

LIVING MINDFULLY WITH CYSTIC FIBROSIS



***A SIX-WEEK INTRODUCTORY
MINDFULNESS CLASS***

Compiled by Julie Desch

Welcome to Living Mindfully With Cystic Fibrosis. I have designed this six-week online course, a modification of the wildly successful Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, to be more specific to issues that face people living with CF and their caregivers. It is essentially offered as a beginners course in mindfulness meditation, although it will also be helpful for those who already have a meditation practice and want to deepen it in the company of their peers.

The intention of this course is to help foster the development of a powerful defense to the onslaught of uncertainty and intense emotions brought about by living with a chronic illness. Each class will include a short gentle movement practice as well as a longer guided seated practice where you will learn to bring a kind awareness to the range of human experience; sensations in the body, wide ranging-emotions, distracting thoughts, and concepts such as uncertainty and self-compassion. What differentiates this class from a typical MBSR program will be the talks provided to suggest the relevance of these ideas and skills to living with CF.

This workbook is designed to support the learning and practice of mindfulness. Homework assignment sheets for each week of class detail your home practice for that week. Each week there are formal meditative practices (which involve doing the guided meditations provided); informal practices which facilitate the integration of mindfulness into everyday life, and readings selected readings and videos taken from online sources to provide further background information. Home practice work-sheets for each week are designed to enhance motivation and to help you keep track of your practice.

Please do the homework! Mindfulness practice is a discipline which can support, comfort and enrich life if you make your it a part of your life. The key words are discipline and practice.

What you get out of the class will be directly proportional to what you put into it in terms of both the quantity and the sincerity of your effort. In the context of mindfulness practice, effort refers to the strong

intention and commitment to being non-judgmentally aware in each moment. This connotes simply being fully present and attentive, in contrast to the conventional notion of effort as striving and doing.

It is best to arrange a regular time and place to practice when you will not be disturbed. You don't have to like the homework practice - just do it! Often the times when we feel most resistant to practicing are the times when it is most valuable.

Mindfulness meditation is different from many other stress reduction approaches. Here, the emphasis will focus on shifting your relationship to experience itself, rather than on learning techniques. It is my sincere hope that the class will help you in coping with stress of living with cystic fibrosis, or of caring for someone who does. Even more, however, I hope that the practice of mindfulness will deepen and transform your capacity to appreciate "the full catastrophe" - the life we are given, whatever it may be - and the preciousness, richness, and poignancy of each moment of that life, no matter how painful or mundane.

HOMEWORK SESSION #1

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Body Scan Meditation (15 min) OR Check-In (5 min) - 6 days this week. The recordings of these guided meditation practice were attached to your welcome email.

- . 2) Keep a daily record of your practice; when and where you did it as well as brief comments about anything you may have noticed. The chart on the following page will provide a template for this.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Intermittently throughout the day, pause to become aware of your breathing for just one or two breaths. Good time to try this would be during a nebulizer treatment and then during a time when settled comfortably and relaxed.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:

WATCH: Shauna Shapiro TED talk: <https://youtu.be/IeblJdB2-Vo>

READ: Seven Myths of Meditation (attached)

Day	What Practice	How Long?	Comments
Day One			
Day Two			
Day Three			
Day Four			
Day Five			
Day Six			

7 Myths of Meditation

By Deepak Chopra

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In the past 40 years, meditation has entered the mainstream of modern Western culture, and been prescribed by physicians and practiced by everyone from business executives, artists, and scientists to students, teachers, military personnel, and — on a promising note — politicians. Ohio Congressman Tim Ryan meditates every morning and has become a major advocate of mindfulness and meditation, as he describes in his book, *A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit*.

Despite the growing popularity of meditation, prevailing misconceptions about the practice are a barrier that prevents many people from trying meditation and receiving its profound benefits for the body, mind, and spirit. Here are seven of the most common meditation myths, dispelled.

Myth #1: Meditation is difficult.

Truth: This myth is rooted in the image of meditation as an esoteric practice reserved only for saints, holy men, and spiritual adepts. In reality, when you receive instruction from an experienced, knowledgeable teacher, meditation is easy and fun to learn. The techniques can be as simple as focusing on the breath or silently repeating a mantra. One reason why meditation may seem difficult is that we try too hard to concentrate, we're overly attached to results, or we're not sure we are doing it right. In our experience at the Chopra Center, learning meditation from a qualified teacher is the best way to ensure that the process is enjoyable and you get the most from your practice. A teacher will help you understand what you're experiencing, move past common roadblocks, and create a nourishing daily practice.

Myth #2: You have to quiet your mind in order to have a successful meditation practice.

Truth: This may be the number one myth about meditation and is the cause of many people giving up in frustration. Meditation isn't about stopping our thoughts or trying to empty our mind — both of these approaches only create stress and more noisy internal chatter. We can't stop or control our thoughts, but we can decide how much attention to give them. Although we can't impose quiet on our mind, through meditation we can find the quiet that already exists in the space between our thoughts. Sometimes referred to as "the gap," this space between thoughts is pure consciousness, pure silence, and pure peace.

When we meditate, we use an object of attention, such as our breath, an image, or a mantra, which allows our mind to relax into this silent stream of awareness. When thoughts arise, as they inevitably will, we don't need to judge them or try to push them away. Instead, we gently return our attention to our object of attention. In every meditation, there are moments, even if only microseconds, when the mind dips into the gap and experiences the refreshment of pure awareness. As you meditate on a regular basis, you will spend more and more time in this state of expanded awareness and silence.

Be assured that even if it feels like you have been thinking throughout your entire meditation, you are still receiving the benefits of your practice. You haven't failed or wasted your time. When my friend and colleague David Simon taught meditation, he would often tell students, "The thought I'm having thoughts may be the most important thought you have ever thought, because before you had that thought, you may not have even known you were having thoughts. You probably thought you were your thoughts." Simply noticing that you are having thoughts is a breakthrough because it begins to shift your internal reference point from ego mind to witnessing awareness. As you become less identified with your thoughts and stories, you experience greater peace and open to new possibilities.

Myth #3: It takes years of dedicated practice to receive any benefits from meditation.

Truth: The benefits of meditation are both immediate and long-term. You can begin to experience benefits the first time you sit down to meditate and in the first few days of daily practice. Many scientific studies provide evidence that meditation has profound effects on the mind-body physiology within just weeks of practice. For example, a landmark study led by Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital found that as little as eight weeks of meditation not only helped people experience decreased anxiety and greater feelings of calm; it also produced growth in the areas of the brain associated with memory, empathy, sense of self, and stress regulation.

At the Chopra Center, we commonly hear from new meditators who are able to sleep soundly for the first time in years after just a few days of daily meditation practice. Other common benefits of meditation include improved concentration, decreased blood pressure, reduced stress and anxiety, and enhanced immune function. You can learn more about the benefits of meditation in a recent post, "Why Meditate?" on the Chopra Center blog.

Myth #4: Meditation is escapism.

Truth: The real purpose of meditation isn't to tune out and get away from it all but to tune in and get in touch with your true self — that eternal aspect of yourself that goes beyond all the ever-changing, external circumstances of your life. In meditation you dive below the mind's churning surface, which tends to be filled with repetitive thoughts about the past and worries about the future, into the still point of pure consciousness. In this state of transcendent awareness, you let go of all the stories you've been telling yourself about who you are, what is limiting you, and where you fall short — and you experience the truth that your deepest self is infinite and unbounded.

As you practice on a regular basis, you cleanse the windows of perception and your clarity expands. While some people do try to use meditation as a form of escape — as a way to bypass unresolved emotional issues — this approach runs counter to all of the wisdom teachings about meditation and mindfulness. In fact, there are a variety of meditation techniques specifically developed to identify, mobilize and release stored emotional toxicity. If you are coping with emotional upset or trauma, I recommend that you work with a therapist who can help you safely explore and heal the pain of the past, allowing you to return to your natural state of wholeness and love.

Myth #5: I don't have enough time to meditate.

Truth: There are busy, productive executives who have not missed a meditation in 25 years, and if you make meditation a priority, you will do it. If you feel like your schedule is too full, remember that even just a few minutes of meditation is better than none. We encourage you not to talk yourself out of meditating just because it's a bit late or you feel too sleepy.

In life's paradoxical way, when we spend time meditating on a regular basis, we actually have more time. When we meditate, we dip in and out of the timeless, spaceless realm of consciousness... the state of pure awareness that is the source of everything that manifests in the universe. Our breathing and heart rate slow down, our blood pressure lowers, and our body decreases the production of stress hormones and other chemicals that speed up the aging process and give us the subjective feeling that we are "running out of time."

In meditation, we are in a state of restful alertness that is extremely refreshing for the body and mind. As people stick with their meditation ritual, they notice that they are able to accomplish more while doing less. Instead of struggling so hard to achieve goals, they spend more and more time "in the flow" — aligned with universal intelligence that orchestrates everything.

Myth #6: Meditation requires spiritual or religious beliefs.

Truth: Meditation is a practice that takes us beyond the noisy chatter of the mind into stillness and silence. It doesn't require a specific spiritual belief, and many people of many different religions practice meditation without any conflict with their current religious beliefs. Some meditators have no particular religious beliefs, or are atheist or agnostic. They meditate in order to experience inner quiet and the numerous physical and mental health benefits of the practice — including lowered blood pressure, stress reduction, and restful sleep. The original reason that I started meditating was to help myself stop smoking. Meditation helps us to enrich our lives. It enables us to enjoy whatever we do in our lives more fully and happily — whether that is playing sports, taking care of our children, or advancing in our career.

Myth #7: I'm supposed to have transcendent experiences in meditation.

Truth: Some people are disappointed when they don't experience visions, see colors, levitate, hear a choir of angels, or glimpse enlightenment when they meditate. Although we can have a variety of wonderful experiences when we meditate, including feelings of bliss and oneness, these aren't the purpose of the practice. The real benefits of meditation are what happens in the other hours of the day when we're going about our daily lives. When we emerge from our meditation session, we carry some of the stillness and silence of our practice with us, allowing us to be more creative, compassionate, centered, and loving to ourselves and everyone we encounter.

As you begin or continue your meditation journey, here are some other guidelines that may help you on your way:

Have no expectations. Sometimes the mind is too active to settle down. Sometimes it settles down immediately. Sometimes it goes quiet, but the person doesn't notice. Anything can happen.

Be easy with yourself. Meditation isn't about getting it right or wrong. It's about letting your mind find its true nature.

Don't stick with meditation techniques that aren't leading to inner silence. Find a technique that resonates with you. There are many kinds of mantra meditation, including the Primordial Sound Meditation practice taught at the Chopra Center. Or simply follow the in and out of your breathing, not paying attention to your thoughts at all. The mind wants to find its source in silence. Give it a chance by letting go.

Make sure you are alone in a quiet place to meditate. Unplug the phone. Make sure no one is going to disturb you.

Really be there. If your attention is somewhere else, thinking about your next appointment, errand or meal, of course you won't find silence. To meditate, your intention must be clear and free of other obligations.

Source: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/deepak-chopra/meditation-myths_b_2823629.html

HOMEWORK SESSION #2

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Body Scan Meditation - 6 days per week, keep a daily record (attached below)
- . 2) Try at least once the breathing practice at https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Practice mindfulness in daily life (teeth-brushing, washing dishes, showering, driving, etc). Pick one and commit to it!
- . 2) Intermittently throughout the day, pause to become aware of your breathing for just one or two breaths.

WATCH: Jon Kabat-Zinn: Life Is Right Now [https://youtu.be/w-XMH6xi8v4](https://youtu.be/w-<u>XMH6xi8v4</u>)

READ: Interesting Scientific American article on brain changes associated with meditation: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/what-does-mindfulness-meditation-do-to-your-brain/>

REFLECTION: How does joy show up in your body? Contentment? Sadness? Anger? Fear?

Maybe you don't know this yet, so for this week try to pay attention to where and how in your body these (or similar) emotions appear.

Day	What Practice	How Long?	Comments
Day One			
Day Two			
Day Three			
Day Four			
Day Five			
Day Six			

HOMework SESSION #3

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Alternate body scan (15 min) with longer Mindfulness of Body/Breath/Sound meditation (20 min). Record in the chart following the S T O P exercise description.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Continue practicing mindfulness in daily life (teeth-brushing, washing dishes, showering, driving, etc). Pick a different activity from last week and commit!
- . 2) Intermittently throughout the day, pause to become aware of your breathing for just one or two breaths.

HOMework:

WATCH: Dan Harris Google talk: <https://youtu.be/Dt5Qv9tUObI>

READ AND TRY (IF YOU WISH): Mindfulness of Thought Exercise (next page). A different analogy than river of boats, but very similar.

PRACTICE: S T O P exercise as often as you can remember to do when triggered or stressed in some way. Description of how S T O P exercise is done is on following pages.

INQUIRY:

What are some of your “top ten” thinking hits?

Mindfulness of Thoughts

Tips for this exercise:

Find somewhere quiet initially to help you practice. As you become more experienced it is useful to practice this whilst you are going about your daily routine, the usual distractions will be there and will increase your skills in noticing when your mind wanders.

To practice, think of a way you might like to visualize letting go of your thoughts. Some examples include imagining sitting in a field and watching your thoughts float on clouds, putting them on leaves that float down a stream, watching a train go past and putting the thoughts on carriages, putting the thoughts on balloons. Try different methods and see which works best for you.

It will be really helpful to practice this daily if you can.

Practice

Imagine you are in your chosen scenario, for example sitting on the bank of a stream, in a field watching the clouds, whatever. Notice what is around you (pause). Now bring your attention to the activity of your mind, notice your thoughts. Don't try to stop them, change them or block them, just observe and watch them come and go. Try not to judge the thoughts or criticize yourself for what comes up.

As you notice each thought, using whatever technique you have chosen, watch the thoughts float by a bit like you would watch a film. You might find the thoughts come as images, that's fine, just watch them float by. You might want to imagine yourself putting the thoughts on the vehicle you have chosen, for example putting the thoughts on to a leaf and watch it pass by down the stream. Just continue to watch your thoughts and allow them to pass by using whatever technique you have chosen.

You might find you get caught up in the thoughts. If you notice this is happening, gently return to your position on the bank, field etc watching the thoughts and let them pass by. Some thoughts might come up more than once,

that's OK, just allow them to pass. Some thoughts may come in quick succession, that's OK too, just put them all on the leaf (cloud etc) and watch them pass. You may even have the thought "this is hard" or "I'm not having any thoughts", well try to recognise these as thoughts and let them go. Some thoughts may come as images or have emotions attached to them, again, just notice, watch and allow them to pass by without trying to change anything, judge yourself or block it.

Continue to watch the thoughts come and go. When you are ready to end the practice take a few deep breaths and slowly return your attention back to the room.

How can this be useful for me?

When we experience distressing thoughts, it is easy to get "hooked" on them. That's is we get caught up in them and do not notice that we are no longer paying attention to what we want to. We can then begin to analyse them, they can quickly spiral and cause more distress. We start to take our thoughts as if they are factual, which can create more distress. This exercise will help you to become more aware of your thoughts and judgements and notice when you are getting caught up in them. If we are more aware of our thoughts, we can choose which ones we want to focus on and which ones we want to let go of without obsessing over them. This technique is called thought diffusion (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999)

In everyday life, you can either continue to visualize putting the thoughts on leaves (or whatever you have practiced) or you can simply notice the thoughts and that your mind has wandered and gently return it to what you want to focus on. Some people find it useful to visualize putting the thoughts on leaves as this helps them "unhook" from the thoughts.

Hayes, S.C., Strosahl, K.D., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). Acceptance and commitment therapy: An experiential approach to behaviour change. New York: Guildford Press.

The S.T.O.P. EXERCISE

Creating space to come down from the worried mind and back into the present moment has been shown to be enormously helpful to people. When we are present we have a firmer grasp of all our options and resources which often make us feel better. Next time you find your mind racing with stress, try the acronym S.T.O.P.:

S - Stop what you are doing, put things down for a minute.

T - Take a breath. Breathe normally and naturally and follow your breath coming in and of your nose. You can even say to yourself “in” as you’re breathing in and “out” as you’re breathing out if that helps with concentration.

O - Observe your thoughts, feelings, and emotions. You can reflect about what is on your mind and also notice that thoughts are not facts and they are not permanent. If the thought arises that you are inadequate, just notice the thought, let it be, and continue on. Notice any emotions that are there and just name them. Recent research out of UCLA says that just naming your emotions can have a calming effect. Then notice your body. Are you standing or sitting? How is your posture? Any aches and pains.

P - Proceed with something that will support you in the moment. Whether that is talking to a friend or just rubbing your shoulders.

From “Hectic Life? Quick Tips for Mindful Living,” by Elisha Goldstein

Day	What Practice	How Long?	Comments
Day One			
Day Two			
Day Three			
Day Four			
Day Five			
Day Six			

HOMework SESSION #4

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Alternate body scan (15 min) with longer Mindfulness of Body/Breath/Sound meditation (20 min). Record in the chart on following page.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Continue practicing mindfulness in daily life (teeth-brushing, washing dishes, showering, driving, etc). Pick a different activity from last week and commit!
- . 2) Intermittently throughout the day, pause to become aware of your breathing for just one or two breaths.
- . 3) Continue working with the S T O P exercise this week. Consider sticking reminder notices in places you often become stressed (i.e. the car dashboard).

HOMework:

WATCH: Interesting YouTube talk about unpleasant emotions: <https://youtu.be/EKy19WzkPxE>

INQUIRY: What have you noticed when doing the S T O P exercise. Do you notice any familiar patterns?

Day	What Practice	How Long?	Comments
Day One			
Day Two			
Day Three			
Day Four			
Day Five			
Day Six			

HOMework SESSION #5

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Alternate Mindfulness of Body/Breath/Sound meditation (20 min) with Big Sky Mindfulness meditation (20 min). Record in the chart on following page.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- . 1) Continue practicing mindfulness in daily life (teeth-brushing, washing dishes, showering, driving, etc). Pick a different activity from last week and commit!
- . 2) Try driving, commuting, or walking without music or listening to the radio. What do you notice?

HOMEWORK:

Mindfulness researcher Richie Davidson on Resilience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALjF1yb-VLw>

Two part Tara Brach podcast on Resilience:

Part One: <https://www.tarabrach.com/true-resilience-part-1/>

Part Two: <https://www.tarabrach.com/true-resilience-part-2/>

INQUIRY: What have you learned about yourself from the times you've "gotten back up again" after a setback?

Day	What Practice	How Long?	Comments
Day One			
Day Two			
Day Three			
Day Four			
Day Five			
Day Six			

SESSION #6 Additional Material:

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Keep practicing!!!

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- 1) Keep remember to be mindful in daily life. You will forget over and over. But just keep trying and be kind to yourself:-).

<http://self-compassion.org/> (Dr. Kristin Neff—Self-Compassion guru)

Mindfulness on the Internet:

www.umassmed.edu/cfm (regional listings, articles)

<http://marc.ucla.edu/> (UCLA's mindfulness site, great guided meditations)

<https://www.tarabrach.com/> (more great guided meditations)

Suggested Readings:

Joseph Goldstein:

The Experience of Insight, Shambhala, 1987. - *Insight Meditation: The*

Practice of Freedom, Shambhala, 1993.

Seeking the Heart of Wisdom, Shambhala, 1987

Thich Nhat Hanh:

The Miracle of Mindfulness, Beacon Press, 1976.

Being Peace, Parallax Press, 1987.

Jack Kornfield:

A Path with Heart, Bantam Books, 1993.

Jon Kabat-Zinn:

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to

Face Stress, Pain, and Illness, Bantam Books, 1990.

Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday

Life, Hyperion, 1994.

Stephen Levine:

A Gradual Awakening, Anchor/Doubleday, 1979.

Shunryu Suzuki:

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Weatherhill, 1986.

