

A Mindful way through Menopause

Presented by Emma Reynolds
Mindfulness for Life
www.mbsr-mindfulness.com



Welcome to Session 2 - Focus and Perception

Check in

So how did you get on? Did you fill in the Course guide with how many days you did the various practices – Body Scan, STOP and Belly Breathing? What resistance did you notice, if any, to doing the practices? What helped you get past this resistance? (such as remembering these are just thoughts, and reminding yourself of your intentions).

What this session is about

In this session we will be exploring where we habitually place our attention or focus. We also explore how the way we perceive events and people has a direct effect on our experience (and stress levels!)

5 Senses Practice

Last week we began to explore where the wandering mind can wander off to – the past, the future or into judging the present. When the mind is one place and the body is another, we're out of sync. To bring us back we can use our senses- touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. These are experiences in the present moment, not a conceptual idea of the future, nor a memory of the past, or a judgement. In this practice we explore our environment, noticing when the mind wanders into labelling or judgement and kindly invite it to come back to the here and now.

In this way we are training ourselves to notice what is already present, to recognize when we have "gone off" and to practice coming back. It doesn't matter how many times your mind wanders off. In the moment you recognize you are no longer with, for example, the sense of smell and you bring yourself back to it, this is a moment of mindfulness. Paradoxically these moments when we lose concentration are what we need, to be able to practice. Coming back over and over is what we do this for – not to get good at smelling (!) but to get good at re-focusing on what we what the point of focus to be. Why? Because being more present in our lives, without judging it, is a good place to be. Wandering into fears around the future, judging yourself or others, or regretting past events feels a lot less satisfying.

Mindful Teeth Brushing

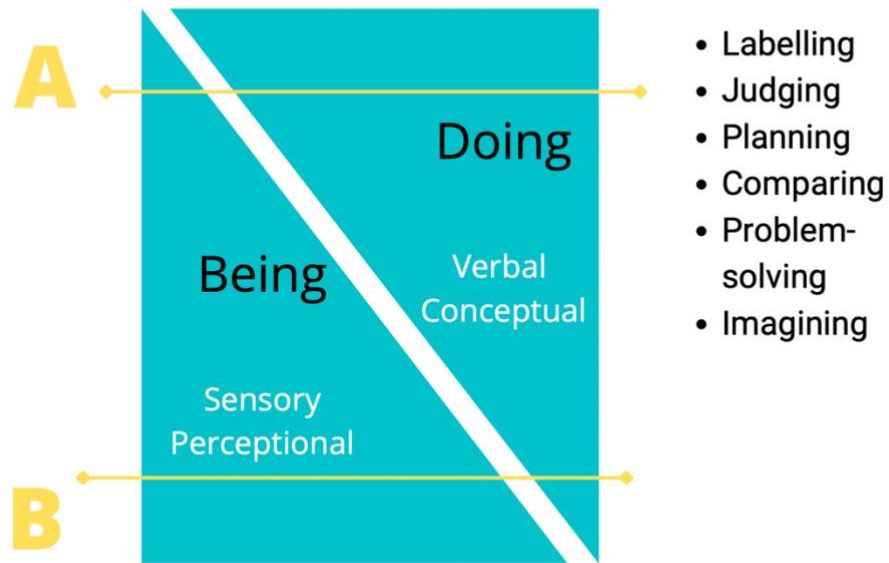
You are invited this session to explore brushing your teeth, focusing on each sense in turn. How often do you normally brush your teeth, thinking about all the things you have to do that day, or concerning yourself with past events? If this happens now when practicing, just keep coming back to one of the senses. Closing your eyes can really help you focus on smell, touch, taste and sound.

What did you notice when you practiced brushing your teeth mindfully? Did any emotions come up? (Frustration, boredom etc). Could you keep coming back? If not, why not?

Being versus Doing model

Being versus Doing

Our mind works in two ways



- Seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, smelling = FLOW

In this image you can see we have two ways our mind works. In the “Doing” section we can include physical doing, but also mental doing; labelling, judging, planning, comparing, problem-solving, imagining. How much time do you think you spend in this area during your day? Are you on the A line?

In the “Being section” we are in the senses. Consider how much time you spend there in your daily life. Do you really taste your food, feel the sun on your face, hear the noises around you, or are you more in the doing section? Practicing mindfulness is an opportunity to move from one mode to the other. What might it feel like to be on the B line?

Perhaps take a break right now and just focus on one sense such as the sense of hearing. What does it feel like to just stop and listen for a minute or two?

Imagine.. Walking down road

In this exercise you were asked to imagine you were walking down the street and you saw someone you knew. You waved and smiled and the other person kept on walking. What did you notice?

What thoughts did you have?

What emotions did you feel?

How did your body react? (Tightness in the back, stomach, heart beating faster, feeling hot or cold, or something else?)

When you imagined the scenario, what did you want to do next? (Chase after them and ask why they were ignoring, plan to ignore them in the future, worry you'd upset them and spend time working out how, shrug it off or something else)

What thoughts come up when you see how you reacted?

Storytelling Mind

Was this an old way of reacting to this type of situation? How do you think you decided to react? Was it on automatic pilot?

In the story we have no actual idea why the person didn't react, but your mind possibly tried to fill in the blanks and depending on what story it created, you then experienced the emotions and body sensations that go with those thoughts. How did the mind decide which story to tell you? Was it perhaps similar to another situation?

When we don't know, the mind uses past experiences and transposes them onto the present or the future. So if you have a tendency to believe people, for example, don't like you much, then this belief colours your experiences and then you live out the experience. We also have a confirmatory bias. This means we look for signs to confirm our beliefs. It's a very lob-sided way of looking at life and can make us very sad, angry or depressed.

The invitation here is to begin to explore your usual ways of thinking and begin to question the validity of your assumptions. Was the person ignoring you on purpose, or did they not see you?

How would your experience have been if you'd just shrugged it off and said to yourself "Well, I don't know what happened there." And you didn't fuel the fear with more thoughts?

Perception- past experiences

Our perception of life can be coloured by past experiences. If, for example, you were bitten as a child by a dog, that memory will be stored in the brain and in the future you may always believe all dogs bite.

Now you fear dogs.

But is it true that all dogs on the planet bite?

Consider now some of the beliefs you hold that limit you experiencing life to its fullest. These may well include beliefs about yourself "I'm not X enough" "I'm too X"

Are these beliefs true?

A + B = C

A is an event, B is how we perceive it and C is our experience. If A is out of our control (such as the way someone is acting, a situation that happens by mistake, body pain, or even our own negative thought) we often believe C is the result. E.g. "Of course I'm angry (C), someone just reversed into my car (A)". But in this example we have concluded A= C and we've forgotten about our 90% - the B part, how we perceive it. And this is where our power is.

So someone has reversed into your car. It's already happened. Do you want to calmly deal with the next moments or do you want to go into automatic pilot and suffer all the emotions and body sensations that

accompany it? Perhaps anger does well-up in you, but you still have a choice. How do I want to react to my anger? Let it vent, or perhaps bring in a practice to calm down (like the STOP practice from Session 1). How would this affect your next moments?

Consider a situation recently where you did, or didn't wake up to your automatic pilot way of dealing with something or someone. What happened?

4 Step Awareness (20 minute meditation)

In this practice you are invited to explore what is unpleasant and pleasant in your moment to moment experience. Note down here what you noticed:

Unpleasant:

Pleasant:

Was it easy or hard to notice these things? How did it feel to just sit with both the pleasant and unpleasant aspects, without wishing to push away the unpleasant, nor grasp onto the pleasant? How might this be useful in your daily life?

