

A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook



Includes
MP3 CD

with **21** guided
meditations

mindful breathing ♦ mindful eating ♦ mindfulness in everyday life
body-scan meditation ♦ mindfulness meditation ♦ mindful yoga
mindful self-inquiry ♦ mindful walking ♦ mindfulness of emotions
loving-kindness meditation ♦ mindful interpersonal communication
the gift of rest ♦ the gift of connection

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Foreword by JON KABAT-ZINN, PH.D. | Afterword by SAKI SANTORELLI, ED.D.

foreword

Dear Reader:

There are many different and complementary descriptors that might be used to characterize this precious and exceedingly useful offering you have in your hands. Its title suggests that it is a workbook, and it is certainly that. It invites us into and guides us through a potentially profound and healing undertaking, one that involves, even requires, significant personal commitment and an ongoing fidelity of engagement. This is precisely what mindfulness teachers mean when speaking of interior discipline. The ultimate fidelity, of course, is to yourself—to your very life, your moments, and the beauty of your being, even if you don't always see it or even know it is here. It is humbling to think that being present and nonjudgmental is perhaps the hardest work in the world, and the most necessary. All the more reason for us to undertake it wholeheartedly. Our very lives and even the well-being of the world, in ways both small and large, may hang in the balance.

But it would be good if you could also think of this book as a *playbook*, because mindfulness is really a playful adventuring within life itself. The discipline required needs to be taken on as much in the spirit of play as in the spirit of hard work, for it is both. Mindfulness and the curriculum and challenges of MBSR and of life itself, and perhaps your reasons for picking up this book in the first place, are far too serious to take too seriously. The play element invites us to approach everything, especially when being guided by the formal meditation instructions, with the lightest of touches, and to not take ourselves too seriously, or fall into idealizing either the process itself or the imagined and hoped-for outcomes of MBSR training, even though your motivation for coming to this engagement, and the personal stakes in terms of its potential benefits for you, are serious indeed.

You are certainly in very good hands in this undertaking. Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein sound just the right notes here, cognitively, emotionally, relationally, somatically. Even though we are not in the classroom together with them week by week in a literal sense, in a larger way, we definitely are, or can be if we throw ourselves into the work and

the play of the text and its reflections, suggestions, and written exercises, and make regular and good use of the guided mindfulness practices on the accompanying a mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook CD, whether or not we feel like it on any given day. We can benefit enormously from their welcoming hospitality, their invitation to participate fully to whatever degree we can manage, and their warmth as teachers and as people. Their warmth emanates off each page and from every practice track on the CD, reminding us in the very feeling of it of the overriding need for us to honor ourselves and embrace our experience with kindness and compassion, not in an inflated or ego-enhancing sense, but rather in the true and matter-of-fact sense of seeing and acknowledging ourselves as worthy and whole, just by virtue of being human, no matter how convinced we may be of our shortcomings and inadequacies. The authors know, and you can feel it in these pages, that all of us are, when it comes right down to it, miraculous beings, with unimaginable potential for learning, growing, healing, and transformation across the life span; that we are much larger than who we think we are; and that we are perfect as we are, including all the ways in which we know that we are imperfect.

Have you ever wondered whether that aspect of your being that is aware of your shortcomings itself suffers from those or even any shortcomings? Or whether your awareness of pain when you feel pain is actually in pain? Or if your awareness of your fear, at times when it might arise, is afraid? This is something you can actually investigate, and see for yourself, especially at key moments when you *do* feel overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy, or by pain or fear, or by any other experience. There are whole new hidden dimensions of being and of experience to dis-cover and inhabit here in this laboratory of our lives unfolding moment by moment, in this adventure in embodying that which is deepest and best in ourselves, which is already here and so does not need to be “gotten,” and which we have perhaps ignored for most of our lives—the faculty we call awareness, which is mysteriously and seamlessly both mind and heart.

Mindfulness involves an elemental and spontaneous openness to experience, grounded in the body, in the timeless, in not expecting anything to happen, a befriending and inhabiting of this present moment for its own sake. When you rest in mindful awareness, you are

participating intimately in life as it is unfolding, seeing what happens, experimenting, allowing the original beauty and mystery of the world and of yourself to speak to you, without shying away from wonder, and awe, and joy—and the miracle of being alive in these precious present moments that are available to all of us but that we so often ignore in the hope of some “better” ones at some future time.

This volume is a playbook in another sense as well: it is a collection of well-thought-out strategies and exercises for navigating your relationship to the twists and turns and ups and downs of life, and the various challenges and obstacles that inevitably arise over the course of a day, or a lifetime, in this increasingly unpredictable and stressful world. These are practices that have been utilized by human beings for millennia, and that have been demonstrated to be effective both in clinical environments and in the laboratory over the past thirty plus years, during which time mindfulness has become an intimate part of modern medicine and health care in many different and continually expanding ways (Krasner et al. 2009; Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn 2008; Didonna 2008).

You can also think of the text as a supreme cookbook—but not in the usual sense of a compilation of recipes that you can just follow and get a delicious result, because each page and each exercise is missing the most critical ingredient: you. The meals offered up in the form of mindfulness practices and the entire curriculum of mindfulness-based stress reduction are potentially lifesaving and life transforming. However, this book cannot perform its magic until you throw yourself into the pot of mindfulness and begin cooking yourself. You are at the same time the recipe and the meal and the cook; the authors your loyal and caring sous-chefs. You can regulate the heat according to your capacity at any given time, in order to modulate your engagement as appropriate. When you show up completely in any moment, the practices within these pages come alive. You may discover that they will stand you in good stead and wake you up in all your moments to the possibilities of healing, self-compassion, and compassion for others within even the darkest and most difficult of circumstances.

Speaking of mystery and miracles for a moment, recent research has shown that our human brain is an organ that is continually changing not

only its function but also its structure on the basis of experience, and in particular, repetitive experience over extended periods of time. This discovery of an inherent plasticity in brain architecture and function, known as *neuroplasticity*, implies that what we call the mind actually shapes the brain, and drives transformation of our intrinsic capacities, and it does so not just in childhood but across our entire life span.¹ If the repetitive experiences are traumatic in nature, it can lead to actual shrinking in parts of the brain, and diminished mental and social capacity. This can happen due to physical injury to the brain itself, or due to repeated emotional trauma in childhood or adulthood that can lead to depressive and dissociative syndromes and disordered social relations and behaviors. Happily, there is also compelling evidence that interventions based on repetitive positive experience may be restorative and therapeutic. Exercise itself, which tends to be highly repetitive when engaged in regularly, is a major driver of neuroplastic changes in the brain, which is why physical exercise is one of the most important factors in restoring and maintaining mental as well as physical health across the life span, starting from the moment one begins such a program. Increasing evidence from laboratory studies of meditators has shown that the repetitive practices at the heart of meditative disciplines can drive positive neuroplastic changes that also reflect mental and physical well-being, such as greater emotional balance, compassion, and genuine happiness, as well as a potential buffering of stressful and traumatic experience when it does occur (Lutz, Dunne, and Davidson 2007).

So the mind can change the brain (Siegel 2007; Begley 2008). This means that if we train our minds through meditative disciplines such as MBSR, we can grow into seeing more clearly and acting spontaneously with greater awareness, compassion, and wisdom. And since what we call mind is not separate from what we call heart, we can speak of mindfulness and heartfulness as complementary aspects of MBSR. What is more, since we cannot speak of mind or brain without a body, the core of this work, as you shall see, includes befriending your body with gentleness and acceptance, however it is in any moment. This in itself can be a major attitudinal challenge for anyone who might feel betrayed by his or her body and very much in need of befriending it or re-befriending it. Realizing that, as the authors emphasize, “as long as you are breathing, there is more right with you (and your body) than there is wrong with you” in any given moment makes for a very good place to

begin. We can trust in the process, we can trust the expertise of Bob and Elisha, and above all, we can place our trust in our own capacity to pay attention in new ways and learn and grow from this attending.

Mindfulness is the container that holds it all. Therefore, your commitment to practice is what is most important here—and, paradoxically, your willingness to engage in practice for its own sake, to be in touch with life unfolding, however it is in any given moment, yet without being too attached to attaining any outcome. This is at the core of the invitation to enter into this engagement with an open mind and an open heart, without necessarily thinking you know what you will get out of it, and committing yourself anyway—a gesture of faith in yourself and your truest possibilities, which are always unknown. Ultimately, as we shall come to see, life itself is the real teacher, and how we meet it moment by moment the real meditation practice.

So now, it is time to roll up our sleeves, and begin.
I wish you all the best in this adventure of a lifetime.

— Jon Kabat-Zinn October 1, 2009

Introduction

Welcome to *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*. We thank you for purchasing this workbook and want to fully affirm that in doing so you're taking an active role in your health and well-being. If you're feeling any signs or symptoms of stress, such as anxiety, irritability, muscle tension, burnout, apathy, restlessness, headaches, fatigue, stomach distress, difficulty in concentrating, worry, overwork, substance abuse, smoking, eating problems, sleep disturbances, or feeling overwhelmed, this workbook can help. It can also help with the stresses associated with living with illness, chronic pain, and conditions such as AIDS, arthritis, asthma, cancer, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, heart disease, high blood pressure, migraines, and many other medical conditions.

Simply put, mindfulness is the practice of cultivating nonjudgmental awareness in day-to-day life. This educational and experiential workbook will introduce you to mindfulness meditation and teach you simple, profound practices that can decrease suffering and bring you greater balance and peace. You'll find that these tools help you maximize your life and experience, even in the midst of stress, pain, and illness.

As an affirmation of the healing path you're embarking upon, we'd like to dedicate the following poem by Mary Oliver to you:

*One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice—
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers*

*at the very foundations—
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice,
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do—
determined to save
the only life you could save.
—Mary Oliver, “The Journey” (1992, 14)*

the human condition

Despite considerable research into stress and anxiety and seemingly innumerable approaches to stress management and reduction, stress is an unavoidable fact of life. It’s the human condition and always has been. We all live with and cannot escape from uncertainties, difficulties, illness, aging, death, and an inability to fully control life events.

Though it’s always been this way, our modern times are laden with new threats, such as nuclear warfare, terrorism, global warming, and other environmental catastrophes in the making, as well as a growing sense of alienation and disconnection. We often don’t feel comfortable within ourselves or don’t know how to connect with one another, and we often feel estranged or isolated from the natural world.

In recent years, technology and a tsunami of information have accelerated the pace of living, and the complexity of everyday life seems to be mounting. We now have the option of communicating with cell phones, email, instant messaging, text messaging, and social networking

sites, making us all available 24/7 to a mad rush of daily activities and demands. We also face an onslaught of news, often piped through these gadgets, with an imbalanced focus on trauma and gloom, overexposing us to worry about world events, health care costs, the obesity epidemic, sleep-deprivation, economic crises, environmental degradation, and so much more.

The fact is, our brains get overwhelmed by this pace of life and bombardment of information, leaving us susceptible to frustration, worry, panic, and even self-judgment and impatience. Given this context, it isn't surprising that many people become so worried or depressed that they demand or are given medications to help balance them out. While taking medications can sometimes be essential for health and well-being, it's also important to cultivate inner resources for dealing with stress, pain, and illness.

Our improvements in technology have brought advancements that border on the miraculous, and at the same time, many of us no longer even know our neighbors. We purchase more and more things yet often feel like we don't have enough. Our educational systems and society teach us facts and information but often don't teach us how to live, and value, a life of integrity. This has left many of us feeling separated, disconnected, and unsafe.

In fact, stress and anxiety have risen to a point where we're beginning to worry about our worrying! The National Institute of Mental Health reported that approximately forty million American adults suffer from anxiety disorders (National Institute of Mental Health 2008). Stress and anxiety affect physical health and have been associated with numerous medical conditions, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and reproductive disorders. On a societal level, the increasing need for treatment of stress-related problems has led to escalating medical costs, with the result that many people are unable to afford basic health care. And, of course, the various difficulties created by stress can have detrimental effects on quality of life and well-being.

Herbert Benson, MD, a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine, maintains that many people aren't adequately equipped with coping strategies for dealing with stress (Benson 1976). Approximately five billion doses of tranquilizers are prescribed every year (Powell and

Enright 1990), and experts at the American Institute of Stress estimate that the annual cost of stress in the United States—to industries alone—is a monumental figure of approximately \$300 billion (American Institute of Stress 2009). Clearly the costs would be much higher if we considered all impacts on individuals and society. This underscores why there’s such an urgent need to find alternative ways to cope with stress and anxiety.

In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., a molecular biologist with a long-term meditation practice, founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. His early research with patients suffering from anxiety and chronic pain showed significant reductions in symptoms (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992). Since then, an exponentially increasing amount of research has accumulated on the benefits of mindfulness in dealing with stress, depression, substance abuse, pain, and illness. Recently, this effective approach has finally made the leap into mainstream culture. The numbers speak for themselves: A Google search for “mindfulness” results in millions of hits, and mindfulness-based therapies are growing in popularity, with programs in over 250 hospitals around the country and many more around the globe.

who we are

We want to take a few moments to introduce ourselves. We feel it’s important for you to know a bit of our story and how we came to write this book. As you’ll discover, both of us came to mindfulness practice out of our own stress and pain, and in search of greater understanding about this wonderful mystery called life. We hope that sharing these stories helps you feel a deeper and more personal connection to us.

Bob Stahl

My spiritual journey began at the age of four, when I had my first realization of death. Over the next few years, I had other powerful experiences that emphasized that death can happen to anyone at any time. By the time I was ten, I had experienced the deaths of three people who were very close to me: my younger brother, Buddy, my best friend, Ellen, and my grandfather, Ben. Impermanence and the fleetingness of life are key concepts in the Buddhist worldview. Most people don’t

understand these truths deeply until they're adults, perhaps when they or someone they love has a serious illness. It's difficult to learn these frightening truths about the world as a child, when you don't yet have the tools, such as mindfulness, to work with them. Consequently, I grew up pretty confused, filled with grief and fear, and wanting to understand the meaning of life.

In high school I had an important learning experience that pointed me in the right direction to working with fear and mystery. When I was sixteen years old, I drove my parents' 1964 Ford Galaxy around the Boston area in the winter. A few times the car skidded out of control on the snowy roads, and each time I tried desperately to straighten out—but without much success, since I was turning away from the skid. One day I was telling my dad about this, and he said, "Bob, if you really want to get out of a skid, you need to turn *into* it." I thought this was a crazy idea, since it seemed it would only increase the skid, which scared me. So the next time it happened I still tried to steer away from the skid.

The New England winter bore on, and one icy day I took a skid that seemed to be headed for disaster. With nothing left to lose, I turned into the skid, and lo and behold, the car began to straighten out. I felt that a remarkable seed was planted that day and came to see it as a metaphor for life—that if you turn into your fears, you can overcome them. Although it may feel natural to turn away from fear and discomfort, doing so is often fueled by denial, aversion, repression, and suppression—strategies that seldom lead to successful outcomes in the long run.

After graduating from high school I became deeply interested in Eastern philosophy and religion. The *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu (translated by Witter Bynner, 1944) deeply affirmed my inner journey. Reading this small book of eighty-one epigrams was like finding a long-lost friend. I realized that I had been looking for answers about life outside of myself and that they could only be found within me. Epigram 47 (55) had an especially important impact upon me:

*There is no need to run outside
For better seeing,
Nor to peer from a window. Rather abide
At the center of your being;*

*For the more you leave it, the less you learn.
Search your heart and see
If he is wise who takes each turn:
The way to do is to be.*

Eventually I moved to San Francisco and enrolled in a masters program in psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies. That was where I took my first formal mindfulness (vipassana) meditation retreat. After graduating in 1980, I received an invitation from my first vipassana mindfulness meditation teacher, Dr. Rina Sircar, to go to Burma (now Myanmar) to meet her teacher, the renowned meditation master Taungpulu Sayadaw. In November 1980, I ordained temporarily as a Theravadan Buddhist monk with the name U Candima (Angel of the Moon) in a remote forest monastery in central Burma. During my time there, I had many opportunities to work on my attachments, fears, and pain, instead of trying to escape from them.

In 1981, I disrobed and headed back home to the redwood forests of Northern California to help start the Taungpulu Kaba-Aye Monastery with Dr. Rina Sircar, her students, and the Burmese community. I lived in that monastery for over eight and a half years, studying with my primary meditation teacher, Hlaing Tet Sayadaw. I also went back to school and received a Ph.D. in philosophy and religion, specializing in Buddhism.

In 1989, I left the monastery and married my beloved wife, Jan, and in 1990, an ex-monk friend of mine, Bruce Mitteldorf, sent me a copy of *Full Catastrophe Living*, by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, which describes the mindfulness-based stress reduction program that he developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (Kabat-Zinn 1990). This book revealed what my life's work should be and forever changed my life.

Since 1991, I've taught mindfulness-based stress reduction programs and currently teach at three medical centers. I've worked with thousands of people and many hundreds of health professionals, teaching them mindfulness to help them maximize their lives, even in the midst of pain, stress, and illness. I'm very happy to extend this approach to a wider audience through *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*.

Elisha Goldstein

When I was six years old my parents divorced, which left me an angry and confused little boy without the tools to understand and express my hurt and frustration. As I became an adult, I often found myself with some sort of self-help or self-development book in hand, searching for ways to understand my pain.

In my midtwenties, I was living and working in San Francisco in the midst of the Internet boom. While my background was in psychology, I felt drawn to these exciting developments, so I entered the world of sales and management. I soon realized that I was actually quite good at sales, and before long I was getting a lot of attention and recognition. I got caught up in the material world, making money hand over fist, but something always seemed to be missing. I started spending my time living in accordance with the motto “Work hard and play *much* harder.” I surrounded myself with people who practiced that same battle cry and avoided those who didn’t. I increasingly avoided my family and friends and had to take more days off work because I simply couldn’t function with the hangovers. Things seemed out of control and a small part of me was always nagging, “How long do you think you can do this? You’re destroying yourself.” Whispers about my erratic behavior started circulating among family and friends, and eventually phone calls came pouring in expressing their worry and concern.

I finally realized I was way out of balance and decided to take some time off work to go on a one-month retreat. During my time away, I was able to take a step outside of my madness and become more aware of the destructive habits I had been so blind to. I deeply felt the truth in theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel’s saying “Life is routine, and routine is resistance to wonder” (1955, 85). I realized that if I could cultivate a way to break out of my unhealthy routine of avoiding pain and fear, I could come back in touch with the wonder of life and see what life really had to offer. That was the start of a mindfulness practice that has grounded me and helped me reconnect with what matters most to me in life: supporting myself and others to live the lives we want to live.

After returning to San Francisco, I realized I needed to make some changes. I applied to graduate school at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, which integrates an East-meets-West philosophy in its curriculum. During that time I also trained as a mindfulness-based stress reduction teacher. I currently run mindfulness-based groups and am in private practice as a clinical psychologist in the West Los Angeles area. It has been my pleasure to work with Bob Stahl, a highly respected mindfulness teacher, to introduce you to a practice of mindfulness that could very well change your life, as it has mine and tens of thousands of others.

who this workbook is for

This educational and experiential workbook is for anyone living with stress, anxiety, pain, or illness. Weaving mindfulness into your everyday life will not only help reduce stress and anxiety, it will also guide you to a life of greater compassion, health, peace, and well-being.

In addition, this workbook may be helpful for therapists, clinicians, and educators who would like to bring mindfulness to their clients or students as an adjunct to therapy or education. It can also be used in the workplace to help alleviate job stress. You may also want to do this workbook with a group of friends. Mindfulness has become very popular in the worlds of psychology, medicine, neuroscience, education, and business. We hope that this workbook will inspire you to make mindfulness an important part of your life, as a way of being, and believe that as you grow in your own mindfulness practice, you'll be better able to support others on this path.

Although this workbook was inspired by the pioneering mindfulness-based stress reduction programs created by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., assisted by Saki Santorelli, Ph.D., at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, it isn't a substitute for taking the program. (See the Resources section for guidance in finding an MBSR location in your area.) That said, we do believe that this workbook will be an avenue to greater peace and healing in your life.

how to use this workbook

We strongly recommend that you work through this book sequentially, as its organization is based on a well-established and effective program. As you work your way through the book, you'll engage in a variety of mindfulness practices to help reduce the stress and anxiety you feel in response to life's challenges, building your own mindfulness practice along the way. Many of the chapters contain formal mindfulness meditation practices, initially of a fairly short duration and becoming longer as you progress through the book, and all chapters (other than chapter 11) include an informal practice.

Often, change doesn't happen as quickly as we would like. Be assured that change will come with time and practice, and understand that practice is the key to true and lasting change. We suggest that you work with each chapter for at least a week before moving on to the next. This will help integrate the practices into your daily life so that they're more accessible to you, especially when you're dealing with stress or stress-related conditions.

In addition to basic background information, most of the chapters include certain elements to help you gain a greater understanding of mindfulness, develop your own formal and informal practice, schedule your practice, and stay on track with that schedule:

- **Journal.** When each formal practice is first introduced, we include space for you to journal what came up for you. If you like journaling or find that this enhances your practice, consider dedicating a notebook or journal to your mindfulness practice.
- **Mindful exploration.** Throughout the workbook you'll find spaces for mindful self-reflection on various questions to help sustain, deepen, and support your practice.
- **Just do it.** In these text boxes, we offer suggestions on how to bring mindfulness to various day-to-day activities. When you come across one, read it, then put down the book and just do it!

- **FAQ.** Over our many years of teaching mindfulness-based stress reduction, we've found that certain questions come up time and again. These text boxes answer some of the questions we hear most often.
- **Planning your practice.** At the end of every chapter you'll find a checklist reminding you to schedule formal and informal practices over the next week. We recommend using some sort of system or device, such as a daytimer, phone alarm, or electronic calendar.
- **Formal practice logs.** After doing your scheduled formal practices, take the time to use these logs to briefly record what you experienced during each practice.
- **Reviewing your informal practice.** After the formal practice log, we've included a space to review how your informal practices are going. You can use this information to guide you in making any needed adjustments.

At the end of the book, in chapter 11, we'll give you suggestions on how to maintain your mindfulness practice as a way of life. To enhance the effectiveness of your practice and the work you do with this book, we recommend that you connect with a larger community of your peers at www.mbsrworkbook.com. There you'll find like-minded people who can support you in the process of cultivating your mindfulness practice. You're likely to find that others appreciate connecting with you for your support, and to share, discuss, and learn more about mindfulness. You'll also find video blogs from both of us and from other meditation teachers.

FAQ

What's the difference between mindfulness meditation and other forms of meditation?

There are essentially two forms of meditation: insight and concentration. Mindfulness is considered insight meditation since it brings full attention to the body and mind in the present moment without trying to alter or manipulate the experience. Whatever is occurring in the body (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations) or mind, the task is simply to observe its ever-changing nature. With the practice of mindfulness, you begin to discover the causes of your own suffering and find a pathway to greater freedom. In concentration meditation, on the other hand, the focus is on concepts, imagery, or a mantra. A sense of tranquility is one of the benefits of the mind becoming deeply absorbed with the meditation object in a one-pointed way. The distinguishing difference is that with concentration meditation, you become one with the object of focus, leading to greater meditative absorption, whereas with insight meditation you begin to see the ever-changing nature of body and mind and the difficulties that are generated from grasping, aversion, and the self-limiting definitions of who you think you are. These insights deepen your understanding of what fuels your stress and suffering and lead to greater balance and peace.

meditation practice suggestions

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for and develop your practice. We recommend that you use the audio CD included with this book as you learn each new practice. It includes twenty-one different mindfulness meditation practices that add up to over eight and a half hours. The tracks are in MP3 format, which can be played on a computer, MP3 player, or MP3 CD player. Listening to the CD will allow you to deepen your practice, since you won't have to read and refer back to the book as you're practicing. Continue using the CD until you're thoroughly familiar with each practice—or longer if you like. Another advantage to using the CDs is that it paces the practice for you. If you must practice without the CD or choose to, simply set a timer for the length of the practice. For longer practices done without the CD, you'll need to pause longer after each paragraph of text.

As you go through the book, we offer a suggested schedule for practice to help you establish a good foundation. Do the best you can to stick to this schedule. As you move through the book, you'll learn more practices and have greater flexibility in choosing the practices that work best for you. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, you'll learn a mindful eating practice, a three-minute mindful check-in practice, and a five-minute mindful breathing practice. You'll find lengthier and more in-depth meditations in chapters 4 through 8, some with options for practicing for fifteen, thirty, or forty-five minutes, depending on your schedule or preference. In chapters 9 and 10, on mindfulness in relationships and mindfulness for well-being, we'll offer more informal practices to help you extend mindfulness to these aspects of life as you continue with the formal practices you learned earlier in the book.

Read through the first three chapters within a couple of weeks. With the introductory practices in chapters 1 through 3, it's fine to experiment and vary the way you practice them. For example, after practicing the mindful check-in once a day for a week, the second week you could practice the mindful check-in a few times a day or alternate it with the five-minute breathing practice. You could also combine them into one practice, beginning with the mindful check-in for a few minutes and then adding the breathing practice. The main point is to practice regularly and make the practice your own. Later, when we introduce you to longer meditations in chapters 4 through 8, we highly recommend that you work with each of them for a week.

If at any point you notice that you haven't practiced for days, don't be hard on yourself. Just let it be and notice that you are present once again and can make a plan to practice that day. Ultimately of course, it's up to you to work with the practices in a way that feels right for you.