

Decentralizing Pain

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



As we move through life, we consider everything that happens to be occurring around the 'I' or the 'me' that we have become identified with.

Statements such as, "I got caught in the rain!" or "By the time that I got to my food, the food was cold," reflect this tendency.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this way of relating to the world; it is entirely natural and not something we need to (or should) rid ourselves of completely.

Embodying and understanding our personal, physical self is a part of our wellbeing. However, if we are open to exploring how we might temporarily decentralize ourselves from stories, we might find greater peace within certain circumstances.

The experience of pain, for instance, is one area where we might explore this. The following exercise guides us into this, beginning with a softer practice of decentralization. Remain curious and open-hearted as you explore this.

1. Consider the last time you had a chore to do. It might be the laundry, cleaning the house, or picking up groceries. Tell the story from your point of view, including what you did, how you felt doing it, and any other personal perceptions you experienced. Be free in your use of the words: I, my, me, mine.

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Sentences could include statements like: *I had to go back to the laundromat four times... I was tired and didn't feel like leaving the house... I was distracted and so I felt that the time went quickly.*

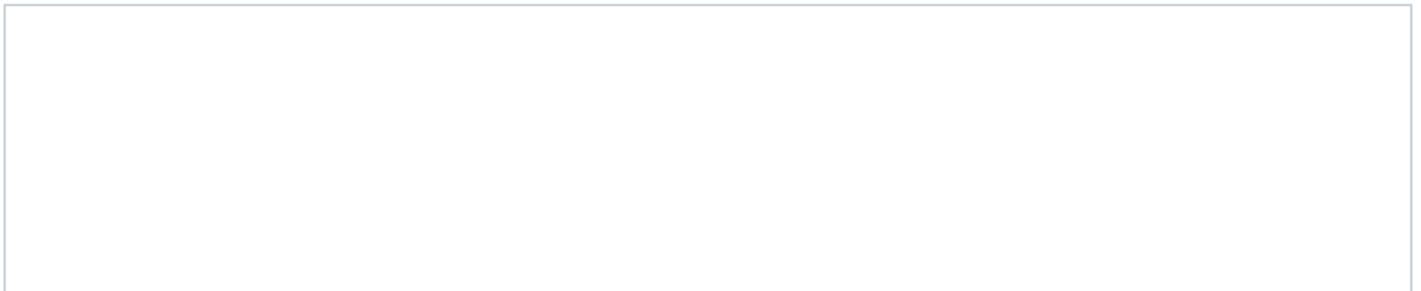


2. Now, try telling this story again without using the words: I, my, me, mine. This will be the decentralized viewpoint. It will undoubtedly be more challenging so take your time with it.

Sentences could include statements like: *Two feet took the road to the laundromat... The scent of lavender arose from the soap... Hands picked up four things that were empty in the kitchen.*



3. When you are finished writing the decentralized version of your story consider: How difficult was it to write that story without placing yourself within it? How did it feel to consider your experience in this way? Other than the obvious, do you notice any major differences between the two stories?



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4. Repeat the same practice but with a painful experience. On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being low intensity pain, 10 being immense pain), choose something that you might rank to be a 3 or 4. Examples could include the pain you felt when a friend forgot to call you back or the sensation of biting into a slice of pizza that hasn't yet cooled down enough.

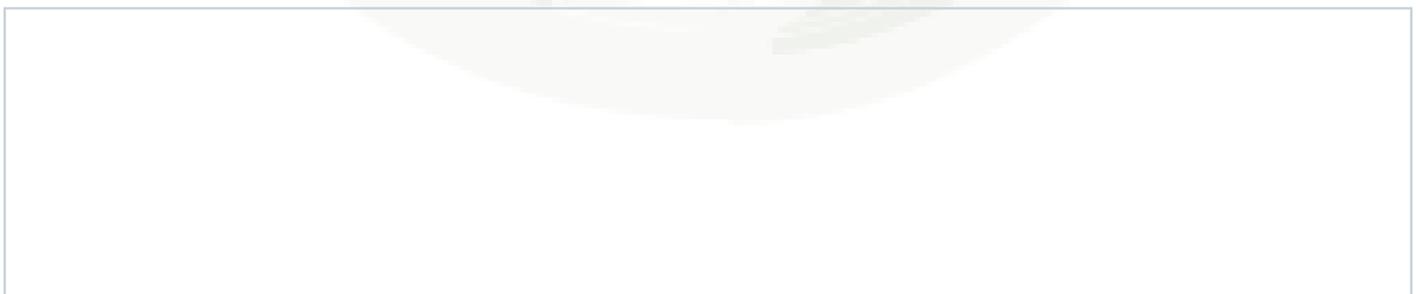
In the space below, write the story from a centralized viewpoint (using I, my, me, and mine freely).



5. Now, tell the same story from a decentralized view point. Without using the words *I*, *my*, *me*, or *mine*, consider how you would tell this story. Avoid using the word 'pain' as well, opting for more descriptive words or phrases like: contraction, tightness, 'the shoulders dropped'.

Sentences could sound something like: *The roof of the mouth was raw... The body wanted to turn in on itself... Tears came to the eyes.*

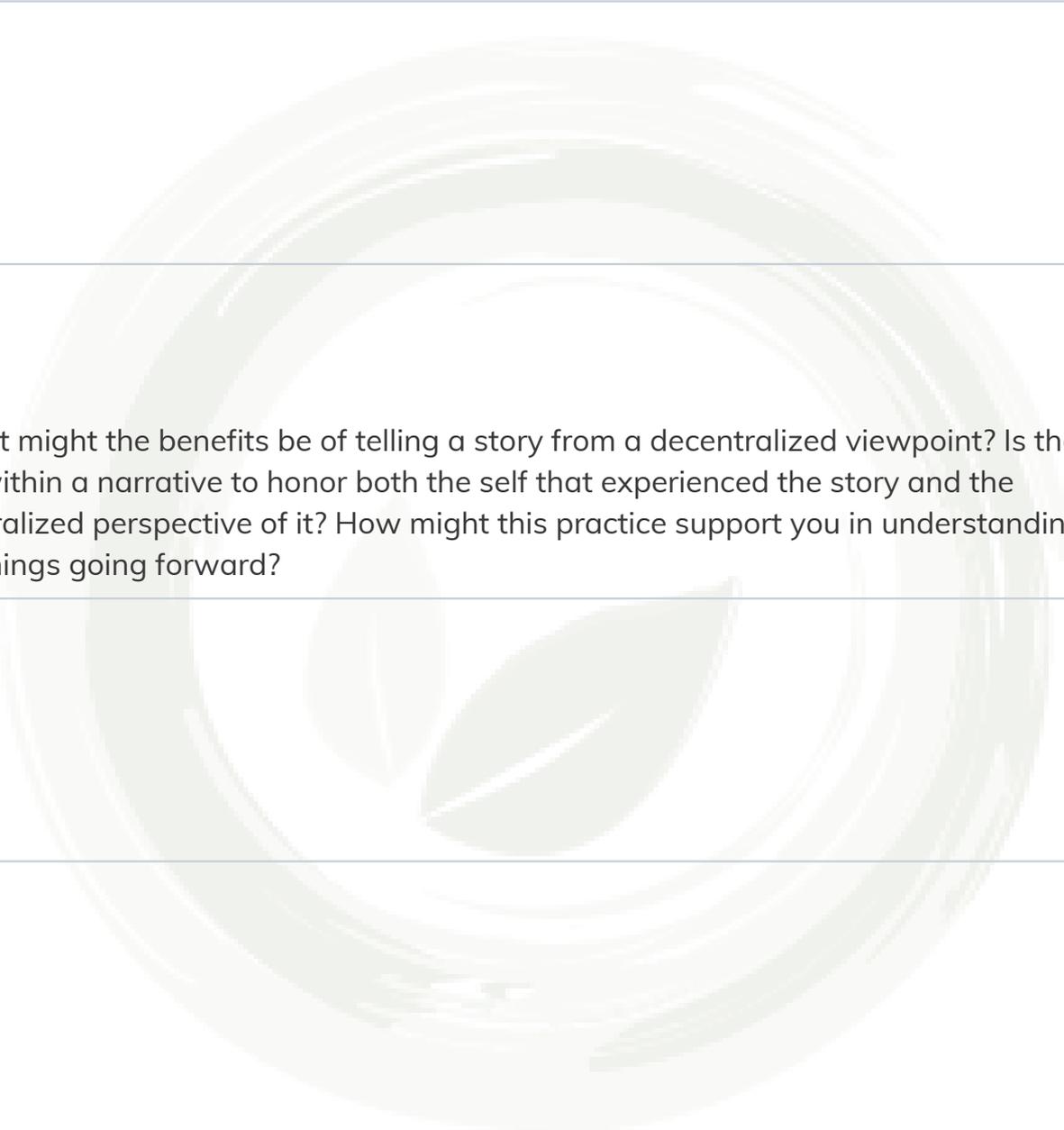
You can also refer to more complex inner emotions and narratives that did not yield a clear physical sensation with sentences such as, "The mind felt confused and frustrated," or "The inner dialogue said that this wasn't fair."



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6. Once you have finished writing this pain story from a decentralized viewpoint, consider: How difficult was it to write the story this way? What was it like to tell the story from this perspective? How does this shift your sense of what happened?



7. What might the benefits be of telling a story from a decentralized viewpoint? Is there room within a narrative to honor both the self that experienced the story and the decentralized perspective of it? How might this practice support you in understanding life happenings going forward?