curiosity to explore the moment fully. Practice being curious about your thoughts and feelings, interested in whatever is in your presence right now. Simply notice these happenings in your present moment and let each one go. If you find yourself getting caught up in one sensation or feeling, simply say, "What else? What else is happening in my present moment? What else is there to be curious about and take an interest in?"

Concentration [Self-Regulation]

Allow your attention to narrow to just one thing – your breath. This is the concentration phase of the breathing space, where the idea is to let go of all the happenings in your present moment with the exception of your breathing. Allow yourself to feel the fullness of your in-breath and the fullness of your out-breath. Feel the sensation of your breathing in your body. Concentrate just on the breath. When your mind wanders away from your breath, simply bring it back to the breath. Over and over – bring your focus back to your breath. Each time you bring your attention back to your breath, you are practicing self-regulation. This means you are "taking control" of your attention. Always back to your breath.

Expanded Awareness [Perspective]

While you continue to focus on your in-breath and out-breath, you can also allow your attention to expand to your body-as-a-whole. As you breathe, notice your wholeness, the oneness of your body and mind. Allow yourself to feel a sense of completeness or oneness. This can be viewed as using your strength of perspective – stepping back to see the wider view of your body/mind and your place in this present moment. This allows you to see and breathe with the bigger picture.

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