

A New Perspective on Emotions

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

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



We've all heard the saying, "I got caught up in my emotions," or "my emotions swept me away."

When we're in the throws of emotion we become reactive, everything seems urgent. There's no space in which to take a breath, wait, or stand back. Frequently, this is when we do things we later regret. We hurt people, and we make mistakes.

We've also experienced moments when we're so deep in emotion, we feel as though we "are" the emotion - as if the emotion has become a permanent state.

Fixed to our identity. Even in smaller ways, each time we say "I am angry," for example, we speak in a way that says "I identify with this emotion, I AM this emotion."

But you are not your emotions. Your emotions are simply energy. And like all things made of energy, they have a life cycle in which they arise, last for a little while, then dissipate. All our suffering comes from trying to stop this energy.

We trap the energy of emotion when we attempt to grasp on to positive emotions, push away negative emotions, or when we try to solidify the emotion by attaching our identity to it.

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Mindfulness Worksheet

Meditation can help us put emotions in perspective. Through meditation, we learn that there's space between our emotions, and our awareness of them. When given that space, our emotions are able to do their thing and then move on.

When we are experiencing an emotion that's particularly strong or frustrating, it's the perfect time to stop and explore. Let's try it with the following exercise:

MEDITATING ON EMOTIONS

- Take a comfortable seat in a quiet and safe place
- Set a timer for 3, 5, or 7 minutes (or more!)
- Close your eyes
- Choose an emotion to work with as the object of your meditation
- If working with anger, for example, your intention is to listen, watch and get curious about anger
- Notice anger in your body, and move towards it
- Explore all the qualities and details you're able to notice about anger
- Anytime you notice you're telling a story about anger, return to the physical sensation of anger
- The goal is to feel the emotion, rather than ruminate about its object, history, or source
- Notice how the emotion physically moves and changes
- It is energy, and all energy arises, lasts for a while, and then dissipates
- Stay with the emotion as your object of meditation until the time is up

WHAT DID YOU EXPERIENCE?

Describe your experience with the meditation in general

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Mindfulness Worksheet

Which emotion did you choose, and why?



While observing the emotion, was it easy to pin down, or hard to find?

Describe in your words, the emotion. You can use sensations, color, shapes, energy, movement, size, temperature, whatever comes to mind.

Was it challenging to be present with the emotion, versus the story behind it?

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Mindfulness Worksheet

Could you separate the emotion from its object, or from its story?



Have you ever felt one way about a situation, and then later, felt differently?

As you watched the emotion, how did it change?

Did the emotion eventually go away, or become impossible to find?

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Mindfulness Worksheet

How do you think this awareness of emotions could benefit you outside of this meditation?



What do you think the difference is between saying “I am sad” and “I am feeling sadness?”

If you could remember this difference all the time, how would your life change?

Positive & Negative Emotions

We often choose to work with negative emotions, because they are the ones we want to change! Try the meditation on another day, and this time, use a positive emotion. Love, kindness, compassion, gratitude, or joy. Watch and witness the emotion with the same intensity and curiosity you did the first time around. Review the questions again. Is anything different? There’s no right or wrong answer.

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Take it Off the Cushion

Throughout your day, each time you realize you're experiencing a strong emotion (or any emotion) take a pause for 5-10 breaths to explore where the emotion is in your body. Move towards it with your awareness and see if you can describe its color, form, temperature or shape. After 5-10 breaths, ask yourself what changed.

REVIEW

When asking "who am I?" we tend to think that we are the accumulation of all our thoughts and emotions. But this is not the case.

Our thoughts and emotions are fleeting and always changing. They are just energy flowing through the body.

Who and what we really are is the awareness that's witness to those thoughts and emotions.

If your thoughts and emotions are like weather in the sky, you are the sky itself. By identifying more with the self as the witness, and less with emotions themselves, we are able to realize greater clarity, peace and ease.