

Session 2-Living in our Heads

When we are on autopilot, it's often as if we are away somewhere else. But where do we go? More often than not, we are lost in thought—planning, remembering, or daydreaming. Thinking becomes a problem when it takes over, when we are literally lost in thought. We've passed a tipping point: no longer living in the world, we are living in our heads. So what can we do? We can't stop thinking simply by using willpower. And we still need to know what's going on, right now, in our lives. Is there a different way, other than thinking, for us to know, and relate to, our experience? -Teasdale, Williams, Segal (The Mindful Way Workbook)



“Thinking About” vs “Experiencing in the Present Moment”

1. **Thinking about:** Spend a minute thinking about your feet. What thoughts arise when you bring your feet to mind?
2. **Present Moment Experience:** Bring your attention directly into your feet. Become aware of the points of contact between your feet and the floor or against your shoes. See if you can get a sense of the outline of your feet in space, and a sense of the bones and muscles in the feet. Perhaps clench your toes a little, and notice the sensations in your feet, and maybe also tension in your calves and legs. Release your toes and notice the sensations of relaxation.



What do you notice when you pay attention to your feet in this way?

Any physical activity can be done more mindfully simply by paying attention to it. This includes walking or any other activity we do everyday. It's possible to bring present moment awareness into everyday life, whether sending an email, or walking to a meeting, or eating a meal. We can bring more attention to any activity, and notice our thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the body as we undertake that activity. By so doing, our awareness expands, and we change our relationship to the experience, stepping out of automatic, often unconscious thoughts and responses, and into knowing through direct experience. In doing this, we begin to develop abilities to respond rather than react.

Mindful Walking

Find a place where you can walk up and down without feeling concerned about whether people can see you – it can be inside or outside.

1. Feel your feet touching the ground and let your weight distribute evenly. Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides or hold your hands loosely together in front of your body. Direct your gaze softly, straight ahead.
2. Step out with your left foot. Feel it swing, feel the heel hit the ground, now the ball, now the toes. Transfer the weight of your body into the left leg, noticing the changing sensations as it takes over the support of the rest of the body.
3. Feel the same as the right foot comes forward.
4. Walk at a steady pace, slightly slower than in daily life. When your attention wanders, bring it back to the sensations of your feet touching the ground.

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 2

1. Over the next week, see if you can do a body scan once, and one of the awareness of breathing exercises a few times (perhaps try the 20 min practice at least once, and then the shorter practices on other days).
2. See if you can do some form of mindful movement at least three times for a minimum of 10 minutes. For example, you can do mindful walking or even mindful house cleaning. Alternatively, if you go to the gym or to a yoga class, see if you can spend at least 10 minutes in mindful awareness of your movements.
3. Informal Mindfulness: Bring full attention to some everyday activity for a few moments and notice if or how this changes your experience. Try to focus on the same activity at least 3 times.
4. Notice one pleasant event each day, or at least three times, and write it down. It need not be a dramatic event - something simple is fine. Notice the experience in terms of body sensations, emotions and thoughts. The following questions and template on the next page can be used as a guide.

Pleasant Events Calendar:

1. What was the pleasant event?
2. Were you aware of it being pleasant at the time?
3. Did you notice any body sensations? Where? Can you describe them.
4. What was your mood or feelings at the time of the event?
5. What thoughts were present at the time?
6. What thoughts and feelings are with you as you write about the event?

Pleasant Experiences Calendar

Be aware of a pleasant event *at the time it is happening (if possible---otherwise, try to remember it later in the day)*. Use the following questions to focus your awareness on the details of the experience as it is happening. It's ok to write it down later.

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?
Example:	Spending time with a good friend.	Lightness across the face, aware of shoulders dropping	Relief, pleasure.	"That's good," "It's so nice to be outside."	"It was such a small thing, but I'm glad I noticed it."

Inspiration

Day	What was the experience?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods and feelings accompanied this event?	What thoughts went through your mind?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write this down?

Adapted from Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn.⁷⁶ Copyright 2007 by The Guilford Press. Reprinted in Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (Guilford Press, 2013).