MBSP Handout 3.2

Session 3:

Growing from Obstacles

There are a multitude of barriers that can block the path of mindfulness practice and mindful living. The first step is to "catch" the obstacle as soon as possible, whether the obstacle appears to be internal (body sensations, thoughts, emotions) or external (environment, current situation). To "catch" the obstacle means to notice it and face it directly. Rather than avoiding it or directly trying to change it, consider the following two general approaches:

1.) *Take a "growth mindset" approach:* How might you view the obstacle, stressor, difficulty, or challenge as an opportunity for growth and learning? This approach involves viewing yourself as a person who is growing and improving and as someone who welcomes obstacles because they are "learning opportunities" for growth.

2.) *Use your signature strengths:* How you might use your best qualities – your signature strengths – to help you address the obstacle? A person high in curiosity might take an interest in the wandering mind while a person high in forgiveness might remind themselves that they are adept at "letting go" and can use this to manage thoughts.

Common Mindfulness Obstacles

Wandering mind: My mind didn't sit still:
- Judging mind
- Planning mind
- Wanting/craving mind
- Storytelling mind

Tiredness: I fell asleep. I'm too fatigued.

Pain or discomfort: My body tension and discomfort increased when I slowed down.

Excessive self-talk: My mind is negative. I have bad memories. I cannot stop worrying.

Irritation: I'm frustrated. I'm too upset.

Perfectionism: Am I doing it right? Am I good enough? Am I enlightened yet?

Expectations: Nothing is happening. I'm not making any progress. My mind keeps wandering so what's the point?

Schedule challenges: I don't have time to practice meditation. I've got too many things to do. Now is not the best time. I forgot to practice.

The conditions aren't right: It is too hot/cold here. There is too much noise here. I'm too hungry or full.

Feeling obligated: I have to meditate. I have no choice in the matter. I'm doing this to please someone else.

Boredom or lack of pleasure: I don't like this. What's the point? Is it almost over?

Strengths as obstacles: My curiosity is making my mind wander. My kindness (or humility) is driving me to focus only on others. My self-regulation is driving me to control everything. My prudence is holding me back. My creativity won't keep still.