

# The Seven Factors of Awakening

## Unit 2: Mindfulness – Workbook



Mindfulness is not simply an idea. Let's take a moment to feel our way into this intimate and immediate capacity we have to be present with experience.

Unit 1: Understanding the Seven Factors

Unit 2: Mindfulness

Unit 3: Investigation

Unit 4: Energy

Unit 5: Joy

Unit 6: Tranquility

Unit 7: Unification

Unit 8: Equanimity

In this unit, we will:

- clarify what mindfulness is and what it offers.
- illuminate the various aspects of mindfulness as a relaxed presence, gatekeeper, choice point, restraint, protective awareness, and more.

- understand the role of mindfulness as an awakening factor.
- learn how to establish mindfulness.
- listen to classical similes that illustrate the various aspects of mindfulness.
- receive guidance for formal practice, inquiry, and mindfulness in daily life.

But before we talk about what mindfulness is conceptually, let's tune in to the felt sense of mindfulness, here and now, in our experience, with a brief meditation.



## The Felt Sense of Mindfulness

Welcome to this session, where we'll be beginning to investigate the first of the factors of awakening: the quality of sati, mindfulness. Let's begin by taking some moments to arrive and to invite this quality of mindfulness into our experience, just beginning by noticing what's present in awareness itself.

What are you aware of in this moment? What is it that the mind is noticing? It might be the sound of my voice, the touch of your body on your seat, the sounds around you in your space. It might be helpful for a moment to just allow your eyes to close so you can bring a little more attention inwards, noticing the sensations of sitting. Rather than thinking about it, taste experience as it's actually being felt and sensed in this moment. How is it that you know the body is sitting? What are the sensations that you describe as "the body sitting"? What are the sensations that we call "breath"?

Coming up close to the immediacy of your experience, bringing some attention to the experience of hearing and noticing whatever sounds are around you in

your environment. Can you allow the sounds to be received as just sound before any story about them arises, knowing hearing simply as hearing?

What else is present in awareness? Maybe there are currents of thought passing through the mind. You might be aware of a particular mood or mind state. You might be feeling peaceful or interested, expectant, restless—all these different facets of experience that can be known directly by this quality of mindfulness.

Notice how this changes. Attention moves from one thing to another, and we can be aware in any moment of what our attention is noticing and then we can choose to direct that attention. So if I say, "Notice the sensations in your hand," it's almost just an effortless movement of the attention toward the hands, and we start to receive the sensations there. Mindfulness requires very little effort. Just this intention to be aware: the directing of our interest somewhere starts to reveal an experience to us, simply knowing what we're experiencing as we're experiencing it.

In a moment, I'll ring the bell, and you can allow yourself to just receive the sound of the bell and see whether it's possible for the attention to stay with the sound. Just notice that moment at which the sound fades completely out of earshot, and then take in the sights around you.



## Mindfulness



### What are you aware of?

Welcome. In this session, we're going to take a closer look at the first of the awakening factors, the quality of *sati*, mindfulness. And as we begin together, you might just take a moment to pause and notice what you're aware of as you sit, watch, and listen to my voice. Are you aware of your body and of your contact with the ground? Maybe you're aware of sounds around you in the room. As we do this, we're engaging the quality of mindfulness.

The root meaning of this word *sati* is remembering or recollecting. And in a sense, when we do this, we're coming to our senses. We're becoming present to the immediacy of our experience, and doing this is the "on switch" for the whole cascade of the awakening factors to follow. So what are we remembering when we practice remembering? We're remembering the present moment. We're remembering that we're here. We're remembering that we're now. And we're also remembering the context of the teachings, about what's useful to remember, and the context of our intentions. *Sati* is often accompanied by



another word, *sampajañña*, which means all-around knowing, or knowing the context in which things are happening. This is accessed and brought to mind when we tap into this quality of sati.

## **Moving toward freedom**

Sati as an awakening factor includes this intention toward liberation. It can be very beautiful to have the perspective that, when we practice the quality of mindfulness, we're not simply learning to relax—although that's a very valuable effect of engaging with this practice—but we're actually moving toward liberation, toward freedom. Mindfulness has been described as the path to the deathless. We've spoken about how this is a step-by-step practice that takes us in the direction of unbinding.

So mindfulness takes us in the direction of freedom from the afflictive habits and patterns that trap us in suffering. It's a gateway into the experience of peace. In some ways, qualities in the dharma can be seen both as progressive but also holographic: there are elements of the other qualities embedded within mindfulness. This quality of mindfulness as an awakening factor is tinged with nuances of the others.

## **Aspects of mindfulness**

What we want to do now, partly, is explore different nuances in the quality of mindfulness. And I've said that mindfulness is remembering the present moment. Another way to look at it is directly knowing what's happening as it's happening. It's a certain quality of attentiveness to the present moment. One of the things about mindfulness is that it requires a relaxed sense of presence. We can't sustain attentiveness if it's not a relaxed attention. Sometimes it's useful to think of qualities in terms of what they're not, and our attentiveness to the present moment is not a kind of hypervigilance: it's a relaxed form of presence. Mindfulness is also inherently respectful and caring. It's attuned, and it's an embodied sense of attentiveness.

Actually, the use of the word *mind*-fulness perhaps obscures the fact that there's an engagement of the heart and the whole body in the knowing of this moment. One of the many, many images in the suttas of mindfulness that I like comes in the discourse on mindfulness of breathing. It likens the attention of mindfulness to being the sort of attention that a skilled woodturner would apply to the turning of his wood. Knowing a breath as a long breath or a short breath is like the woodturner who knows exactly the quality of movement that he's making in shaping the wood. Or in more familiar terms perhaps, we might think of a potter. To me there's a sense of appreciativeness, a sensitivity, a sense of contacting and feeling out what's happening in the present moment that's captured in that image of how you would work your craft as a skilled craftsman. What is the quality of attentiveness that you would bring?

Mindfulness is also appropriate to the situation at hand. Sometimes our mindfulness will be more relaxed; sometimes it needs to be a little sharper and more on point. Another beautiful image is the image of the cowherd tending the cows. In a situation where there are no crops for the cows to trample on, the cowherd can just sit back and watch what's happening in a relaxed manner. But sometimes there's something that needs a little bit more direct intervention, and then we get up and we do something about it, the cowherd would have to actually jump up and stop the cows from trampling the crops. So we notice if our mind is straying into territory where more direct intervention is needed, and then mindfulness becomes more active and engaged.

For example, I might simply be aware of the sounds happening around me in the room. Then something might grab my attention that really pulls and distracts me, and I want to leap up and do something about it. Mindfulness can have this restraining quality where, rather than have a knee jerk reaction to what's happening, we have a choice:

**"Is this something that really needs a response right now? Or is it something that I can just allow to be and allow to go?"**

What mindfulness offers is this choice point between acting on habit and responding appropriately to a given situation.

One of the things that mindfulness also does is to monitor and balance the qualities in the mind. When we know that there is a lot of energy in the mind, we can pay more attention to calming factors in the mind. When we notice that we're becoming dull, we can choose to sharpen up our attention. In this way, mindfulness monitors and oversees the activities of the mind in our practice and can rebalance them accordingly.

We can even be aware of the comings and goings of mindfulness itself. One of the ways that we're invited to practice mindfulness of these mind states—the awakening factors—is to notice their presence and their absence. We can also notice the conditions that support their arising and their waning. This is an aspect of appropriate attention. So be aware even of the comings and goings of mindfulness itself. This is excellent mindfulness practice. At any moment, we can pause and recollect where we are, then reengage with this quality of sati and remembering.



### **Knowing what to cultivate, and when**

When the Buddha speaks about the bojjhngas, the awakening factors, he speaks about also developing this quality of mindfulness to know when it is appropriate to cultivate any one of the awakening factors.

**"If there is restlessness, this is not the right time to be cultivating investigation. It's the time to be cultivating more calming. If there is dullness, this is the time to be cultivating investigation."**

But the Buddha says it is always appropriate to cultivate mindfulness because mindfulness has the effect of illuminating the moment. If you think about a walk you might regularly do in your life—perhaps it might be a walk to your car, or to the bus stop, or a walk in the park—you know what it's like to walk when you're lost in preoccupations, obsessions, distractedness, how you can return home and realize you haven't been touched by anything. It's almost a lost moment. You're also aware that you can take that same walk in an intentional way, inhabiting the body, present, and be touched by the world around you and within you. Mindfulness has this effect almost of illuminating the moment. I often think of mindfulness as a way of awakening the world around us, that as Jaya put it, we truly come to our senses so that we can be touched and can respond.

We also see the many nuances of mindfulness, and there's a skillfulness of knowing when to draw upon those different nuances to enable us to navigate our way through life more wholeheartedly, more competently, and more freely. One of those nuances of mindfulness is developing the capacity to simply know what is happening within us and around us. And that sounds so easy, but it is not. So much of our knowing is filtered through interpretations, memories, associations, likes and dislikes. There's a remarkable calming and simplifying to be able to come to this simple knowing of a thought as a thought, a sound as a sound, a sight as a sight. In many ways, I think this dimension of mindfulness is actually one of the most transformative because it is the place where we step out of the eye of the storm, so to speak, and begin to develop a dialogue, a

conversation, a relationship with what is being experienced inwardly and outwardly. It's a step of mindfulness where we step out of being identified with what is experienced as being *me* or *who I am* or a self-definition.

## **Protective awareness**

Another dimension of mindfulness that is, in my experience, deeply important is protective awareness. We learn what it means to be a wise gatekeeper within our own hearts and our own minds.

There's a very big difference between protective awareness and defensive awareness. Protective awareness is not about shutting the world out or being life-denying. It is actually the quality of discernment: inwardly knowing what leads to distress and what leads to the end of distress; what leads towards freedom, what leads away from freedom; what leads to the affliction of myself or of others and what leads to the end of affliction.

Discernment in Buddhist psychology is the bridging factor between mindfulness and an appropriate response. It is knowing what causes suffering and what brings suffering to an end. It's not about judgment. It is having the discernment to know what's useful to cultivate and what it is useful to not cultivate. In the suttas, the image of the wise gatekeeper standing at the gates of the city is used: knowing who to welcome in and knowing who to acknowledge but not to entertain or to feed.

We need to know at different times in our day what element of mindfulness is really helpful to us. Is it protective awareness? It's always simple knowing. Is it investigative awareness? Is it about learning to reframe cognition, reframe our perceptions? Is it learning to draw on the extended family of mindfulness, of kindness, compassion, and joyfulness? Mindfulness, as we know, is a word that has been absorbed into our culture. I think it's so important to appreciate the depth and nuances of what mindfulness can offer to us in terms of waking up.



## How to Establish Mindfulness



### **The four foundations of mindfulness**

One of the ways that we can engage mindfulness or awaken mindfulness is to actively turn our attention to what the Buddha called the foundations of mindfulness, or the four domains that he regarded as particularly worth paying attention to. These are called the four *satipatthanas*.

FOUNDATION	DESCRIPTION
<p><b>Mindfulness of the body</b></p>	<p>In a way, this is the root of all mindfulness: to be aware of the experience of the body as we're experiencing it, to be in contact with the sensations of aliveness, to literally know where we are, feel our feet on the ground. To be aware of the different dimensions of bodily experience and recognize the body as body: as this changing, constantly fluid experience.</p>
<p><b>Mindfulness of feeling tones</b></p>	<p>This is the quality of pleasantness or unpleasantness of experience that is, again, constantly changing under our awareness. This is where we get hooked into patterns of reactivity. So mindfulness will observe this experience of pleasant or unpleasant arising but actually doesn't necessarily react to what's arising. We can simply know a pleasant experience as pleasant and an unpleasant experience as unpleasant.</p>
<p><b>Mindfulness of mind</b></p>	<p>When we <i>do</i> react, we can become aware of the mood or the quality of the mind. This is the third domain to be aware of: the mind and mind states as they're arising. To know: is the mind bright or dull? Is it cramped? Is it spacious? How is the mind meeting this moment's experience? Is it possible to expand awareness, or is awareness collapsed around a particular dimension of our experience?</p>
<p><b>Mindfulness of dhammas</b></p>	<p>Among the teachings we could be aware of, these qualities of the veiling factors (hindrances) and the awakening factors are particularly important. To know their presence and absence in the mind and to know their coming and going. With mindfulness, we begin to discern, to notice, the trademarks of these qualities within us and also notice what conditions they're supporting and what conditions they're diminishing. Then we are able, again, to invest our effort and our energy appropriately.</p>

We turn mindfulness to each of these domains of experience both internally and externally. We acknowledge that this is not only how this human being here operates but also how the world is operating around us. Noticing the presence



and absence of these qualities in the world around us enables us to navigate more skillfully through this process of being alive.



## **Intention and Attention**

There is, in reality, so much we can say and explore in this field of mindfulness. But one last piece I would like to reflect on is mindfulness as being able to bear something in mind. Now, what we're bearing in mind is not just the object of our attention, but learning to stabilize our intentional and attentional capacity. It's being aware that intention and attention rise and fall together. We can go out in the day with the greatest intention to be kind until a stranger trips us up, or takes our place in a line, or annoys us somehow. Then we see the intention drops away, being sabotaged by one of the veiling factors. And when our intention drops away, our attention then gets diverted into unwise attention: grasping at sense impressions and the associations with it.

So one of the aspects of mindfulness is developing the capacity to bear in mind: to stabilize this marriage between skillful intention and skillful attention. Many people in the meditative path report that this is the Achilles' heel of their practice: they have wonderful intentions, they have pieces of attention—but the capacity to sustain these is the most challenging part. For most people, the journey from those good intentions and momentary pieces of attention to sustained intentionality and sustained attention is actually a journey through the veiling factors that often sabotage what is wholesome and longed for within us.

We need to see skillful intention as a journey and as a process. It's not as if we wake up in the morning and set the intention to be mindful and hope that we're going to coast on that for the rest of the day. In my experience, intention is something that we set, and reset, and reset: the intention to be present, to be patient, the intention for kindness, for compassion, for wakefulness. Each time we're able and willing to reset that intentionality in a fresh and wholehearted way, we see that the attention gathers around the intentionality as we learn to establish and naturalize it.



## **Meditation: Mindfulness**

There's a small collection of discourses in the early texts that carry the same name of "one fortunate attachment." And in these discourses, the Buddha speaks about a way of living where we are not leaning backwards into the past with regret or shame or "if only." He talks about a way of living where we're not leaning forward into the future with expectation, demands, insistence, or longing. This is a way of living where we are present, without being lost in preoccupations or obsessions. He calls this the one fortunate attachment.

In this unit, we've been speaking about mindfulness, and mindfulness points to this way of being. It's not as if we have no past or have no future. We certainly have a present, but it's finding a way of being in this present-moment experience that's free of shame, judgment, blame, anticipation, expectation, and where we are not overwhelmed. We've been speaking about the different nuances of mindfulness as something that is alive and multidimensional. So in this practice period, I'd like to invite you to explore some of those dimensions of sati, of mindfulness.

## **The posture**

We begin by finding a posture where you feel a marriage of both alertness and ease, where you feel a sense of groundedness and balance in the body, where you can allow your body to come to as much stillness as is possible for you without forcing, without tension, without trying to make anything at all happen. Once you find that posture, just begin to settle.

## **A simple knowing**

Perhaps in the beginning of the sitting, take one or two slightly fuller breaths. With each out-breath, a sense of settling, grounding, arriving in this body, in this present moment. With each in-breath, a sense of enlivening, energizing.

Allow your breathing to find its own unforced rhythm. Attuning, aligning your attentiveness—your mindfulness—with that simple process of the body breathing in, the body breathing out. A simple knowing of this moment-to-moment fluidity of the breathing process.

## **Inhabiting the body**

Intentionally inhabiting the body just as it is now. Bringing the mind into the body with our attention, with our intention. Knowing the body sitting. Knowing the body sensing. Knowing the body listening. Knowing the body breathing. Establishing mindfulness within the body with its spectrum of sensations: the places that feel easeful, restful; and places in the body where there may be more tension, tightness, or discomfort. Just sensing your way into this range of sensations, the processes of the body: changing, fluid. Knowing the body as the body. Allowing the commentary, the thoughts, to sit in the background of your experience.

In the foreground of your mindfulness: sensitivity to the life of the body just now. Looking beneath our concepts of the body, the concepts of knee or hand, face or back. Sensing beneath the words into the fluidity of this bodily

experience. If your attention becomes scattered, fragmented, intentionally gathering, sensing the simple process of breathing, grounding, collecting.

## **Feeling tone**

Once more opening into the fullness of your bodily experience right now. The pleasant, the unpleasant, and that which is neither—coexisting, arising and passing.

## **Mindfulness of mind**

Expanding the field of your awareness to sense whatever mood, whatever mental state is present for you now. Is there restlessness? Is there calm? Does the mind feel dull? Does the mind feel bright? Is there contractedness or spaciousness? Developing this simple knowing and caring. Noticing how these moods or mental states might be impacting your bodily experience in this moment: a tightening or softening, an agitation or calming.

Sensing how the mood of the moment generates ways of thinking, thoughts of worry or agitation, thoughts of kindness and sensitivity. Noticing how difficult moods generate more prolific narratives. Noticing how we can make choices about where we place our attention and the quality of mindfulness we bring. Being able to step back from the flurry of thinking, the storms of stories. Being able to return to the body, touching the ground, your hands touching each other or your lap. Being able to return to an awareness of the body just breathing. Simplifying, collecting, calming, being able to know a thought as a thought, a mood as a mood.

## **Mindfulness of the body is protective**

Cultivating this quality of protective awareness. Learning how grounding, establishing mindfulness in the body protects the heart from surges of reactivity and the patterns and proliferations that don't serve us well.

Learning that we can simplify. We can see, we can know, and remain established in moment-to-moment mindfulness. Breathing in with mindfulness, breathing out with mindfulness. Breathing in with sensitivity, breathing out with sensitivity. Breathing in with kindness, breathing out with kindness. Establishing wakefulness. Knowing the body as the body, breathing as breathing, moods as moods, thoughts as thoughts, sounds as sounds. Listening inwardly, listening to the moment, the ground of stillness and the ground of responsiveness.

As I ring the bell, just listening wholeheartedly without filtering or judging.  
Simple knowing of hearing.

If you're ready to end the sitting period you can. Or if you wish to continue, just continue.



## Reflect

1. Is mindfulness present now?
2. What are you aware of?
3. Are the sensations in awareness pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?
4. What is the mind doing? Is a mood or emotion present?
5. Which of the veiling factors (hindrances) or awakening factors are present? *The veiling factors are sense desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, doubt. The awakening factors are mindfulness, investigation of states, energy, joy, tranquility, unification of mind, equanimity.*
6. What is it like to be aware?
7. What supports you to be mindful?
8. Are there any day-to-day situations where you find mindfulness tends to slip away?
9. What are your intentions for practice? Why are they important?
10. What is the difference between mindfulness and simply fixing your attention on an object?
11. In what ways does mindfulness affect the quality of your day?

You may wish to make notes in a journal.



## Similes for Mindfulness

To draw this unit to a close, we'd like to draw on some of the imagery that's used in the early texts, which more fully portrays this landscape of sati—mindfulness—and the many nuances within it.



### **The watchtower**

One of the images that's used is a person standing on a watchtower. They're looking over a vast panorama. And on this watchtower, they're not exercising any kind of preferences or selective awareness. There's an equality of attentiveness, an equality of awareness, without seizing upon any particular details within the landscape. It's a dimension of mindfulness that's spacious, inclusive, nonpreferential.





### **The surgeon's probe**

Another image is much more precise than that: mindfulness being like a surgeon's probe. If a skilled surgeon were trying to extract an arrowhead from a wounded patient, he or she would meticulously feel their way into extracting the arrowhead in a way that doesn't harm the patient. I really like this image because it conveys precision but also that mindfulness is a healing and compassionate quality. It's not the kind of scrutiny that's critical or aggressive: it has this caring, healing quality, and yet with that, precision.



### **The cow herder guiding the herd**

Another simile is the cowherd who has the skillfulness and care for his cows to gather them together, collect them, and take them from pastures that are worn out where the cows no longer thrive, carefully guiding them to pastures that nourish them. One has a sense that we're learning to gather and to collect our attention, again, from the pastures where we don't thrive—the pastures of habit, the pastures of reactivity, the pastures of confusion—and we're guiding our

attention to be established in present-moment experience: the pasture in which we thrive.



### **A mother looking after her child**

Another image is that of the mother looking after her child: we tend to our experience with the same attentiveness, carefulness, and loving awareness as a mother would in protecting her only child.



### **The cow herder's relaxed awareness**

There's another image of a different kind of cowherd who has gathered the cows together, but this cowherd is now relaxing under the shade of the tree because the crops have been harvested and there's no danger that the cows are going to rampage through fields that are just beginning to grow. So the cowherd can relax and have a more trusting, confident perspective, knowing that the cows are where they need to be.

I feel this is a place in mindfulness practice where we're not being called upon to exercise the kind of vigilance over our thoughts, when the mind is well trained and less likely to stray into dangerous territories. As the Buddha put it, the signal of a well-trained mind is that a person thinks the thoughts they want to think when they want to think them and doesn't think the thoughts that they don't want to think. This cowherd has a well-trained herd. They're not going to rampage because they know the consequences and the cowherd knows the consequences of being unrestrained in fields that don't serve us well.



### **Balancing a bowl of oil on one's head**

There's also the image of a person who's been asked to walk through an excited crowd of people that has gathered to watch the local beauty queen—or you can imagine any celebrity. This person is asked to navigate their way through that crowd with a bowl of oil on their head. And should a single drop fall from from the bowl, somebody following behind them will chop off their head with a sword. It's a drastic image but it also shows, again, meticulousness. If one wants to really build the capacity for ease that Christina just mentioned, it's pointing to a continuity of mindfulness so steady that one could even walk through a crowd of people with a bowl of oil on one's head without spilling a drop.



### **Six wild animals restrained by a stake**

Another image is one of a wooden stake hammered into the ground, and tied to this stake by leashes are six wild animals that are desperate to escape and go off in their very familiar pathways. The six wild animals represent the five traditional sense doors plus the sense door of the mind. The senses are often driven by habit and compulsion into repetitive patterns and territories where we are simply tied to confusion. Mindfulness is the stake in the ground that restrains those habit patterns.



### **Gently holding a bird in your hands**

An image I like because of the quality of contact we're making with experience is holding a bird in cupped hands. We don't want the bird to escape, but we also don't want to frighten or crush it. We are present to our experience in a tactile, hands-on way, but not an oppressive or strangulating way. Just make sufficient contact with experience without crushing it.



### **The gatekeeper**

Another of the images that we alluded to earlier is the image of a gatekeeper at a city. A gatekeeper stands at the doors of the city and warmly welcomes into the city any of the visitors who have the intention of serving the inhabitants of the city well. And the gatekeeper also has the capacity to recognize the visitors who have malicious intentions. They are able to acknowledge such a visitor but then say no: not to welcome them in, not to invite them in, to gently but clearly withdraw that welcome.

### **A farmer plowing a field**

Another image of sati is a farmer plowing a field. Of course, this is referring to ancient methods of farming in India where the plow would be stood upon by the farmer and pulled by an ox. A skillful farmer knows just the right amount of pressure, just the right amount of effort to bring to standing on the plow so that it doesn't dig too deeply and is also not too superficial. There's just the right amount of effort to till the soil so that it's receptive to seeds and will nourish them.

Within these images of mindfulness we see its many nuances. We see the elements of spaciousness, focus, collectedness, equanimity, investigation. This is why, in one way of seeing the bojjangas, the six following awakening factors can truly be seen as elements of sati, mindfulness.



## Inquiry



### **Set an intention to be interested in mindfulness**

We'd like to offer a few suggestions that might help you explore and practice with this quality of mindfulness. As Christina said, it's one thing to have the intention to do something, but our experience doesn't always follow through, so I'd encourage you to see this as a gradual process and an exploratory one.

### **Find a "mindfulness bell"**

Make an intention at the start of the day to be particularly interested in the quality of mindfulness. You might want to find a so-called mindfulness bell, something that you do regularly throughout your day—maybe it's when you take out your phone, maybe it's when you go in or out of your front door—as a moment to remember your intention to be mindful. In those moments, really bring the attention into the body and notice what is being experienced right now.

## **Notice the comings and goings of mindfulness**

You might also like to notice the comings and goings of mindfulness throughout your day. Rather than thinking of it as a failure when you haven't been continuously mindful, just be interested in those times of day or those activities in which you find it easier to be present, to notice what's going on, easier not to be lost in distraction, and these times or situations in which mindfulness lapses. Notice what conditions the comings and goings of mindfulness.

## **How do you know when you're being mindful?**

You might also explore how you know when you're being mindful, and how you know when you're not being mindful. Often, we may only realize this from aftereffects. What are the aftereffects of having lost our mindfulness, when we find ourselves caught up in some habitual pattern, or totally unaware of what we were doing for the last five minutes? Really be interested in how your experience differs when you are mindful and when you're not, and let this be your own personal exploration.

## **Appreciate your efforts**

If you've made an intention at the beginning of your day, I would also recommend that you take a moment at the end of the day not to judge yourself but just to appreciate the moments in which you have remembered that intention and engaged with it—even if it's just once in the day. We're constantly watering the seeds of these qualities in our life and in our experience.





## **Bring mindfulness to a habitual activity**

I find it useful to take one activity in the day that I often engage in habitually or unconsciously and turn this into a mindfulness exploration. It can be something as simple as how you wash the dishes, walk to your car, speak to your partner, or how you listen to the world around you.

Take that one activity and see what difference it makes to be wholehearted and intentionally present. Notice also how mindfulness and habit do not coexist.



## **Summary: Mindfulness**

We have begun exploring the first factor of awakening, mindfulness. Perhaps we can see why mindfulness is talked about so often since it creates space in which all kinds of wholesome qualities can arise.

To summarize what we've learned:

- The word we usually translate as mindfulness is "sati." It literally means something like "remembering the present moment." This awareness of

the present moment is often accompanied by sampajañña: a broader, more contextual awareness of situations.

- The role of mindfulness is not just relaxation or temporary stress relief. It can take us all the way to nibbana: freedom from suffering.
- Mindfulness is awareness of what's happening in and around us, as it happens, without becoming lost in ideas and insistences. It's relaxed, embodied, attuned, and caring. There are many similes in Buddhist literature that hint at the nuances of mindfulness.
- When mindful, we tend to be interested in experience on its own terms. We respond less from a place of habit and reactivity and often find that we have a greater opportunity to choose how to respond.
- Mindfulness is an excellent support for learning from experience. It supports wisdom and self-knowledge to arise. This can be seen in the role it plays in intuitively balancing the factors and qualities present in the mind.
- Mindfulness is also protective, helping us to discern what serves us and those entanglements and obsessions that do not.
- Importantly, mindfulness is not judgmental. It puts us in contact with pleasant, neutral, and unpleasant mind states. Yet because mindfulness does not insist that our experience be other than it is, we find that our capacity to be at ease with these experiences increases.



## Practice

Mindfulness is the foundation of the awakening factors. So the emphasis for our practice until the next unit is to be interested in mindfulness, to strengthen that foundation, and let it support our activity in life.

Continue to practice mindfulness in formal meditation. Audio from Christina's guided meditation is available as a download to support you. Alternatively, you may wish to review the instructions in the workbook and undertake this practice at your own pace.

## Inquiry

Christina and Jaya have suggested inquiry and contemplation practices to deepen your appreciation of mindfulness, and develop its presence in daily life.

- Be interested in mindfulness.
- Find a "mindfulness bell" – a prompt for mindfulness.
- Notice the comings and goings of mindfulness.
- How do you know when mindfulness is here?
- Appreciate your efforts.
- Bring mindfulness to a habitual activity.

See the "Inquiry" section to review these instructions in detail.

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### **Next up: Investigation of states**

When mindfulness is present, we feel settled in the midst of experience. We become naturally curious. We notice what mind states are present and their results, we see the outcomes of our actions and habits. This is the arising of the awakening factor of investigation, which leads us to greater wisdom, freedom, and energy.