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Mindfulness Workbook FOR **DUMMIES[®]**

by Shamash Alidina and Joelle Jane Marshall
Foreword by Dr Shanida Nataraja

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Foreword

In a world filled with constant distractions, demands and stresses, an increasing number of people are earnestly searching for a way of life that brings focus, clarity, calm and, ultimately, fulfilment and happiness. Whilst there are numerous doctrines or disciplines that offer this way of life, mindfulness is a discipline that I am particularly drawn to as a neuroscientist, as it is supported by a rich and convincing scientific evidence base. Thanks to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and other researchers, we know that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) can boost well-being, reduce symptoms of stress and improve mood and coping strategies in a wide range of patients, including those suffering from chronic pain, those fighting cancer or those managing stress-related diseases. Through the research of John Teasdale and colleagues, we know that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is an effective treatment for depression and anxiety in patients who are failing to respond to traditional treatments. And through the efforts of countless researchers, we know that mindfulness-based practices can boost work productivity, reduce work absenteeism and improve social interactions in the workplace. This compelling evidence suggests a clear role for mindfulness in maintaining health, as well as addressing ill health, in people of all ages, backgrounds and professions.

Over the last decade, science has also revealed what happens in the brain during the practice of mindfulness, and this exciting research suggests that mindfulness may have effects on the performance of our brains, as well as beneficial effects on our physical and mental well-being. On both the short- and long-term, mindfulness can elicit changes in our brain that improve our emotional resilience, enhance our ability to regulate our emotional states, fine-tune our concentration and problem-solving skills, and develop compassion and empathy, for ourselves and others. These changes allow us to realise more of the potential of our brains, better equipping ourselves to deal with the challenges of modern life. This evidence presents a strong rationale for incorporating regular mindfulness practice into our everyday lives: in our families; in our schools; in the workplace; as part of our healthcare systems; and in our prisons.

The *Mindfulness Workbook For Dummies* is an excellent introduction to mindfulness and the nuts and bolts of how to live a mindful life. Embarking on any journey can be daunting and the mindful journey is no different. Where should you start? What books should you read? Who is a good teacher? And what is mindfulness anyway? This book sheds light on what being mindful really means and uses practical exercises to escort the reader through the different stages of the mindful journey. Whether a short body scan exercise to raise awareness of bodily sensations or a breathing meditation to calm the mind in a stressful situation, Shamash Alidina and Joelle Jane Marshall provide readers with a series of tools to help them both understand mindfulness and incorporate it into their everyday lives. The *Mindfulness Workbook For Dummies* can be used both in conjunction with an eight-week mindfulness-based programme taught by an experienced teacher and as an aid to guide the reader through this programme in their own home through solitary practice. By providing helpful tips and tricks, addressing potential difficulties arising through mindfulness practice, and giving readers step-by-step instructions on how to do the various mindfulness exercises, Shamash and Joelle have created an invaluable resource for anyone wishing to embark on their own mindful journey.

Dr Shanida Nataraja

Neuroscientist and author of *The Blissful Brain: Neuroscience and Proof of the Power of Meditation* (Gaia Books).

Introduction

Welcome to the *Mindfulness Workbook For Dummies*. Mindfulness offers both a set of techniques and a way of living that can lead towards greater peace, wisdom and joy. Mindfulness is an ancient approach, but now scientific evidence from top universities worldwide shows its effectiveness in treating a range of conditions like depression, anxiety, chronic pain and much more.

Life is full of many challenges – everyone goes through some sort of difficulty over the course of their time on earth. Some difficulties may be physical or practical; others mental or emotional. Mindfulness offers a way of coping with all these difficulties in a harmonious way, so that you don't make those difficulties even more painful, but meet them with wisdom and dignity, allowing them space to dissolve in their own time.

Mindfulness also enhances your life when things are going well. You learn to notice the world around you, become more grateful for what you have, more kind and forgiving towards yourself and others, focus more effectively at work, home, and in your relationships and enhance your physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

We've written this book to make mindfulness a practical reality in your life. The written exercises and accompanying guided meditation audio tracks offer a way to practise and then reflect on your personal experience of mindfulness and deepen your insights, both for beginners and more experienced practitioners too.

About This Book

This book contains a range of different ways to practise mindfulness in your life. We give you a combination of some theory along with lots of exercises to try out. With mindfulness, you discover much more by trying out the exercises rather than just reading theory, so this workbook is an ideal format for exploring mindfulness.

You can use this book as a stand-alone way of developing your own mindfulness. We describe all the key methods of practising mindfulness, and together with the accompanying audio, you can take your first steps into a more mindful way of living.

You can also use this book with a mindfulness teacher or therapist to discover new insights, try new exercises and to keep a useful record of your progress. You can then look back at what you wrote in this book to see how things have changed for you in the weeks, months or years that you've been engaging in mindfulness.

This book contains the main ways in which you can use mindfulness to overcome common difficulties like stress, anxiety, depression and physical health conditions. But the exercises are helpful for everyone; improving creativity, focus and offering a fresh, new look at your own life.

How to Use This Book

You don't need to read this book from beginning to end. You can dip in and out of different chapters, choosing what's most relevant or interesting for you. We've done our best to

cross-reference each chapter to other parts in the book, so you can delve deeper into any concepts or exercises that may be of help to you. Use the Table of Contents at the front of the book and Index at the back to locate specific information.

Please feel free to write in this book – that’s how it’s designed. Scribble in each table to your heart’s content. And if you need more space, you may like to copy the tables for your own use or use your own notebook for further reflection.

Foolish Assumptions

If you’re reading this book, we’re assuming you’re interested in learning mindfulness. We’re guessing that you’ve heard about mindfulness and want to know more. As this is a workbook, we also assume, perhaps foolishly, that you want to get practical and do some mindfulness exercises and keep a record of your experience.

Perhaps you’re a mindfulness teacher, coach or therapist looking for exercises to use with your students or clients. You may have a friend or relative suffering from a difficulty and want to know if mindfulness can help. Or you may already be an experienced mindfulness practitioner looking to deepen your awareness. Whatever the reason, we hope you find the book useful.

How This Book Is Organised

The *Mindfulness Workbook For Dummies* is divided into five parts:

Part I: Getting Started with Mindfulness

This part unlocks the treasure chest and gives you a basic overview of mindfulness. Chapter 1 is all about what mindfulness is and how mindfulness may unfold in your life. In Chapter 2 we explain all the benefits of practising mindfulness on a regular basis.

Part II: Preparing Yourself for Mindful Living

Part II is about ensuring that you have the best underlying approach and mind-set before you dive into practical mindfulness exercises.

Chapter 3 is all about engaging the right attitudes, so when you do the mindfulness practice, you have a good grounding. Without the right attitudes, you may easily get side-tracked or disheartened if your experience doesn’t match your expectations. This chapter helps you to set things straight. Chapter 4 covers two modes of mind – ‘doing’ and ‘being’ mode. You explore the nature and importance of each of these modes, and how you can use mindfulness to identify and switch modes when necessary.

Part III: Practising Mindfulness

In this part we get down to detailed mindfulness practice. In Chapter 5 you learn all the core mindfulness meditations that you can continue to use for the rest of your life, if you like! Chapter 6 is all about how to integrate mindfulness into your everyday life. In this way, you don’t just meditate, but live mindfulness, moment by moment. Chapters

7 and 8 offer you a detailed, evidence-based eight-week mindfulness programme that has been tested by tens of thousands of students for many years. You can use this to learn mindfulness in a methodical way – ideal for beginners to mindfulness. Chapter 9 helps to answer common questions that people have when first learning mindfulness. If you're having any difficulties in your mindfulness practice, Chapter 9 is the place to go.

Part IV: Enjoying the Rewards of Mindfulness

In this part, you discover how to use mindfulness to both increase your wellbeing and deal with common challenges. Chapter 10 is about happiness, and how mindfulness can help to enhance your long-term wellbeing. In Chapter 11 we offer ways mindfulness can relieve your stress and anger, and boost your energy. Chapter 12 explains the causes of anxiety and depression, and how mindfulness can help in these areas. Your physical health is covered in Chapter 13, along with how you can use mindfulness for conditions like chronic pain. And finally, Chapter 14 is about using mindfulness to improve your skills as a parent or teacher, and we share a range of specific mindful exercises to use with children.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Here in Chapters 15 and 16 you can pick up tips for living mindfully and ways to get yourself motivated to meditate. Online (at www.dummies.com/extras/mindfulnessworkbookuk), we give you an additional Part of Tens chapter with lots of resources and ways of creatively enhancing your mindfulness. Some people like to start by reading the Part of Tens – we encourage you to take a look at these mini chapters for instant inspiration.

Icons Used in This Book



We use icons throughout this workbook to bring different types of information to your attention and to clearly guide you through the book.

This icon is used to emphasise information worth bearing in mind.



The Tip icon alerts you to additional useful information that may help you to better understand a concept or to complete an exercise.



You'll see this icon next to exercises to encourage you to flex your mindfulness muscles.



This icon is an alarm denoting possible pitfalls, common errors or potential dangers.



Find pearls of wisdom and stories to get you thinking with this icon.

Where to Go from Here

This book offers a practical hands-on approach to mindfulness. Being a workbook, we devote more space to exercises and less to the underlying theory of mindfulness. If you'd like a more detailed description of the mindfulness exercises and to experience a different set of guided audio meditations, you may also like *Mindfulness For Dummies* by Shamash Alidina (Wiley). If you're looking for a variety of techniques to help you relieve stress, check out *Relaxation For Dummies* by Shamash Alidina (Wiley). For more suggestions of a range of books, audio, films, websites, retreats and more, go to www.dummies.com/extras/mindfulnessworkbookuk for an extra Part of Tens chapter: '(Nearly) Ten Ways to Expand Your Mindfulness Experience'. Head to www.dummies.com/go/mindfulnessworkbookuk to find the accompanying audio meditations mentioned in the book:

- ✓ **Track One:** Introduction (2 minutes)
- ✓ **Track Two:** Body scan meditation, Chapter 5 (25 minutes)
- ✓ **Track Three:** Sitting meditation (expanding awareness), Chapters 5 and 7 (20 minutes)
- ✓ **Track Four:** Mountain meditation, Chapter 9 (10 minutes)
- ✓ **Track Five:** Lake meditation, Chapter 3 (10 minutes)
- ✓ **Track Six:** Three-minute breathing space meditation, Chapter 6 (3 minutes)

Part I

Getting Started with Mindfulness

getting started
with

Mindfulness



Go to www.dummies.com/go/mindfulnessworkbookuk to listen to audio meditations.

In this part . . .

- ✔ Explore the origins and benefits of mindfulness.
- ✔ Understand different types of meditation.
- ✔ Consider your goals and expectations for your mindfulness journey.
- ✔ Enjoy the many benefits of mindfulness, from the positive effect on your body to improving your concentration.
- ✔ Go to www.dummies.com/go/mindfulnessworkbook to listen to audio meditations.

Chapter 1

Beginning Your Mindfulness Journey

In This Chapter

- ▶ Grasping the concept of mindfulness
 - ▶ Uncovering ways to practise mindfulness
 - ▶ Exploring the journey of mindful living
-

No matter how or why you decided to look into mindfulness, we believe that you've made a smart move. Everyone can benefit from the increased awareness and self-knowledge that practising mindfulness can bring.

So what do we mean by that phrase? *Practising mindfulness* means paying attention regularly and intentionally to your present-moment experience with mindful attitudes. Four of the most important attitudes of mindfulness are compassion, curiosity, acceptance and openness for yourself, other people and the surrounding world. You deepen and develop your mindfulness by practising mindfulness exercises and meditations and by living mindfully on a day-to-day basis.

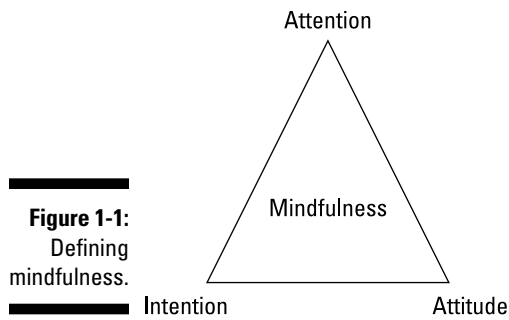
Scientific studies confirm that practising mindfulness regularly allows you to begin to change the way you experience life. As a result your brain is less stressed, focuses better and reacts automatically less, becomes more resilient to future challenges and regulates your emotions more effectively. Your body also becomes better at fighting disease and your tension eases. Most likely your relationships improve and you're more engaged at work. You may well experience greater levels of happiness and peace in your life by living with mindfulness.

In this chapter we introduce you to the concept and practice of mindfulness and guide you gently into beginning your mindfulness journey.

Understanding Mindfulness

In some ways, mindfulness is simple. You pay attention to whatever's going on right now with the right attitude, whether it's an internal or external experience. But mindfulness is also much more subtle. The challenge is remembering to be mindful, rather than reacting automatically, and letting go of your self-criticism and doubt as you begin to practise.

The triangle in Figure 1-1 summarises the essence of mindfulness as proposed by Dr Shauna Shapiro and colleagues, and published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.



Locating the origins of mindfulness

Mindfulness isn't a new concept, although it's rapidly gaining popularity in the West, especially in the field of psychology. Mindfulness is now part of both traditional psychology, which aims to help alleviate conditions such as depression or anxiety, and modern positive psychology, which advocates scientifically sound ways to raise levels of long-term wellbeing and satisfaction (Chapter 10 discusses how mindfulness can boost your happiness).

Many consider mindfulness to have its origins Buddhism, but even before the Buddha's birth some 2,500 years ago, Hindus practised a range of meditations, some of which involved mindfulness.



Mindfulness isn't inherently Eastern, just as electricity isn't inherently Western. Mindfulness is a quality of presence that's innate in all human beings. Awareness is a natural and beautiful quality of being human that can't be limited to one particular tradition or country.



Noticing what your judgements of the word *mindfulness* are before you delve into the practice more deeply is interesting. For the next minute, write down in Worksheet 1-1 all the words that pop into your head when you think of the word *mindfulness*. Don't think about the process. Time yourself for a minute and just write down what occurs to you.

Worksheet 1-1

What Mindfulness Means to Me

Mindfulness is for all

We aren't religious in the traditional sense, and Shamash, who teaches mindfulness, offers trainings in a completely secular way. Mindfulness certainly requires no belief and has no single teacher, guru or organisation. You can discover it from many teachers or just by picking up a book on the subject (oh, you have!). This is partly why we were attracted to

the approach. The other main reason why we're so passionate about mindfulness is that it's scientifically based. Just as you expect your doctor to prescribe you medication that's been proven to work, so you should develop your mental health and wellbeing with proven techniques such as mindfulness.

The development of mindfulness in the West

One of the key people who popularised mindfulness in the West is Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn, together with some colleagues working at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. In 1979 he created an innovative eight-week course that eventually became known as Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR). He tested the programme on chronic pain patients and found that not only their pain went down, but also their feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. Hundreds of research studies have been carried out on that eight-week course,

showing positive outcomes for many physical and mental-health conditions. You can find out more about the eight-week course in Chapters 7 and 8.

In the years that followed, more and more medical institutions began researching mindfulness. Mindfulness is now researched in top university departments all over the world. For example, The University of Oxford in the UK has a whole centre dedicated to researching the health benefits of mindfulness for depression, anxiety, childbirth, parenting and more.

Afterwards, consider the words you're written. Are they positive, negative or neither? Some of them may be your unconscious judgements of mindfulness, and you may find that being aware of this is useful. Your judgements may be based on what someone else has told you or something you've read in a magazine, book or seen on television. After you've discovered your judgements, try to consciously set them aside and consider mindfulness afresh. Suspend your opinions and beliefs until you've learnt and practised mindfulness yourself for some time.



If you didn't get many words coming to mind, perhaps try drawing a picture or image instead. You may well be a more visual person.

Mulling over what mindfulness means

In this section, we take a look at each concept that makes up the following definition of mindfulness: *Intentionally paying attention to your present moment experiences with compassion, curiosity, acceptance and openness.*

- ✓ **Intention:** The process of being mindful requires an intention. Your intention is your reason to practise – this may be to reduce your stress, to manage your emotions or develop wisdom. Being clear about what you hope to get from mindfulness in the long term shapes the quality of your mindfulness experience. For example, if you go to your local supermarket with a clear intention to get milk, bread and eggs, you'll probably achieve it. But if you turn up not really sure what you're after, you may end up buying anything on special offer, even if you don't need it.
- ✓ **Paying attention:** Attention can be narrow or wide. Traditionally mindfulness is about developing a wide, open awareness, but most mindfulness exercises begin with a narrow, focused attention on something – for example, focusing your attention on your breath or a part of your body. Most meditations move on to encompass a wide, open attention too.
- ✓ **Present moment:** The here and now – whatever is happening in this moment. If you're paying attention to whatever is happening now, and you're aware that you're paying attention, you're in the now. Much of the time, your mind is focused on events of the past or concerns about the future. Mindfulness values experiences in the present moment, which ironically leads to a better future! Ultimately, the only moment that exists is the present moment – everything else just exists in your own mind.

Your present moment experiences can be internal (such as thoughts or emotions) or external (such as whatever you perceive through your senses).





- ✔ **Compassion:** Kindness to yourself is the key here. When practising mindfulness, you're invited to be nice to yourself. Whenever you notice yourself judging yourself in a harsh way, mindfulness encourages you to be aware of this process and let the judgement go.

You probably have an inner critic within your mind that's often criticising you or others. Most people do. Mindfulness is about noticing this aspect of yourself and stepping back from it, rather than feeding or encouraging more criticism.

In the ancient Indian Pali language, the words for *mind* and *heart* are the same. And the Chinese character for *mindfulness* is a combination of two characters. One part means *now* and the other means *mind* or *heart*. So, when you hear the word *mindfulness* you can also consider it to mean *heartfulness*.

- ✔ **Curiosity:** Mindfulness is quite natural for children because they're naturally inquisitive and constantly asking 'why?'. Mindfulness is about rekindling your inner curiosity. If you're more curious about the world around you, you're immediately more mindful instead of behaving habitually and reacting to situations automatically. Even children can benefit from mindfulness though, as we explain in Chapter 14.

This dimension of curiosity is especially helpful when dealing with difficult thoughts and emotions. Instead of automatically trying to fight or run away from unhelpful thoughts or emotions, mindfulness encourages you to become curious about them. This in turn creates a different mind state and is more likely to allow your difficult inner experience to pass away.

- ✔ **Acceptance:** One of the most important and poorly understood attitudes in mindfulness. In fact, mindfulness is sometimes referred to as an acceptance-based therapy because this attitude is so important. Acceptance for some people has negative connotations of passivity, giving up or allowing someone to do wrong without taking action – acting like a doormat. But this isn't at all what acceptance means in mindfulness.

Acceptance is an active process of acknowledging your present-moment experience and is particularly important when dealing with emotions. This example may help. Imagine that you're travelling from London to Manchester. Before you can get to Manchester, you need to accept that you're in London. That makes sense. If you don't accept that you're in London, you're never going to get to Manchester. You need to begin where you are. In the same way, if you're feeling sad, you need to accept it. Pretending, denying, fighting or running from your feeling doesn't help – in fact, you're inadvertently giving the feeling more attention and so are more likely to strengthen it.

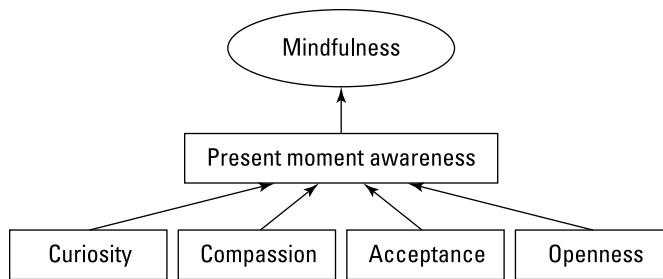


- ✔ **Openness:** Mindfulness encourages you to open up to your inner and outer experiences, as best you can. By *openness*, we also mean a sense of stepping back from your experiences, but not avoiding or running away from them. This stepping back is tremendously helpful when you're having relentless thoughts or difficult emotions. Mindfulness enables you to watch the thoughts arising and passing away without the need to cling or attach to them. You don't need to believe everything you think. A sense of detached openness also enables you to watch emotions come and go from a safe distance instead of being overwhelmed by your feelings. In this way, instead of suppressing emotions you deal with them.

For example, say you're nervous about an upcoming exam. You can watch your thoughts, such as 'I hate exams' or 'What if I fail?', as just thoughts and let them go. You can also be aware of the feeling of anxiety in your stomach with a sense of distance or perspective. You may then centre yourself by taking a few deep, slow breaths, feeling the sensation of your breath in your body. You then feel more effectively prepared to study for your exam.

Figure 1-2 summarises the four mindful attitudes. (We discuss maintaining healthy attitudes in Chapter 3.)

Figure 1-2:
Summarising
the key
mindful
attitudes.



Exploring Types of Mindfulness Meditation



Mindfulness, also called wise attention, helps us see what we're adding to our experiences, not only during meditation sessions but also elsewhere.

— Sharon Salzberg

One of the areas of common confusion is the difference between mindfulness and meditation. To clarify:



- ✓ **Mindfulness** is the act of being consciously aware with mindful attitudes. You can practise mindfulness over any length of time, for the duration of a single breath or for your whole life. You can practise it while waiting in a queue, talking to your partner or walking down the street.
- ✓ **Mindfulness meditation** is an activity where you make time deliberately and consciously for cultivating mindfulness (flip to Chapter 5 for some formal mindfulness meditations).

Clinically proven courses usually contain certain common mindfulness meditations such as:

- ✓ **Body scan meditation:** Often done lying down, but you can use any posture you like. This meditation involves becoming aware of your bodily sensations in a mindful way, step by step. You also begin to discover how easily your attention wanders off to other thoughts and how to be kind to yourself rather than self-critical when this happens. Check out Chapter 5 for more.
- ✓ **Movement meditation:** Usually yoga, t'ai chi, qi gong or another physical mind-body exercise (see Chapter 6). This type of meditation involves focusing on your bodily sensations, breathing and mindfully watching and perhaps letting go of whatever thoughts and emotions arise as you practise. Slow walking meditation is another possibility that's sometimes used. For how mindfulness can help with physical pain and illness, turn to Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Breathing space meditation:** A short, roughly three-minute, meditation that we describe in Chapter 6. We recommend that you do this practice a few times a day and whenever you experience a highly stressful situation or difficult emotion. The idea is to create a mindful awareness of your experience instead of avoiding it. This approach has been shown scientifically to be much more effective than avoidance. For more mindfulness approaches to stress and anxiety, check out Chapters 11 and 12 respectively.
- ✓ **Expanding awareness meditation:** Usually called sitting meditation, but it can be practised in any position. The meditation involves focusing, often in this order, on your breath, body, sounds, thoughts and feelings, and finally developing an open awareness where you're choicelessly aware of whatever is most predominant in your consciousness (see Chapter 5).

You can break down the expanding awareness meditation into separate meditations, each powerful and transformative in themselves:

- **Mindfulness of breath meditation:** Focusing your attention on the feeling of your in-breath and out-breath. Each time your mind wanders, bring your attention back non-judgementally.
- **Mindfulness of body meditation:** Feeling the physical sensation in your body from moment to moment. You can also practise this together with the awareness of breathing.
- **Mindfulness of sounds meditation:** Being aware of sounds as they arise and pass away. If no ambient sounds exist, you can simply listen to the silence and notice what effect doing so has for you.
- **Mindfulness of thoughts meditation:** Being aware of your thoughts arising in your mind and passing away and having a sense of distance between yourself and your thoughts. You allow the thoughts to come and go as they please, without judging or attaching to them.
- **Mindfulness of feelings meditation:** Noticing whatever feelings arise for you. In particular, you notice where you feel the emotion in your body and bring a quality of acceptance and curiosity to your emotions.
- **Open awareness meditation:** Sometimes called choiceless awareness, because you become aware of whatever's most predominant in your awareness without choosing. You may be aware of any of the above meditation experiences as well.

Another group of mindfulness meditations are more like visualisations. These meditations slightly expand the definition of mindfulness, which usually involves paying attention to present-moment experiences. However, many people are quite visual and find the meditations valuable. The two main visual meditations included in the audio of this book are:

- ✓ **Mountain meditation:** This meditation helps you to cultivate stability and groundedness and feel more centred. For details, flip to Chapter 9 and listen to Track 4 on the accompanying audio.
- ✓ **Lake meditation:** This meditation is about exploring the beauty of accepting and allowing experiences to be just as they are. Check out Chapter 3 and listen to Track 5 for more.



If you've already tried some form of meditation in the past, use Worksheet 1-2 to record your experiences and what you discovered.

Worksheet 1-2 Recording My Past Experiences of Meditation	
Type of Meditation	What Did I Think of the Meditation? How Was My Experience of It?

Reflecting on any past meditation experience allows you to see what type of meditations seem to work well for you. If you've never practised meditation, don't worry. You're in a good position because you're starting with a blank slate.

Setting Off on a Mindful Journey



In the end, just three things matter: how well we have lived, how well we have loved, how well we have learned to let go.

— Jack Kornfield

Going on a holiday is similar to the journey into mindful living. In this section, imagine that you're going on a trip and reflect on how the journey is like the inner journey of mindfulness.

Taking the first steps: Choosing your learning method

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a cunning plan . . . and then a single step.

Like deciding to set out on a mindfulness journey, the start of an excursion is tremendously exciting! You're going on an adventure and aren't sure what you'll experience. So you need to have at least a rough idea of where you're going. And when you're planning your journey, you need to know what you hope to get from the trip. Here are the kind of questions you may consider:

- ✔ Are you interested in connecting with nature or finding adrenalin-rush activities?
- ✔ Will you have lots of free time or are you on a tight schedule?
- ✔ What's your budget?
- ✔ Will you be sleeping in a tent, a campervan or checking into a motel or 5-star luxury accommodation?
- ✔ What type of traveller are you? Do you like to go with the flow or prefer to have every day pre-planned?

For me (Shamash), I prefer planning trips by speaking to someone, and I don't like to pre-plan too much. So I just turn up to a tourist office when I arrive and have a nice chat with the representative and plan that way. You may prefer to read books. Others like asking all their friends or discussing the trip online. You can plan a trip in loads of different ways.

Discovering and integrating mindfulness into your life is similar. The first stage in the mindfulness journey is to find out about mindfulness. Do you prefer to learn from just reading a book such as this one or to complement the experience with further support? If so, you may consider:

- ✔ An online course.
- ✔ A workshop.
- ✔ A course in person with a teacher.
- ✔ One-to-one coaching with an expert, on the phone or in-person.

Your choice depends on what you've preferred in the past, your budget, how much time you have and so on. You may just decide to read this book and use the audio to begin with – that's a perfectly good way to start.



Go with whichever option you prefer and let the process unfold naturally. Just as planning a trip isn't the trip itself, so planning to practise mindfulness isn't mindfulness! Until you have a go and see what effect the mindfulness has, you haven't started. You're close if you're planning, but not quite there yet.



Mindfulness isn't something new for you to learn; it's the rediscovery of a world you used to live in as a child, with the added wisdom of experience. Mindfulness is an innate quality in every human being (check out Chapter 4), and you experience mindfulness from time to time in your daily life. Each time you really see a sunset, marvel at the beauty of your baby, take a deep conscious breath or listen to piece of music, you're being mindful.



Use Worksheet 1-3 to evaluate your experience of past learning methods. This exercise can help you to decide what would be the best method for you to learn mindfulness.

Worksheet 1-3		
Deciding How I Want to Learn		
Method of Learning	Have I Tried this Learning Method Before? If so, for Learning What?	How Effective was the Learning Method for Me?
Online		
Weekly group course		
Half-day workshop		
Weekend workshop		
One-to-one coaching		
Audiobook		
Anything else		

Treading the path: Committing to practise mindfulness regularly



Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.

— John Lennon

After you plan your trip, you need to go! You don't want to be an all-talk but no-action kind of person. So, pack your bag and go. As you're travelling you may stop in some unexpected places, just out of curiosity. Yesterday I (Shamash) was driving on a small road and noticed a beautiful turquoise lake. I stopped my car and asked a coffee-shop

owner if she could recommend a walk. She did. I found myself walking up to an observatory at the top of local peak and seeing the lake from high above, with ice-capped mountains in the distance.

You need to practise mindfulness regularly. If possible you need to practise the mindfulness meditations every day, or at least make an effort to be mindful in your daily activities (as we discuss in Chapter 6) as best you can. Your reward is a brain that's more focused, creative, productive, emotionally resilient and peaceful. Not bad, eh? (To read about all the benefits that mindfulness can bring, check out Chapter 2.)

One of the challenges that most people have is remembering to be mindful. Drifting back into your usual habits on autopilot is just so easy. Therefore you need to think of ways to support yourself to keep going. For more help on your motivation, flip to Chapters 2 and 16.



Which of the approaches in Worksheet 1-4 do you think is going to help you stick to practising mindfulness regularly? You know yourself better than anyone else, so trust your intuition and see what answers you come up with.

Worksheet 1-4		Maintaining My Motivation	
<i>Method or Approach</i>	<i>How I Can Use this Method to Help Practise Mindfulness Regularly</i>		
<p>Learning with a friend, putting mindfulness exercises in your diary, joining a class, reading more books on the subject.</p>			



Overcoming difficulties along the way

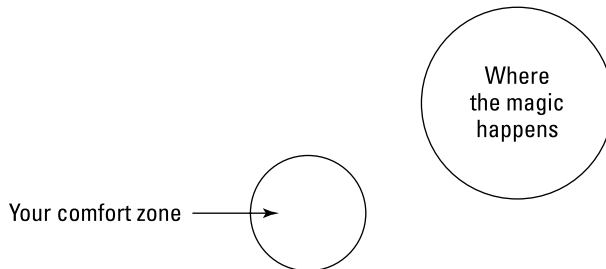
'I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.'

— Thomas Edison

To enjoy an excursion, you need to let go of your expectations and instead go with the flow. If you're obsessed with planning and something goes wrong, you may get upset rather than enjoy the adventure. The same is true for the journey into mindfulness. You need to practise the mindful exercises as best you can and just see what happens. Letting go of your goals, desires or specific outcomes makes the process work far more effectively. You may feel calm and peaceful, or you may release more emotion and feel a bit drained. Whatever happens, happens. That's the attitude you want to cultivate to keep your journey running smoothly.

Journeys are almost guaranteed to have difficulties. Without difficulty, you're probably too far inside your comfort zone. Sometimes you need to move out of that zone to experience something radically exciting and different. Figure 1-3 contains a great picture we saw online the other day.

Figure 1-3:
The benefits
of leaving
your com-
fort zone.



You need to take a chance sometimes and do things that feel slightly uncomfortable. Practising mindfulness can itself be outside your comfort zone. You may think that when you practise something scary could happen: difficult emotions might come up and overwhelm you, or thoughts that you've been suppressing may suddenly arise. Chapter 9 covers dealing with difficulties in your practice.



Meditation has been shown to be a very safe process and many people feel much better and happier through mindfulness practice. Consider it as a bit like flying in a plane: it may seem risky, but in fact travelling in a car is far more dangerous. Mindfulness is a very safe way to travel.

Staying flexible

Here's an example from a recent trip. I (Shamash) stopped at one scenic point and admired the view. As I was returning to my car, I spotted a few brown streaks on my bonnet. Just out of pure curiosity, I decided to look at the engine. To my astonishment, the oil cap had come off and engine oil had spilt all over the engine. If you're not mechanically minded, basically this isn't good. Fortunately I was in a mindful state and saw the whole thing as quite an adventure. I was grateful I'd

spotted the problem before it got worse, and I managed to get myself to the nearest garage and have the problem fixed.

Journeys are only frustrating if you plan for an outcome and fixate on that desire. If I'd planned exactly what I was going to see and do that afternoon, I may have been quite upset and reacted negatively.