RECOVERING WITH A MINDFUL SPIRIT:

INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS AND THE TWELVE STEPS

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ABSTRACT

RECOVERING WITH A MINDFUL SPIRIT: INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS AND THE TWELVE STEPS

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This dissertation asserts that incorporating mindfulness practice into a Twelve-Step program strengthens a person's potential to stay sober. Both AA and mindfulness practice promote an individual's relapse resistance by providing information and tools that super-charge recovery, in harmony with a Twelve-Step program.

The practices and well-established benefits of mindfulness bolster a Twelve-Step program because mindfulness teaches ways of thinking and of questioning, which lead to gaining a greater understanding of self and mind, and a heightened awareness of how one relates to their thoughts. With this awareness, an individual can realize that they are capable of consciously choosing their actions, rather than reacting to situations according to deeply established default behaviors.

Mindfulness practice teaches the value of experiencing life in the present moment. By remaining present, an individual can become more aware of how they experience their emotions, both internally and physically. With practice, cultivating a mindful view enables a person to experience a thought, and then pause, observe, and make a conscious choice of how they will react. With present moment awareness, an individual might become more attuned to where their attention goes and notice when their thoughts are leading them in a bad direction. Developing these skills is useful to someone in recovery since thoughts are so closely tied to relapse.

Included in this dissertation is an exploration of the research regarding the brain science behind addiction. It points out the vulnerabilities that can prevent a person from going into recovery or prevent them from staying sober. Spirituality is highlighted as an essential component in the recovery process, both in Twelve-Step programs and in mindfulness practice.

This dissertation creates an eight-week recovery program that optimizes the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and mindfulness-based recovery approaches by blending them into one program, with a particular emphasis on spirituality. Intersections and opportunities of the program and practices clarify how mindfulness not only supports but easily harmonizes with the AA program.

Key words: recovery, addiction, mindfulness, relapse, Twelve-Step programs, AA, Alcoholics Anonymous.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children, Jonathan and Kate. Jon, your experience is the point of origination for this dissertation. I am grateful every day for the miracle of your recovery. I admire how you live your life and for how you help others. Kate, I am so deeply appreciative for your steadfast love and support. I know how deeply you have been affected by those chaotic years. To both of you, I watch you with fascination and am so proud. You are both beautiful spirits who contribute good to this world.

I am thankful to my parents, Barbara and David, whose unconditional love and deep belief in me continue to sustain me. They were incredible role models whose words and actions gave me a blueprint that has helped me navigate my life.

I also dedicate this work to the families of those who struggle with addiction. My deep hope is that this work is helpful to someone, a son or daughter, a parent, a beloved family member, or friend.

I thank God for the strength and love that have been so gracefully shared with me.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my gratitude to Erin Sheehan for introducing me to mindfulness practice, the practitioners, researchers, programs, and scholars who have made discoveries in this field. It was in my first course with Erin that I saw the intersections with recovery, which gave me the inspiration to engage in this work. Erin's excitement and commitment in partnering with me on this dissertation has been a gift.

I am thankful to Laura Winters for her wisdom and guidance on the dissertation process. From our engagement in pre-dissertation preparation, she was an encouraging voice of confidence that helped me organize and move ahead with this effort. Her discernment and guidance on scholarly expression have been so appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation asserts that incorporating mindfulness practice into a Twelve-Step program strengthens a person's potential to stay sober in a recovery program. The practices and well-established benefits of mindfulness include awakening and paying attention to the present moment. Mindfulness is being centered, calm, and fully present in the moments of one's life, whether meditating, eating, walking, or doing chores. An important aspect of being present is that a person might learn to cultivate their ability to pay attention which increases their understanding of how they experience their thoughts and emotions. Individuals in recovery can use this clarity to augment their potential to stay grounded in their recovery. The last key element of mindfulness to highlight is that practitioners cultivate self-compassion. Self-compassion is important in helping an individual overcome the shame and blame that often comes with addiction. Shame and blame can prevent a person from moving into a state of improved wellness and self-compassion can help free a person from these feelings.

I claim that using this integrative approach, as outlined in the *Recovering with a Mindful Spirit* program, offers an individual who struggles with addiction additional tools that augment the potential to strengthen their recovery. This program introduces different and positive viewpoints that can increase a person's self-efficacy and self-image, which fuels hope and inspiration. It encourages understanding experiences and emotions with a more open mind, realizing that each day is a new day with a new beginning. This helps an individual break repetitive, negative habit loops that keep them stuck in unhealthy behaviors. The unique contribution that this dissertation makes is integrating mindfulness principles directly to Twelve-Step work and augmenting spirituality to an even greater

degree as part of recovery. Eastern and western spiritual views are explored and harmonized in a recovery program.

This dissertation shows the many ways that the purposes of Twelve-Step programs and mindfulness practice support and strengthen one another. For example, understanding powerlessness in Step 1 helps a person let go in their meditation practice. Or, investigating one's mind in meditation helps a person do their inventory work. Listening to the suffering of others in the rooms develops a heart of compassion. In regard to the ways that the two programs differ, those differences are discussed and reconciled for the reader to consider how they work together.

As a person enters recovery it is helpful if they have a foundation of good mental and emotional health. Part of achieving a good state of well-being is having some foundational spirituality. Later in this paper research is presented that supports this statement. Spirituality plays a significant part in healing and recovery. It influences our beliefs, which are so powerful in influencing our health outcomes. Spirituality helps an individual become more grounded and provides a reservoir of hope and peace which prepares them to do the difficult work of recovery.

In reading through this work, the reader can expect to learn about addiction, the basics of a Twelve-Step program, mindfulness meditation practice, and some seminal mindfulness-based programs that address certain health and well-being issues. A discussion on spirituality as part of health and recovery is included, plus a section that explains the intersections and opportunities of both approaches. The product of all of this research is represented in the last section of this dissertation, as an eight-week recovery program that optimizes Twelve-Step and mindfulness practice.

A considerable amount of work has been done on practicing mindfulness to help heal addiction and other mental and/or physical maladies, especially over the last 10-15 years. One of the first to explore healing through mindfulness in western science was Jon Kabat-Zinn. I have been influenced by him and other researchers who are cited in this work, and have built my program based on some of their foundational concepts. One important program that exists is the Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) program that was created by Sarah Bowen, G. Alan Marlatt, and team. The MBRP program was created for people in recovery in a clinical setting, and took elements of two important programs that were focused on using mindfulness meditation to address health conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression. These programs which preceded the MBRP are the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) and the Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy program (MBCT). Doctors Sarah Bowen and Alan Marlatt have clearly given credit to the elements of those programs that their team incorporated into MBRP.

I have also been impacted by the mindfulness-based program of Dr. Mark Williams, who was part of the original MCBT program and wrote *Mindfulness, an Eight Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World.* In this book he and Danny Penman created an eight-week plan to rediscover peace and contentment amidst a frantic and relentless way of life (Williams, 2011, p. 2). His program is not directed towards addiction, but is beautifully straightforward and easy for anyone to become engaged. I also want to reference the work of Dr. Amishi Jha, who wrote a program that uses mindfulness to focus on attention, in her book *Peak Mind*. Learning to manage our attention is a key element of a mindfulness practice that supports recovery. Jha's ideas

reinforce what the MBRP suggests while adding more knowledge of brain science and how to understand and manage our brains. The last work that I want to mention is that of Kevin Griffin, called *One Breath at a Time, Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*. He shares real-life relevancy of how an AA/Twelve-Step program works in harmony with mindfulness practice.

My recovery program spans eight weeks, with both AA-related activities and mindfulness activities each week. Included are prayers for contemplation which create an opening for people who want to pray. Each week also contains an exercise I have adopted from Williams and Penman's *Eight Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, which is a weekly "Habit Releaser" which breaks down ingrained habits (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 56-57). The program is designed to be used as a self-study handbook but it can easily be used in group settings. Some weeks reference one of the twelve steps, not necessarily in order, and it is not my goal to cover all the steps in sequential order. I pair AA activities with complementary mindfulness activities that lead a participant through an intentional discovery of mindfulness practice to support their recovery. Each week contains prayers for contemplation and includes a prayer that is oriented towards Christianity, one that is from AA literature, and a mindfulness prayer or contemplation. At the end of the program, the participants are encouraged to write their own, ongoing mindfulness practice and are given the tools to do so.

The contribution that I hope to make with this work is to have created a program that is flexible and can be used by anyone who struggles with addiction, whether they are early in their addiction or well aware of their struggle. It can be considered a handbook which provides a structure of practice and recovery. The *Recovering with A Mindful*

Spirit Program can also be used by family members affected by addiction or by clinicians who support those in recovery. This audience of people might go to Al-Anon or Nar-Anon for the Twelve-Step practice and can adopt the mindfulness program for their own enrichment and support. I encourage those who use this program to trust in the depth of science and wisdom contained and to use it as a springboard to further developing your own practice of mindfulness in harmony with your mindful recovery program.

CHAPTER ONE

ADDICTION

Addiction takes different forms and many individuals may have wondered, at different times in their lives, if a particular behavior or substance calls to them a little too much. It might be eating ice cream every day, even if overweight, or drinking too much alcohol when it is known that one's health is suffering for it. People who are obsessed with keeping their house clean may choose to stay home and clean rather than socialize, even if they are lonely and could use some company . Some addictions are dramatic, like using heroin, which puts one's life in danger. Others can be subtler and easier to hide or not acknowledge. However, addictions all happen in the same way. What distinguishes an addiction from a preference or choice are the consequences of those choices. A very basic, but comprehensive, definition of addiction is that addiction is continued use, despite adverse consequences (Brewer, 2017, p. 18). This can be applied broadly to addiction, meaning that the use of a particular substance or the continuation of a specific behavior is causing adverse effect, and if a person keeps it up then it is grounds for evaluation. The severity will differ, based on the consequences and the extent that it upends the life of a person, but the outcome will be this continued behavior that produces negative impact.

This dissertation focuses on substance abuse, addiction, and recovery, and references are primarily about drugs and alcohol. In treating addiction, it does not matter if the addiction has to do with drugs or alcohol because the beginnings and perpetuation of addiction, treatments of addiction, and recovery from addiction apply to any addiction.

Addiction has continued to evolve as a significant problem in our country, the number of people addicted to drugs or alcohol is rising every year and fatalities from drug use are higher than ever. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention ran a study in 2018, explaining that in recent years, more Americans have died of overdoses than from car accidents (Seth, Scholl, Rudd, & Bacon, 2018). While the reasons for initial use of drugs are diverse, relatively few of those who take drugs recreationally go on to become addicted, shifting from controlled drug use to compulsive and excessive drug use, despite negative consequences (Volkow, et al., 2011). People often begin to use drugs to help themselves cope with emotional stress of one kind or another. Some may use alcohol or opioids for relief of boredom, stress, anxiety, or pain. Others may use drugs in search of positive experiences associated with relaxation, or euphoria. Stimulants, such as amphetamines, are used to achieve heightened alertness and endurance. There are also large portions of people who initially begin using drugs because of social group pressure to conform, related to feeling acceptance and connectedness to friends. One thing that all these motives have in common is that the use of drugs somehow achieves a purpose for the user, whether by producing pleasure, by relieving displeasure, or by winning approval from peers (Bechara, et al., 2018, p. 97). The repeated use of these drugs will eventually lead to negative consequences and some people will be able to stop and some will not. Factors that impact who becomes addicted include genetic (50% of risk), developmental (with the highest risk in adolescence), and environmental (access to drugs, family/community culture, stress) (Volkow, et. al., 2011).

Behavioral Changes Associated with Addiction

When a person becomes addicted to drugs their behaviors change, and it becomes very obvious to those who know them. Behavioral changes include self-centeredness, a lack of caring about things they used to, a connection with others, and sometimes a person will begin to steal money or goods to pay for their drug of choice. To the people who love these individuals, it will seem like their deep, inner values have changed and that something down to their core has shifted – because it has. A person who used to be happy may become unhappy and irritable. If they were family oriented and loved to be at home with loved ones, they may start to isolate or go out of the house all of the time (because they need to use). If they had excelled at school or work, they may begin to take sick days, make mistakes, and not care about their performance like they used to. They will not care about their health. If they used to express their love to others they may now isolate or and push other away. They will steal from you, swear at you, and lie to you. In my experience, the person you love the most in the world can turn on you, detest you and disrespect you. If they are caught up in their addiction, you will not recognize who they have become.

A person who is addicted to substances often experiences themselves as a dishonorable person. They cannot stop themselves from stealing, or using, or doing other things that they know are wrong or are bad for their health. They may lose friendships with their friends who don't use but they will choose new people to spend time with who are like them, drug users who exist in a drug culture. Over time they form a degraded self-image and have low expectations of themselves and others. Their self-efficacy almost completely erodes, and they no longer believe in themselves or think that they can change their lives to get back on track to health and well-being. There is a lot of shame

that accumulates and it is part of recovery to learn to forgive oneself for that period of life and work to shed the shame and start to resume a life of health and hopefulness. During active using, addicted people may not see how they are suffering, and they don't see how their loved ones are suffering – and if they do, they don't care. When addiction takes over, the focus of that addiction becomes the most important concern of their life.

To understand how to treat addiction, it is important to understand how addiction happens and what goes on in the brain. A common theme in becoming addicted is related to a rewards-based learning process (Brewer, 2017, p. 2). Humans have a deeply ingrained, evolutionarily conserved learning process that connects to our survivalist nervous system (Brewer, 2017, p. 2). We are hard wired to survive and that relates to ensuring that our basic needs are met, such as finding and securing food. Individuals develop habit loops, based on experiential learning. If we are hungry, we search for food, and find it in a particular place. We register that as a successful experience. It may have taken an hour to locate the source of food but now that it is known, tomorrow the process can be repeated and the successful procuring of food will be accomplished in much less time and with greater comfort. This is a habit-loop and our brains imprint this behavior/action sequence, just like a shortcut. Over a short amount of time, we barely have to think about executing on the sequence of getting food. This understanding of reward-based habit loops and conditioning is not new; B.F. Skinner wrote about this using the term "operant conditioning" back in the 1930's and into the 1950's (Skinner, 1938).

In recovery from alcohol, from trauma, from anything upsetting, a person may develop habit loops to avoid pain. They might explain a habit loop like this: "Every time

I would remember [a traumatic event]," (trigger) "I would get drunk (behavior), "and this was better than reliving the experience" (reward). A habit loop is developed, will be repeated, and will become stronger with each cycle (Brewer, 2017, p. 39). The more it is practiced, the more difficult it is to break the cycle. Everyone experiences urges and cravings and they all happen in the same way. It is always: trigger, behavior, reward, repeat. These are critical ingredients to developing a learned behavior. As people experience stress and their "buttons" are pushed, and what follows largely depends on how they have learned to cope with life. As an example, if a person grew up in a family where they learned to handle stress by taking a walk, phoning a friend, or some positive behavioral response then they likely will model that. Trigger: upsetting conversation, behavior: take a walk, reward: feel better with a different perspective. If a different person learned that drinking alcohol was the first response to stress, then that may become their default behavior and learned response.

Another aspect of these cause and effect loops is that a person cannot help but interpret current experiences based upon past experiences. Past experiences and associations are brought into all of our present experiences. Dr. Jud Brewer, a leader in the field of addiction study, explains that "something that happens depends on something else causing it to happen – literally (Brewer, 2017, p. 37)." Encountering a sensory experience can be a trigger, based on how the mind interprets it based on a prior experience. This interpretation automatically generates a feeling that is expressed as pleasant or unpleasant, colored by the past. This feeling leads to a craving or an urge where the pleasant feeling is pursued or an unpleasant feeling is fled from. With this motivation, the urge is acted upon. The brain records the outcome of that action as a

memory which then conditions the next round of continuing in an endless loop of behavior. As a person trains themselves to repeat the action, without fixing the problem, a perpetual cycle of habit formation and reinforcement is created (Brewer, 2017, p. 38). The reponses become automatic (not entirely conscious choices) processes that are perpetuated by both positive and negative reinforcement.

For a person to be able to get ahead of these negative habit loops and stop a destructive cycle of behavior it is essential to understand what is happening in the mind and try to become aware of these automatic, default behaviors. For people with addictions, knowing about this process provides more tools with which to stay away from using. In treatment, the trigger and urge process can be mapped with each patient for them to understand their habit loop. Teaching people to learn how to step back and reflect on what makes them happy, and what automatic behaviors are making them feel worse, are important steps in breaking a destructive cycle.

Brain Structures and Systems Involved in Addiction

The dopamine system is associated with reward processes in substance abuse disorder. Dopamine is released when a person feels excitement, self-gratification, yearning, or fantasizing about anything that is desired or provides happiness. It is released when a reward is received and even when the brain is expecting a reward. Both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement trigger dopamine release/responses in the brain. A positive reinforcement may be something like seeing a cookie (trigger), eating it (behavior), and tasting it (reward). The behavior is repeated because it feels good and a positive outcome is experienced. Negative reinforcement helps an individual learn to repeat behaviors that reduce bad feelings. An example is when someone sees alcohol

(trigger), drinks it (behavior) and experiences stressful feelings (negative reward). There will come a time when the trouble caused by the behavior (e.g. using drugs) becomes greater than the previously positive reward. Therefore, dopamine fuels both the positive and negative reinforcement form habit loops that people repeat over and over.

Some scientists believe that dopamine may account for a common neurobiological underpinning in addiction (Linnet, 2019, Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry, Volume 98, 2020, p. 109802). In a series of experiments in the 1990's, a neuroscientist named Wolfram Schultz proved how reinforcement learning ties in with dopamine. In his studies he monitored the reward centers of monkey brains and saw that when they receive juice as a reward in a learning task, dopamine neurons increased their firing rate in early learning periods but it progressively decreased over time and switched to a lower, more habitual mode of firing (Schultz, 2006, p. 87). In other words, the subjects got used to the experience and their dopamine firing decreased. Dopamine fires into the part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens, a brain region that is consistently linked to the development of addictions. It gets activated and then wants more. Different levels of phasic/intermittent firing of dopamine harmonize with what we hear about substance abuse addiction, that initially a measure of a drug is satisfying but that desire, over time, will increase. Phasic firing of dopamine helps us learn to pair a behavior with a reward (Brewer, 2017, p. 80). And, in turn, identifying the behavior helps us step back and observe what we are doing.

To make things even more interesting, when behavior and reward are paired, dopamine neurons change their phasing firing pattern to respond to stimuli that predicts rewards (Brewer, 2017). As an example, if a person smells cookies baking they will then

imagine what the cookies will taste like and subsequently the mouth waters. Another example is that if a person sees someone using drugs, that observer will imagine the feeling the drug would provide as a personal experience. Dopamine is released and an urge is ignited. Even memories can generate the upsurge of dopamine production.

Dopamine neurons also fire when unpredictable events occur, such as when you might come home and tell your family that you got promoted at your job. If you had never received a promotion then you and your family experience something completely new and unfamiliar. Their praise would elicit a big phasic release of dopamine in the brain which would then set off the whole reward-based learning and habituation process. Dopamine develops context-dependent memories. Conversely, if you are a child who consistently brings home report cards with all A's then your dopamine response will be lower since you and your family have already had this experience and it has become a common occurrence. All this text that is devoted to dopamine release and reaction are included to show the unavoidable power it has over us and how strategies are needed to understand and manage it. Understanding phasic firing of dopamine and the physiological roots of addiction helps scientists and researchers understand that learning to manage urges is central to recovery and staying sober. People who struggle with addiction need tools to be able to manage their related to cravings and learn how to disengage from destructive habit loops.

Examining the brain, its urges and ability to exercise self-control correlates to both the rational mind and the emotional mind. The rational mind of a person in recovery will address their urge to use substances by reminding themselves that staying in recovery is their goal. That same person's emotional mind might send a different

message, something like “if I smoke pot just this once it’s probably ok because I am an alcoholic.” Passionate, emotional minds are what can get people into trouble and steer them away from their goals, especially if they are tired. Daniel Kahneman wrote a book entitled *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, which won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on studying these two ways of thinking. He calls the rational mind System 1, which represents the most primitive emotional system and the “fast” thinking part of the brain. It represents the “I want” urges, impulses, and gut instincts (Brewer, 2017, p. 87). System 1 does most of a person’s mental work, it is automatic and people do not have control over it. It accounts for impulsivity, acting on one’s “gut” and it makes emotional decisions (Kahneman, Thinking Fast v Thinking Slow, Inc. Magazine, 2013).

System 2 is more deliberate and it controls thoughts. It enables people to see things that cannot be seen with System 1. This system represents the higher cognitive capacities and include planning, logical reasoning, and self-control. System 2 does important work when there is intentional slowing down in the thinking process and this part of the brain is used. The brain regions associated with System 2 are the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which keeps a person focused on what needs to be done. As these two systems work together, System 2 has the weakest voice (Kahneman, Thinking Fast v Thinking Slow, Inc. Magazine, 2013). Additionally, scientists have found that stress can cause a rapid and dramatic loss of prefrontal cognitive abilities (Arnsten, 2009, p. 410). This means that daily stresses can cause a reaction where this slow thinking, rational part of the brain becomes depleted. Repeated stresses can make it run out of its energy reserves. This type of resource depletion directly affects the likelihood of someone being

able to resist an urge or desire. The best one can do it to try to get enough sleep, maintain a good diet, and attend to the basics of self-care.

Continuing with the vulnerabilities that are present because of our natural, base wiring, the human mind can trigger its own anxiety, stress, worry and irritability. Everyone struggles with deep seated "fight or flight" responses. If a person feels stressed or in danger, memories are resurrected as reminders of when they felt threatened. Then the mind fantasizes about scenarios of what could happen in the future and their power can take hold. Temporary and non-problematic emotions can become transformed into persistent and troublesome ones (Williams and Penman, 2017, p. 27). Everyone has a default mode network in their brains which is the center of self-referential thought. The default mode network (DMN) is where thoughts about ourselves come from (Jha, 2021, p. 133). It is where people experience the ups and downs of their day to day experiences (Brewer, 2017, p. 100). While plugged into the DMN, a person can observe themselves thinking (I am thinking now) or remembering, or deciding. The brain regions associated with this system are the midline structures such as the medial prefrontal cortex (MPC) and the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) (Brewer, 2017, p. 115). The PCC links experience with reward-based learning, the region of the default network most linked with the grab of self (Brewer, 2017, p.170). When the PCC is activated a person is thinking of themselves ("I want to relax, I want to use, I want to… I need…"). People in recovery want to stay away from activating their PCC. Actually, anyone who wants to have a calmer, more peaceful life would best know that too much self-referential thought leads to less happiness, and the PCC plays a part in that. Our "me" gets in the way of the greater things we might do and learning to control self-referential thought is powerful

information. Studies have shown that PCC deactivation is linked with positive experience and fulfillment (Brewer, 2017, p. 116). Olympic athletes who reported that they were "in the zone" with complete focus on the present moment experience a deactivated PCC. Their ego and other concerns fall away, along with a loss of reflective self-consciousness or evaluation. They were able to be fully present and participated in its continual unfolding with confidence and calm (Brewer, 2017, p. 171). Knowing how the brain works and the ways that it can be understood are tremendously empowering to help learn how to manage thoughts, feelings, and how to relate to the world.

Adding more complexity to understanding our default mode network (DMN), it has been found that self-referential processing and mind-wandering are linked. People are naturally prone to mind-wandering and studies have proven that the mind wanders about 50% of the time (Jha,2021, p.1)! That means that it is accurate to say that a person is not really present for half of their lives. Mind wandering is when an individual has trouble focusing on a task on which they want to focus on, but cannot. When people mind wander it can be said that they mentally "time travel." One may think about something in the past that they try to reconcile, or, he/she might imagine a future event that causes concern. Someone might time travel to prepare themselves for an upcoming scenario, such as imagining going to a party and living through this future forward simulation of how the experience will be. Conversely, someone might travel back in time and simulate/imagine how a difficult discussion between themselves and a family member may have resulted in a better outcome. The human brain is vulnerable to distraction where a person's mind is often not here in the present, but thinking about something that could happen tomorrow, or, ruminating about a regret. This natural distractibility stems

from basic survival underpinnings of being human but in present days most people do not have to be concerned about a predator lurking nearby or about obtaining food.

As distraction and daydreaming occur, the midline brain regions become activated and cause emotional stress. Stress presents a vulnerability to relapse and the prefrontal cortex, which regulates behavior, goes "offline" when stressed (Brewer, 2017, p. 30). It should be recognized that mind wandering has a significant cost. When engaging in mind wandering, a person disconnects from the immediate environment, resulting in mistakes. Performance declines and stress increases. Having off-task thoughts when trying to do something has implications and impact on psychological health and mood (Jha, 2021, p.103). When a person leaves a daydream and re-enters the present, that moment presents some negativity as a person orients themselves back. The more the mind wanders the more a person experiences these dips in mood. It is known that higher stress levels cause vulnerability to even more mind-wandering, which leads to an even worse mood, which continues the downward spiral (Jha, 2021, p. 103).

Scientists have found a direct correlation between the frequency of mind wandering and brain activity in the midline brain structures involved in Kahneman's System 1, the impulsive, emotional part of the brain (Brewer, 2017, p. xxv). When attention lapses, a person falls into a daydream and might start thinking about something else to do that day – and these brain structures light up. The attention system is constantly highlighting certain things and closing off others. The good news is that recent research has revealed that it is possible to train and manage where the brain focuses its attention (Jha, 2021, p.115). Further, it is actually possible to change the way that the attention system operates.

The suggestion from Dr. Amishi Jha, a scientist who studies attention, is to learn how to train the brain to work differently. It is possible to strengthen the capacity to experience the moments that one lives in right now, and to navigate life's challenges more effectively. Therefore, a person can train themselves to operate more frequently out of the higher parts of the brain (remember Structure 2) and intentionally direct experience to outcomes that make logical sense. For "addicts" this means that they are more empowered to not use/abuse substances because decisions can be consciously made rather than unthinkingly, or automatically, made based on old, default behaviors. Training in attention control can help people learn how to be aware of and control distractions that lead to urges. This will later be incorporated into a discussion of mindfulness practice.

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain what addiction is, how it happens, and what is happening in the brain when addiction takes hold and begins to dominate. Understanding physiological, hard-wired behavioral drives and reactions provide useful understanding of why a person can get caught up in destructive behaviors. It can be seen how reward-based systems and behaviors affect people in powerful ways and how difficult it is to stop old behavior loops. This clarity is powerful knowledge for a person who wants to get into or stay in recovery. Studies have shown that those who struggle with addiction need a set of tools, a multi-faceted program to give them the skills to gain control over their urges.

CHAPTER TWO

TWELVE-STEP PROGRAMS

The goal of this chapter is to explain the history of Twelve-Step recovery programs, their philosophical foundations, methods, and results. There are many Twelve-Step programs in existence and the focus here will be on Alcoholics Anonymous, the original Twelve-Step program.

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international community-based network for people who have lost control over their excessive use of alcohol. AA was started by William (Bill) Wilson in 1935 at a time where there were no support groups available for people who struggled to achieve and maintain sobriety. Wilson had been a chronic alcoholic for years and during his fourth alcohol-related hospital stay he experienced a profound connection with God, which moved him to vow to never drink again. He had already been a religious man and a member of an organization called The Oxford Group, which was a religious, revivalist program that believed that the problems of the world could be healed by people who had undergone personal, spiritual awakenings (Galanter, 2016, abstract). Through this group he met Dr. Robert Smith, who also struggled with sobriety. Both men decided to support each other in their sobriety and their friendship and mutual support became the origination of Alcoholics Anonymous. Their core religious and spiritual beliefs carried a faith-based spirituality into the program. In 1939 Wilson published "the Big Book," Alcoholics Anonymous, which detailed the doctrine and techniques of the program. Over time they intentionally tried to enlist others into their program since they found that their fellowship was the only thing that was helping them

stay in recovery. The growth in the membership of AA was very slow; from its inception to their 10-year mark, its membership was estimated at 13,000 people. But, by year 15, the membership had increased to 100,000 and now, and for the last 25 years, membership averages at about 2 million participants (Galanter, 2016, viii). AA has become a respected and long tenured program that has helped millions of people get sober.

The path to sobriety includes working through twelve steps in sequential order, which involves admitting powerlessness over alcohol, turning to a Higher Power for help, acknowledging one's shortcomings, making amends, engaging in prayer and meditation and helping other alcoholics (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002, 4th ed.). The twelve steps have been adopted by other self-help groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Overeaters Anonymous (OA), to provide coping mechanisms for recovering from addiction.

In practice, the meetings are a participatory democracy, and all meetings are set up independently and are self-governing. On any day or night, even on holidays, or especially on holidays, there is a meeting taking place both in person and online. Even before the option of online meetings, there have always been so many locations hosting meetings that one can always be found within reasonable distance. When a new member joins the fellowship, they are encouraged to attend 90 meetings in 90 days (referred to as "90 in 90") to become immersed in their efforts to stay sober and to connect to the fellowship and its practices and principles. All of the groups are peer-led and within the fellowship members engage in acts of service to help other addicts. The members of the fellowship refer to themselves as "addicts" and making that admittance in front of others represents an act of surrender and trust. Most people in the program enlist the help and

support of another member who they choose as their sponsor. Typically, the sponsor will help the sponsee "work the steps." In turn, each sponsor has their own sponsor and works the steps with them. The program values anonymity and confidentiality and the members of the fellowship agree that they will not acknowledge their association or membership outside of "the rooms."

The meetings follow a certain general format that includes introduction and call to order by a person who begins by saying "hello everyone, I am [insert name] and I am an alcoholic." This call to order is usually followed by a moment of silence and group recitation of the Serenity Prayer (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002, 58-60). Next will be readings from the Big Book, a reading of the twelve steps, a speaker, and then open discussion and sharing. The formats of the meetings differ, with intention. Some meetings are "closed" and only people in the program are welcome. Some meetings are "open" where family members and friends who are not in AA can attend. During meetings people share their struggles with staying sober and others offer stories of hope and inspiration. To attend the meetings, one only has to have a desire to be sober. That means that a person can still attend if they are drunk or high as long as they want to get sober. They will be allowed to stay as long as they are not disruptive. The message of AA is clear: any individual recovering from alcoholism can gain an entirely new life perspective, a spiritual awakening, by remaining open minded to spirituality and by working the Twelve Steps as outlined in their basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002).

The philosophy and doctrinal foundation of AA includes a strong, spiritual-based understanding that members acknowledge that they are powerless over alcohol and rely

on a “Higher Power” to help them stay sober. Many members say that they have experienced a spiritual awakening that moved them into sobriety. The founders of AA wrote that they “came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” The term “Higher Power” is used throughout the Big Book of AA to reference the power that was greater than they were. Spirituality has been a controversial, or at least much-discussed aspect of the program. Participants follow a spiritual and communal path to recovery. The first of the 12 steps acknowledge that one does not have the ability to recover from alcohol abuse on one’s own accord. Therefore, the way to develop a healthy lifestyle is to open oneself to a spiritual view and submit to the will of a Higher Power (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999). There is great emphasis on the acceptance of a “Higher Power” and asking that Higher Power to help change their character. Prayer and meditation are encouraged to keep in close relationship with God or a Higher Power. This embedded spirituality carried into the program from the beginning when Wilson and Smith conceived of AA. The original AA big book had stronger references to God. To make the program more acceptable to people who are not committed Christians, that original text changed references to God to a “Higher Power” or “God as we understood him.” (Today, some people may oppose the gender reference of God as male but the paternal language is preserved in AA literature.) Commentary from one member of the fellowship was that “as long as that Higher Power is not you, the notion works (Galanter, 2016, Chapter 2).” AA is a spiritual program, but not a religious program, with a philosophy that intends to be relevant and engaging to people who believe in God or not, and uses the “Higher Power” reference to communicate to every person that recovery cannot be done on one’s own, without help.

God or Higher Power are directly mentioned in Steps 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11. Step two of the Twelve Steps says that "we came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." One recovering alcoholic understands the second step this way:

> I love all of the 12 steps of AA, but Step 2 is the one that gives us hope. With Step 2 we learn that we are not alone, and that something greater than ourselves can help to conquer addiction and despair (Griffin, 2004, p. 33).

Step 3 states "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." Essentially, Step 3 is about turning over your will to God, getting out of your own way, and being restored to a state of health and peace of mind.

Step 5 says "We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." This step is a confession of personal wrongdoings and is meant to be the beginning of a person's spiritual housecleaning.

Step 6 reads "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character" and claims that it is time to allow a Higher Power to cut out attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that no longer serve. It recognizes that character defects and habits that have been ruling a person's life need to be let go, with God's help. The sixth step can bring about significant and very noticeable change when it comes to the thought patterns and behavior that have been present for a long time.

Step 7 says "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." This is about getting rid of shortcomings and replacing them with humility and spiritual principles. There is a switch from self-centeredness to a focus on helping others.

Step 11 states "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us

and the power to carry that out." Exploring one's spiritual path in Step 11 means seeking a closer connection with God or Higher Power and asking for divine guidance and support amidst a growing and personal relationship.

Spiritual awakening is especially emphasized in the twelfth step, which advises helping others: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." Findings have shown that it is reasonable to characterize spiritual awakenings as a major transformative event across many long-term AA members, even though the specific character of the experience differs across individuals (Galanter, et. al., 2014).

Besides these direct references to God in the Twelve Steps, the spiritual references and understanding appear throughout the Big Book. The strong connection to God supports the spiritual awakening that is reported as a core aspect of the program. Spirituality is comingled with hope, community, humility and personal growth.

The characteristics that seem to play a role in long-term recovery for AA members include feeling God's presence on a daily basis, believing in a Higher Power who cares about us as individuals, and program involvement of helping others and sponsoring fellow AA members (Dermatis and Galanter, 2016, p. 519). An accompanying fundamental belief in AA is the need for spiritual renewal on a daily basis. This connection provides people with a sense of gratitude for the gift of sobriety and links them in kinship to others inside and outside the program.

The next foundational concept of AA is that of community. The philosophy of AA holds that alcoholism deteriorates a person's life and that the process can be reversed through spirituality and peer fellowship (Machell, 1988, p. 5). Attending meetings

frequently, listening to and talking with others in the fellowship, and having a sponsor as a mentor are key elements in being able to maintain recovery. Members of AA believe that being solitary in recovery is bound to lead to relapse. The concept of fellowship is thought to be a cornerstone healing influence within AA as it creates a sense of belongingness (Machell, D.F., 1988, p. 3). Feeling connections with others is the foundation for a program of self-healing.

Continuing the exploration of the foundational beliefs of AA, the organization considers alcoholism to be a disease. Alcoholism is seen as a chronic, relapsing illness that never goes away (Galanter, 2014, p. 108) but can be managed (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001). This means that the outlook on alcoholism is that a person cannot control their choice to abstain from alcohol without help. Studies have shown that the majority of treatment workers in the United States more strongly believe that addiction is a disease (Russell, et. al, 2011, p. 150). Conversely, providers in the United Kingdom feel more strongly that addiction is a choice. It has been found that beliefs that addiction as a disease are stronger for those who provide treatment in for-profit institutions, have stronger spiritual beliefs, have had a past addiction problem, are older, are members of a group of addiction professionals and have been treating addiction longer (Russell, et. al, 201, p. 151). Research also reveals that treatment providers who have had their own personal addiction problems, and are presently in recovery, were much more likely to believe that addiction is a disease, the longer that they attended a Twelve-Step based program.

For those who ascribe to the disease model, implied is that this is a chronic brain disease that develops because of a genetic predisposition towards addiction, or through

continued excessive use (Russell et al., 2011,p. 163). Typically, an individual will begin to use drugs on a voluntary basis. Over time, and through continued use, changes occur in the neural pathways and processes of the brain. This leads to a gradual loss of behavioral control, driving that person into intensified use of mood-altering substances. Using drugs goes from voluntary use to an obsessive habitual response, not a choice (Ochoa E. L., 1994, p. 195). The disease model suggests that individuals with substance use disorders receive treatment by medical personnel since it might give them the best opportunity to mitigate, if not eliminate their addiction (Russell et al., 2011, p. 158). There exists substantial empirical evidence to challenge the notion that addiction is purely a genetic disorder and cannot be cured (Miller, 1993, p. 129). Other points of view suggest that addictions are maladaptive behaviors with some elements of cognitive or physical disease or dysfunction.

The last foundational and doctrinal view of AA to be explored here is AA's view on abstinence or relapse. There is no argument that recovery can be sustained but it is never considered to be a stable phenomenon. In AA, relapse is seen as a failure or misstep in an individual's recovery. When a person relapses, concerns arise because if a person's self-efficacy is low (feeling out of control) then the notion may be to continue using because they've already failed (like they knew they would anyway). Additionally, if a person goes back to using they may pick up and use the same quantities/dosage of their drug of choice which may now be far higher than they can tolerate. Relapse is a serious problem because it not only means a person has returned to substance abuse but it also could turn into a fatal episode. This phenomenon in recovery is called "abstinence violation effect." It refers to the response a person has to their own relapse, where they

blame themselves and how they feel about themselves and their loss of control. When a person violates their rule of abstinence they might think of it as a personal failure, experience guilt and remorse that could lead to increased drinking or drug use in an attempt to escape their feelings of failure (Menon, J., & Kandasamy, A., 2018, p. 60). This is where the community and support of the fellowship comes in which, if a person engages with the group and does not isolate, their chances of entering back into recovery become stronger. There is group empathy and acknowledgement that this is a common occurrence and they can start their recovery again, surrounded by positive support.

How effective is AA? Research on its effectiveness is controversial and has been subject to widely divergent interpretations. The variance in the results seems to be largely based on the quality of the evidence and the criterion used to judge the effectiveness (Kaskutas, 2009, p. 1). Perhaps the most powerful and popular indictment of the effectiveness of AA was the Cochrane Study of 2006. Cochrane Reviews are considered to be the gold standard in medicine for integration of all the research about a particular intervention (Erickson, 2020, p. 1 quoting Dr. Keith Humphreys in the Sanford News, Alcoholics Anonymous Most Effective Path to Alcohol Abstinence, 2020, p. 1). It was widely publicized and claimed that conclusions found no experimental evidence that demonstrated the effectiveness of AA or Twelve-Step programs for reducing alcohol dependence or problems. It had a small study of 3,417 participants and only eight rounds of trials. Later, in 2020, the Cochrane Group ran another study which was much larger than the first. Quality and quantity were increased and the study included 10,565 people and twenty-seven studies were run. The studies also examined a wider range of programs that differed in their approach and intensity and compared against other programs and

different treatments for alcohol abuse disorder (New Cochrane Study, 2020). The conclusions were dramatically different than the first study. The 2020 study found, with high certainty, evidence that proved that these programs that were designed to increase AA participation can lead to higher rates of continuous abstinence over both months and years, when compared to other active treatment approaches such as Cognitive Based Therapy (CBT) for increasing abstinence.

In a study conducted by Marc Galanter, Helen Dermatis, and Cristal Sampson in 2014, the effect of the spiritual awakening that is referred to in Step Twelve was the focus. The study engaged 161 subjects who had been long time members of AA, who responded to questions about their own spiritual awakenings and the effect on their lives. Descriptions of spiritual awakening include a sense of connectedness to others, a suspension of ego and self-centered perspective, insights into one's true nature, purpose, and values. This spiritual openness has been found to enable a person to shift their perspective and change old habitual behavior loops, giving them a better chance to change. All subjects reported decreased cravings for drugs and alcohol and sixty seven percent of respondents reported no cravings at all. There was also an increase in positive mood, more positive relationships, and increases in service to others in AA (Galanter, 2014, p. 111). Another study conducted in 2022 that focused on spiritual awakenings, finding similar results. Those who had achieved a spiritual awakening had greater affiliation with AA, increased coping skills, self-efficacy, and increased hope. Results of this study align with previous investigation of spiritual awakening in recovery and its influence on recovery-related outcomes. The role of spirituality in the treatment of

substance use has even been found to be effective for individuals who do not identify as religious, or with God or Higher Power (Bell, et. al., 2022, p. 1).

The most comprehensive study revealed in this research, was done in 2009 by Lee Ann Kaskutas, Dr. P.H. at the School of Public Health, University of California Berkeley. It researched across all relevant scholarly databases for articles that contained titles or keywords that included Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, 12step group, and 12-step facilitation. Even though this was published 12 years ago it was so comprehensive that it is worth referencing. Her study was constructed to evaluate six criterion that affect causation, or what causes people to be able to abstain from using substances. She concluded that experimental studies represent the weakest evidence of efficacy of AA. Lack of experimental studies had been the primary complaint from the skeptics of AA. Rather, she found that the best indicators of success are the consistency of applying mechanisms that affect behavior change. Specifically, she studied the relationship between exposure to AA and abstinence and the amount of involvement in AA and its relation to higher levels of abstinence. It was found that the more a person went to meetings and interacted within the AA community, the higher the rate of abstinence. This relationship was found across different samples and follow-up periods. Looking more into the sample studies, it was found that rates of abstinence for people who complete inpatient are about twice as high for those who attend AA as opposed to those who do not. One-year follow-ups considered 12-step group attendance and abstinence from alcohol and drugs, while the 18-month results reported AA attendance and alcohol abstinence. Results were similar, at 1-year and 18 months, for these different exposure and abstinence measures. About 20%–25% of those who did not

attend AA or another 12-step group (or receive any other form of aftercare after the inpatient stay) were abstinent from alcohol and drugs at 1 year [15], and from alcohol at 18 months (combined alcohol and drug abstinence were not reported at 18 months) [16]. The rates of abstinence were about twice as high among those who had attended AA or another 12-step group (Kaskutas, 2009, p. 8).

More recently, in March of 2020, at the Stanford School of Medicine, Professor Keith Humphreys collaborated on a study to ascertain the effectiveness of AA with colleagues from Harvard Medical School and the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Humphreys is a Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and his study was published in the March 11, 2020 edition of the Cochrane Database of Systematic Review. He intentionally wanted the Cochrane Group to publish his work because of their reputation and previous interest in the topic. Humphreys and his colleagues conducted an in-depth study where they evaluated 27 other studies which involved the work of 145 scientists who worked with 10,565 participants. Their intent was to evaluate whether peer-led AA and professionally delivered treatment that facilitate AA involvement/Twelve-Step facilitation achieve abstinence, reduced drinking intensity, reduced alcohol-related consequences, alcohol addiction severity, and healthcare cost offsets (Kelly, Humphreys, Ferri, 2022, p. 3).

It was determined that AA was nearly always found to be more effective than psychotherapy in achieving abstinence (Humphreys, 2020, p. 215). Through their large sampling and meticulous research, they found that AA/Twelve Step interventions most often produced increased rates of continued abstinence of large magnitude, compared to interventions such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and MET, which many

people have considered to be the state-of-the-art behavioral interventions for alcohol use disorder (AUD). The findings were consistent between sample participants, whether they were old or young, male or female, veterans or civilians, from the U.S. or another country. Humphreys commented that psychologists and psychiatrists who are heavily degreed and trained on cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational enhancement therapy "can have a hard time admitting that the lay people who run AA groups do a better job of keeping people on the wagon" (Erickson, 2020, p. 1). AA works because it is based on social interaction, where members give each other emotional support as well as tips to help them refrain from drinking.

There are many studies on the efficacy of AA and Twelve Step programs but the previous studies fairly represent a portion of the dialogue on the subject. What is notable is that in the last two years, with studies such as Humphreys, et. al., and Bell, et. al., researchers are finally finding scientific evidence that proves aspects of AA's effectiveness. Methods of measure have improved, the sample groups are more precisely chosen, and the sample sizes of the studies have grown to produce viable proof of results.

The AA program has been replicated by many other Twelve-Step programs such as Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and the list goes on. Dr. Humphreys of Stanford, referenced in the last paragraph, said that the AA review is "certainly suggestive that these methods work for people who use heroin or cocaine (Erickson, 2020, p. 1, quoting Dr. Keith Humphreys). There is now wide recognition that people who struggle with addiction might break that cycle with having solid support from a fellowship group.

Back to the question posed earlier in this chapter – why does AA work? AA and twelve step programs are now widely recognized as effective in helping people abstain from alcohol consumption. Effectiveness has been proven through science, and also by testing outcomes with those who stay in close fellowship with AA, those who experience spiritual awakening. Behaviors change through AA meeting attendance, fellowship, and working the twelve steps. AA offers a strong foundation upon which a person might start their journey towards long lasting abstinence.

CHAPTER THREE

MINDFULNESS

This chapter will explain why mindfulness has the potential to strongly impact an individual's recovery program. It will provide specific content that will show that incorporating mindfulness practice into a Twelve-Step program strengthens a person's ability to stay sober in a recovery program. The chapter begins with a description of what mindfulness is, provides a brief history, and describes the foundations of mindfulness practice. Following that groundwork, the benefits of mindfulness will be highlighted with an explanation of how mindfulness specifically benefits people who are in recovery. While it is true that the foundations of mindfulness originated within Buddhist thought, practice, history, and culture, the research presented here is representative of modern iterations of mindfulness that have spread to the West and are non-secular. The viewpoint of this paper is not from a Buddhist point of view, but rather, calls upon Western, non-secular meditation techniques.

Descriptions and Characteristics of Mindfulness

It has been said that mindfulness is the most reliable source of peace and joy and that anyone can do it (Thich Nhat Hanh, quoted in Kabat -Zinn's Full Catastrophe Living, 2013, Preface). It enables a person to cultivate their minds in ways that have the potential to alter the way they see themselves and others in the world. Mindfulness encourages practitioners to develop the ability to focus attention on what they are doing in the moment, and enables them to make conscious choices about what thoughts they will entertain or dismiss, and what behaviors they will choose to engage in. Mindfulness has

the potential to free people from suffering since what we pay attention to affects our entire life experience. People experience stressors in their lives, created from both outside influences and from inside themselves. Mindfulness can help a person learn how to change their relationship to their thoughts and how they relate to others, to nature, and the world. An oft-quoted definition of mindfulness is that it "can be thought of as moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as openheartedly as possible (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 108)."

The practices are first learned, and then with continued practice a person might experience deeper benefits as time goes on. Someone trained in mindfulness might learn to become better at staying present and being aware of what their mind is up to. This awareness helps a person to become better at identifying discomfort, or cravings, and enables them to pause before engaging in a negative and repetitive habit pattern. It is possible to learn to quiet the ongoing narrative inside one's head that is concerned about the future, the past, past failures, fears, and so forth.

Mindfulness meditation helps a person gain more clarity into their inner state of mind (Hanley and Garland, 2017, p. 334). It is believed to be intimately linked with the self and self-concept, with mindfulness practice thought to encourage insight into the true nature of the self (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). It has been scientifically shown to have a powerful influence on one's health and well-being and helps with self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth and having a purposeful life (Aghaie, Ghomian, 2021, p. 393). Research centers, such as Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Massachusetts, continue to explore the efficacy of mindfulness meditation on mental and physical health.

Mindfulness has been shown to improve brain function and strengthen the immune system (Davidson, et. al., 2003, p. 564). It helps people improve their relationships. Mindfulness has become undeniably important in the scientific and medical fields, especially in light of research findings in the last 10 years. An expanded discussion on the benefits of mindfulness is covered later in this chapter.

Mindfulness can be practiced in formal and informal ways, where formal practice would be intentional meditation and informal practice would be to intend to be more aware of the present moment in any activity, like eating or walking. The view expressed in this dissertation is that mindfulness meditation is an essential component of mindfulness practice. Mindfulness meditation helps its practitioners see an alternative way in which to understand and relate to the world and how to find more peace. The practice is thousands of years old and its essence is about attention and awareness, non-striving and acceptance.

Mindfulness is characterized as both a state and a trait. When a person practices mindfulness meditation and is in the moment, they are engaged in state mindfulness. They are in a state of being mindful and aware. Trait mindfulness is different, it is a type of awareness that occurs over time with practice where a person becomes predisposed to be mindful more regularly, noticing their thoughts and feelings in the moment without judgement (https://psychcentral.com/blog/dispositional-mindfulness-noticing-what-you-notice#mindfulness-practices). The more a person practices state mindfulness, their level of trait mindfulness increases. In turn, a person's potential to heal and experience well-being increases.

History of Mindfulness

Mindfulness practice has its roots in many traditions but is most often associated with Buddhism. Practicing mindfulness does not mean that you are a Buddhist or that you are turning away from your own religious practice. It is a silent, contemplative practice, and offers a space for focused thought. Other examples of silent contemplative practice are walking in nature, practicing yoga or dance, reflective writing, and focused prayer. It is undeniable that the practice of mindfulness and its intent began within Buddhism thousands of years ago. It is also important to understand that mindfulness is also a non-secular practice that has potential to enhance wellness independent of any religious belief system.

It is believed that mindfulness (Sati) is the first step towards enlightenment (Selva, 2017, p. 1). People have been practicing mindfulness for thousands of years and the origins of mindfulness date back at least 2,500 years ago to India. A historical figure named Siddhartha Gautama, later known as the Buddha, is considered to be the first person to start talking about mindfulness. He lived from approximately 563 to 483 BCE (some say 480 BC to 400 BC (Batchelor, 2015, p. 4)) and focused his teachings exclusively on suffering and referred to suffering as “dis-ease” (Brewer, 2017, p. 186). He devoted his studies to learning how to identify the causes of suffering and the ways in which to end it, or at least decrease it. Suffering, called dukkha, is addressed in the ancient collection of scriptures from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, called the Pali Canon. It contains the text for the Four Noble Truths, a familiar reference for many people who may have made some introductory inquiries into Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths are a toolset that a person might use to end suffering. The first truth, the Truth of Suffering, states that suffering is inescapable. The second, the

Truth of Arising, identifies the cause of suffering as craving. The third truth, the Truth of Cessation, instructs that removing craving will remove suffering. The fourth truth, the Truth of the Path, outlines the way to achieve nirvana.

In *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*, Stephen Batchelor describes the four noble truths as a "fourfold task" (Brenner, 2017, p.188). The task "is to comprehend suffering, to let go of the arising of reactivity, to behold the ceasing of reactivity, and to cultivate a path that is grounded in the perspective of mindful awareness (Batchelor, 2015, p. 27). Reviewing the underlying causes of addiction and the suffering it causes, and applying an understanding of the Four Noble Truths provides a pathway of understanding. Suffering, craving, being aware of and controlling reactivity, and paying attention to thoughts are all key elements of recovery, and of mindfulness. The principles seem simple and clear but training and diligent practice are needed to make progress. Suffering is part of the human condition and can come from many different sources: disappointment in life, loneliness, yearning, poverty, physical pain, so many common occurrences in life other than just a craving for drugs or alcohol. Applying mindful awareness offers the potential for people to use their awareness to move towards greater happiness.

Mindfulness meditation came to the west in the 1970's, influenced by a few notable institutions and individuals. The Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts was founded by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield in 1976. As young teachers, they saw the value in providing a retreat center for mindfulness practice and healing. Today, this retreat center continues to thrive. Many scholars credit Jon Kabat-Zinn with being the biggest influence on bringing mindfulness from the East to the West.

This paper will rely heavily on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his creation of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction program and the years of research it has contributed to the field. Kabat-Zinn studied mindfulness under several Buddhist teachers, including Thich Nhat Hanh, and he founded the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and the Oasis Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education and Training. He developed an Eastern foundation in mindfulness that he introduced with Western science to develop a treatment program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), targeted for people with stress-related problems. His program de-emphasized Buddhism as a religion/culture and focused on the practices contained within the roots of mindfulness practice as the elements that can help a person become less stressed and happier (Woods, Rockman, 2021, p.2). In the wake of Kabat-Zinn's work, a growing number of scholars have also contributed to bringing attention to mindfulness with a secular view so as to invite more people to engage with mindfulness and eliminating the potential rejection of it by those who do not identify as Buddhists. In *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*, Dr. Stephen Batchelor describes who the Buddha was and what he was trying to teach, and emphasizes that it surpasses any religion (Batchelor, 2015, p.4). Incorporating Western non-secularized elements into the foundational Eastern mindfulness practice have been important in the widespread popularity now found in the United States.

Foundations of Mindfulness

The foundations of mindfulness have to do with attitude and commitment (Kabat-Zinn, 19, 2013). The mind has to be receptive to understand that learning and change can occur. There is an emphasis on being present in the moment, calming one's mind and

body, and gaining a new perspective on oneself and how you relate to the world. It is not too bold to say that meditative awareness requires an entirely new way of looking at things. For those who struggle with addiction, this new way of understanding increases a person's potential to break old patterns, and allow them to see themselves in a new way and discard old biases and notions about themselves. Foundational to mindfulness practice is one's attitude. In Full Catastrophe Living, Jon Kabat-Zinn writes about the "Seven Attitudes of Mindfulness (pp. 21-29)." A description of these follows.

Relationality. Mindfulness is about relationality, meaning how a person is in relationship with everything. This view can dissipate self-centered feelings. It has been found that much of a person's misery is associated with how they relate to themselves, their minds and bodies, thoughts and emotions. An individual might observe their past, and what brought them into this moment, and then consider how they can learn to live in their own authentic way. This should include emphasis on integrity, honoring what has been learned throughout a lifetime, and applying kindness toward oneself and others. A person becomes more aware of other living beings, of animals and other non-human elements of the earth, and begins to see a greater connectedness to the universe. This creates a curiosity, and a responsibility to understand oneself in relation to others. It brings a person away from self-centered thought and increases a focus on others, compassion and caring. As human beings, there are deep resources inside of each person that can be called upon that might enable a transformation away from addiction, to increased freedom and happiness. Mindfulness is a practice and it has to become a way of being rather than something one practices for a quick fix. Research at Jon-Kabat Zinn's Stress Reduction Clinic in Massachusetts has proven that those who start mindfulness

mediation with an open-minded attitude, even if skeptical, more fully adopt and benefit from mindfulness meditation practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 20).

Non-judging. Mindfulness is cultivated by paying attention to moment-to-moment experiences while not getting caught up in one's own ideas, opinions, likes and dislikes. The hope is to try to become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experiences that can get a person's attention – and then learn to step back from them (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 21). The habit of categorizing and judging personal experiences locks a person into automatic reactions of which they are not aware and may have no objective basis at all. Stress is a common catalyst for a number of automatic, reactive responses that occur if a person is not paying attention. If awareness of these responses is gained, then more effective ways of handling these responses is possible. If stressors have been a cause for relapse then adopting this non-judging, stepping-back-from-the-reaction awareness can help people stop and pause. They might learn to suspend judgment, impartially observe what is going on, and then decide how to respond to the situation. Non-judging and looking at things anew allows a person to create space for pause, compassionate consideration, and enablement to make a new and different choice.

Patience. Patience has to do with letting go. It allows a person to accept that sometimes it is best to step back and let events and situations unfold in their own time. A person might learn to relax with the understanding that no one can control everything, or even much of anything at all. Adopting an attitude of patience in one's mindfulness practice helps a person realize that some things cannot be forced or controlled. Another benefit is that aa person may learn to be patient with themselves, their minds, and their

own bodies. (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 24). It is useful to remember to call upon patience when the mind is agitated or drawn into some version of craving. Practicing patience is a reminder to be open to each moment, accepting it, and knowing that things unfold in their own time. The person struggling with addiction can learn to sit with a craving, observe it, and let it pass. Letting go and embracing this thought invites people in recovery to shift from agitation to a more aware and calm way of being and accepting.

Trust. Learning to trust in oneself and honor whatever feelings are present is an essential part of mindfulness meditation training. "It is impossible to become like somebody else. Your only hope is to become more fully yourself. That is the reason for practicing meditation in the first place (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 25)." Psychologists and behaviorists study self-efficacy, which is the belief in oneself. For a person in recovery, learning to trust and believe in oneself after having made some bad decisions can be a significant challenge. Their self-efficacy is likely low, after repeated failures at getting sober or even just trying not to steal, gamble, etc., to get drugs. Emotional feelings that are rooted in the past may suggest to a person that they will never be able to stay in recovery, or will never be able to… fill in the blanks. They may also feel a great deal of shame because of how they hurt their family and loved ones during times of active use. Developing self-trust and belief is important in recovery because of the positive feelings of hope that emerge and guel change. Substance abusers have a lot of shame to flush out of their emotional systems and they may learn to forgive themselves for past transgressions. As a person practices mindfulness, they take the responsibility for being themselves, honoring themselves, and come to believe that they are capable of starting on

a new journey. They begin again to learn who they are and re-establish a trust in themselves that life's circumstances may have stripped them of.

Non-striving. The concept of non-striving is very difficult because most people are socially, or inwardly, programmed to achieve and only engage in activities that have purpose. And that purpose has to be visible to others, it seems. Meditation is the opposite of striving, and is referred to as an act of "non-doing" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 26). Basically, when meditating, a person will just observe themselves. In our society, people may be called lazy, or worse, if they do not show an achievement attitude. So, it is necessary to be counter-cultural if a person wants to position themselves to gain a new way of seeing oneself, as someone who tries less but has more clarity and happiness. The idea is that the best way to achieve personal goals is to stop striving for results and start focusing on seeing and accepting things as they are, working on what one chooses to, while staying present, and then over time observe the goals naturally coming to fruition. This attitude keeps a person in touch with what they feel and want as they live each day.

Acceptance. Meditation is not about accepting the unacceptable. It is about seeing the world with greater clarity so an individual can take wiser and more well-considered action to change the things that need to be changed (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 7). Further, and pertaining directly to those in recovery, meditation helps cultivate a deeper and compassionate awareness that allows assessment of goals and the ability to find the optimum path towards realizing values (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 7). Coming to terms with accepting what is will often involve going through a healing process that is preceded by denial and anger. Pain, grief, and stress are difficult to reconcile and perhaps acceptance of oneself, and who a person thinks they are, can be the

most challenging. People judge themselves constantly and assess whether or not they are above the line or below the line of what constitutes the idea of a respectable or successful human being. Acceptance does not mean that a person accepts everything with passive resignation. It means that an individual might be willing to see oneself and their world clearly and then make choices that bring a positive impact. If someone is addicted to heroin, they would practice acceptance by accepting "heroin addict" as a description of their present psychological and physical health. With that, they might then decide that now, as this is fully accepted, help will be needed to change this present state of being and form a plan. Denial and self-justification are left behind, some things that can keep a person sick. With that, room has been made that will allow a person to heal.

Letting go. In the vernacular of mindfulness practice, letting go is called non-striving. If a person starts to mostly focus on their inner world and their reactions, that person becomes attached to outcomes. Thoughts often becomes ruminative. The mind wants to hold on to thoughts and feelings, no matter what, and it causes a great degree of stress. Letting go is a way of letting things be and accepting things as they are (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 30). Letting go is a bit different than acceptance. It is about deciding to let go of judging thoughts, and realizing how every experience is judged and evaluated. It is deciding to stop trying to exert all one's force to bend the universe to how you want it to be. When thoughts of the past or the future come up, a person might let go of them and watch and rest in awareness instead of ruminating in regret or fear. Practicing this ability to let go helps a person in recovery understand that right now, they are sober, and their past "track record" is irrelevant. Today, I let go of who I thought I was and embody who I am now, right now.

Benefits of Mindfulness

The understanding that mindfulness has an important place in our world is growing each year, and the medical community is recognizing its value, as evidenced by a significant number of programs and studies that include mindfulness as part of promoting health and recovery. Harvard's David S. Rosenthal Center for Wellness and Health Promotion considers mindfulness and meditation as foundational to well-being (https://wellness.huhs.harvard.edu/mindfulness). The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health established the Thich Nhat Hanh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health in April of 2023, and their mission is to empower people around the globe to live with purpose, equanimity, and joy through the practice of mindfulness (https://www.mindfulpublichealth.org/home-en/about-us/). They are committed to studying the practice of mindful living at Harvard University and have received a substantial grant to fund a project called "Minding our Future," that focused on evidence-based research to help people live longer, healthier and more functional lives into advanced age. The center has already hosted two international conferences with leading experts in neuroscience, nutritional science, epidemiology, behavioral science, culinary arts, health policy, geriatrics, and mindfulness.

Stanford has prioritized mindfulness as part of well-being in their programs as well. Their Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education has mindfulness as a central, foundational part of their curriculum (https://ccare.stanford.edu/research/compassion-database/mindfulness/). Also at Stanford, the Medical School has within it the "Health and Human Performance Center" as part of their Office of Health and Recreation, which partners with the Department of

Medicine and includes mindfulness as part of their health practices (med.stanford.edu/hhp/about.html).

Some of the leaders in this field of study have shown that regular meditators are happier and overall, more contented than those who don't practice (Ivanowski, et. al., 2007, abstract p.1). A positive mood emerges when meditation focuses on lovingkindness towards oneself and others. Studies have shown that those practitioners have a greater enthusiasm towards life. They developed an increased sense of purpose and had fewer feelings of isolation and decreased physical symptoms of illnesses (Williams, et.al., 2011, p. 51). Numerous clinical trials have shown that meditation can have a significantly positive effect on physical health (Williams, et.al., 2011, p. 51). Studies prove that meditation bolsters the immune system (Davidson, et. al., 2003, p. 567). Anxiety, depression, and irritability decrease with regular practice. Another bonus is that memory also improves, reaction times become faster, and mental and physical stamina increase (Jha, 2007, p. 109). Meditation has also been found to be effective in relieving drug and alcohol dependence (Bowen, et.al., 2006, p. 343).

Other benefits an individual might experience include having a greater awareness of one's day-to-day activities, guiding people towards conscious thinking and decision making, rather than reverting into a default mode of auto-pilot (Williams, et.al., 2011, p. 51). It has been found that regular meditators have better and more fulfilling relationships (McGill, 2019, p. 537). Practitioners may also develop the ability to be open and curious about painful feelings, often enabling them to experience less pain (Williams, et.al., 2011, p. 51). Lastly, a mindfulness meditation practice can strengthen one's sense of autonomy

and self-capability. Increased autonomy enables people to spend more time engaged in activities they enjoy and value (Williams, et.al., 2011, p.51).

Research has proven that health and well-being are intimately connected to a person's patterns of thinking and feelings about self (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 266). By practicing mindfulness, a person might see the world more clearly and see beyond self-created biases that keep one treading water, or going down into an emotional sinkhole. Mindfulness brings awareness to these biases so a person can see how they are leading themselves astray. Once they see that they are not going in a positive direction they can stop, pause, and drop the unnecessary baggage that holds them back and then can reorient themselves (Brewer, 2017, p.13). It is fair to say that mindfulness helps people navigate their way through life. For those who struggle to stay in recovery, with their own set of challenges, mindfulness can be that hoped for, new element that could be the elusive key to a truly strengthened way to live in sobriety.

Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness for Those In Recovery

If one considers the general benefits of mindfulness and then applies them specifically to a subset of people in recovery, mindfulness offers clear tools that support recovery. As examples, an "addict" might become aware of their destructive habits through becoming more present and self-aware. They may learn to release and manage cravings of all kinds (Kabat-Zinn, The Craving Mind, Brewer, 2017, xiv). Developing the ability to stay present and have awareness of how the human brain works when on auto-pilot, and mind develop skills to keep that to a minimum (Brewer, 2017, p. 102). Understanding and managing rewards-based hard wiring and the triggers that are vulnerabilities to recovery are other benefits. Learning to relate to thoughts differently,

as only mental events and that thoughts do not have to be acted upon (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p.243). Mindfulness help improve coping skills and self-regulating abilities, important skills for someone in recovery. Finally, developing greater confidence in one's own body and mind, helps a person believe that they can be healthy and sober (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 245). Following is more detail on the practices of mindfulness and how they support recovery.

Becoming More Aware of Destructive Habits.

Mindfulness teaches a person to rest in mindful awareness and observe habitual reactivity. That person can then make a choice to step out of the cycle of suffering. By learning to stay present, one can observe when they go into auto-pilot, and can understand that thoughts are only thoughts which are temporary and will fade.

Staying Present and Awareness of The Brain on Auto-Pilot

Being present eliminates much of the stress in a person's daily life. One study reported that "a human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind (Brewer, 2017, p. 85)." By simply paying attention, an individual can see how they cause their own stress and can then choose to change those feelings. A focus in the clinical application of mindfulness is that it helps people see their world with acceptance while staying in the present. Focusing on the future and running after the next "fix," or, dwelling in the past and seeking to numb themselves from the pain threaten recovery since they act as triggers. A significant element of stability in recovery is to avoid acting without thinking. Mindfulness practice increases awareness of going into auto-pilot creates a space to break a pattern of reacting habitually.

Managing Rewards-Based Inclinations in Thinking

It has been discussed how people seek rewards when feeling bored, uncomfortable, unhappy, etc. Whatever the craving is - cake, marijuana, gambling – a person can decide to become curious about what that urge is feeling like. Curiosity is a great tool with which to observe discomfort and by observing with curiosity, a person can see that their cravings do not last forever. It can be pivotal to realize that cravings can actually go away. By simply being curious about the cravings, people can ride them out without giving in to those urges. Then the habitual patterns of behavior might start to get reprogrammed, opening up new reward behavior of feeling happy about choosing a positive action.

Observing Thoughts and Becoming Less Reactive

Mindfulness increases metacognitive awareness where one can respond skillfully rather than react automatically. It helps people understand that we are not our thoughts and that our thoughts and feelings come and go, moving on like clouds in the sky. Thoughts can be observed as mental events which can be looked at objectively. The person sees the space between the thought and action and can make a choice that aligns with their goals. It gives a person greater control over their life and the ability to deal with problems in effective ways.

Improving Coping Skills and Ability to Self-Regulate

Working mindfully with oneself involves noticing and acknowledging feelings being experienced in the present (pain, craving, etc.). When dealing with eruptive feelings, a person might learn to sit with the feeling, not try to change it or make it go away. Feelings might be understood as mental events that come and go, creating a space

for a person to become calm and stabilize their mind. Clarity and calmness replace potential confusion and creation of more suffering. It will help to identify rumination of negative thought patterns. There is a learning that these emotions can be worked with and can inform towards greater learning.

Developing Greater Confidence in One's Mind and Body

After experiencing life's challenges people can lose faith in their physical and emotional self. Having confidence in oneself has a significant impact on one's health and even on decision making. Dr. Martin Seligman is one of the original researchers in the field of positive psychology. He and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania studied the health differences between people who were categorized as either optimistic or pessimistic. He concluded that it is not the world who puts people at increased risk of illness but their own understanding of how they see and think about what is happening to them (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). To enjoy life, a certain amount of hope, love, enjoyment, and trust are the conditions that allow people to go on living. "These conditions are fundamental to existence, and if they are present, any number of objective obstacles can be faced with equanimity and even joy (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). This is so directly applicable to people who want to be in recovery and stay in recovery. An inner feeling of confidence in one's ability to grow and recover actually influences the ability to grow into recovery. Mindfulness cultivates the potential for a person to regain trust in themselves and believe that they can be sober.

Mindful awareness helps a person see whether they are leading themselves astray because of subjective biases, or if they are digging themselves into a deeper hole or if unhealthy patterns are being reinforced, where the consequences continue to get worse.

Once a person sees they are going in circles, mindfulness helps bring awareness so a pause and reorientation can happen. Mindfulness becomes the map that helps us navigate life's terrain (Brewer, 13, 2017). A person might come to understand that everything is always changing and that this is part of the natural progression of our lives.

It has been found by scientists, such as Dr. Amishi Jha, that there is very good news that the brain can change. Until recently there were long-held assumptions that a person was born a certain way (example: either optimistic or pessimistic), and that is how they would stay. Studies on neuroplasticity have revealed that it is absolutely possible to train the brain to be different and change behaviors. The brain has a great capacity to change, it can rewrite itself, change and update as we live (Jha, 2021, 24). Science has revealed greater potential and possibility than had previously been imagined, even 20 years ago. Relating this to the attributes that strengthen recovery, there is the potential to achieve a state of being where a person is not striving, not seeking a special state to achieve or attain (e.g. nirvana), and is comfortably present. The brain can be retrained to learn to be happier and more content.

Mindfulness-Based Intervention Programs

Applying mindfulness practice as a form of treatment is called a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI). Over the past 35 years, mindfulness meditation practices have increasingly been integrated into Western medical settings, and research into the benefits of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) continues to expand. All mindfulness-based intervention programs understand that regular practice of mindful techniques changes how a person experiences their thoughts, even when not practicing meditation. Regular meditation is literally associated with changes to brain structures (Fox et al., 2014, p.48).

The regular practice of mindfulness meditation also helps strengthen self-regulation and awareness of when one goes into "mindlessness" or executing on habitual, automatic responses (Langer, 1992, p. 289).

In the last decade, there has been some focus on developing MBIs specifically designed to treat addictive behaviors. The number of studies and the testing results have been gaining traction by showing the efficacy of mindfulness practice as part of a recovery program. Studies have shown that MBIs reduce substance misuse and craving by modulating cognitive, affective, and psychophysiological processes integral to self-regulation and reward processing (Garland, et al., 2018, p.1). Some of the most established and respected MBI programs are Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), and Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP).

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was created in 1976 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The program was referenced earlier as the first program that emerged in the West. It was the first, ground-breaking MBI that was recognized as effective and got the attention of the medical community. MBSR addresses dealing with chronic pain and distress. The program came into being as an option for medical patients who had fallen through the cracks of the health care system, meaning that they weren't being helped by the medical treatments available to them. It turned out that there were a lot of people who qualified (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p.131). This secularized behavioral intervention program provides training in practices designed to evoke a state of mindfulness while offering practitioners opportunities to explore the boundaries of the possible for themselves (Garland, 2018, p.2). The

program's approach offers a combination of mindfulness meditation, body awareness, yoga, and exploration of patterns of behavior, thinking, feeling and action (Kabat-Zinn, www.mbsrtraining.com, 2022). It trains attention and allows people to cultivate awareness, which helps them see that they have more choices with their feelings and actions than they had realized. In essence, it guides people to explore feelings that they have not dealt with and guides them towards paying attention to and accepting those feelings.

As the MBSR program started to get some traction, physicians realized that their own stress levels went down because now they had a new therapy to offer their patients. These doctors spanned across many disciplines and had been holding on to their own stress in regard to their patients, because they no longer had any good treatment options for them (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p.132). Additionally, this program added a new dynamic to treatment where patients had the opportunity to participate in their own healing. Their hope and self-efficacy levels increased when they were no longer only passive recipients on the health care prescribed to them. In some ways, mindfulness becomes a map to help them navigate life's terrain (Brewer, 2017, p.13).

MBSR is conducted in a group therapy setting, consisting of eight weekly outpatient sessions. Each weekly group session has a specific theme (e.g., "mindful self-care," "origins of stress," etc.) and the homework sessions are augmented by a related workbook and CDs (Lehrhaupt & Meibert, 2017, pp. 60, 75, 149). Following its earlier successes in relieving distress in persons suffering from chronic pain conditions, MBSR has been applied to clinical and nonclinical populations to allay a broader range of physical and mental health conditions (Biehl, 2020, p. 22). Patients are trained in secular

mindfulness meditation and metacognitive coping skills that help them manage painful physical sensations and associated anxiety (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 131). Some of the focus areas in the program are mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful breathing, body scan, working with difficulties, exploration of stress, and responding rather than reacting.

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed by Drs. Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale at the University of Toronto. The program was designed specifically to help people who suffer from recurrent depression and it incorporates some of the components of Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program. This team worked for eighteen months to develop a new form of cognitive therapy to prevent recurrence in major depressive disorder (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 431) and they actually had Jon Kabat-Zinn participate in the formulation of their program (Teasdale, 2000, p. 615). Through secular mindfulness meditation they teach metacognitive coping skills that help them manage triggers that may bring on relapse into depression and stop their habitual negative thinking. The focus of MBCT is to teach individuals to become more aware of thoughts and feelings and to relate to them in a wider, decentered perspective as "mental events" rather than as aspects of the self or as necessarily accurate reflections of reality (Teasdale, 2000, p. 616). This program proved it could help people reduce major episodes of depression by teaching participants to become more aware of negative thoughts and feelings at times of potential relapse and also to respond to those thoughts and feelings in ways to allow them to disengage from ruminative depressive processing (Teasdale, 2000, p.616). The cultivation of a detached relationship to depression-related thoughts and feelings is a key skill to individuals whose

negative thinking patterns escalate into vulnerability of relapse/recurrence (Teasdale,1997; Teasdale et al., 1995).

MBCT is conducted in a group therapy setting, consisting of eight weekly outpatient sessions. An all-day session occurs in week 6. Guided meditations are provided so that participants can practice at home once a day, six days a week. The meditations include the "three minute breathing space," the body scan, mindfulness stretching, and daily mindfulness awareness when showering, cleaning the dishes, brushing teeth, eating, making the bed, and exercising (https://positivepsychology.com/mbct-mindfulness-based-cognitive-therapy/#mbct-exercises). The therapy focuses on encouraging patients to adopt new ways of thinking and being, and how to relate to their thoughts and feelings differently.

A third program, the Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention Program (MBRP), was created based on the structure and format of both MBSR and MBCT as a parallel program for the treatment of additive behavior (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. xv). It integrates cognitive-behavioral relapse prevention skills with mindfulness practices. The purpose of the practice is to increase awareness of triggers and habitual reactions and to develop a new relationship with these experiences and learn skills to use in high-risk situations. The MBRP Program was created at the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington under the direction of Dr. G. Alan Marlatt. The original team of researchers and clinicians from UW currently includes Drs. Sarah Bowen, Neha Chawla, Katie Witkiewitz, and Joel Grow, all of whom studied under Dr. Marlatt (https:// mindfulrp.com/about-us). What makes the program different from other relapse therapy programs is that all of the relapse prevention tools center around core

mindfulness practices (Bowen et al., p. 9). While studying Buddhist philosophy and becoming a mindfulness practitioner himself, Dr. Marlatt asked a renowned teacher of vipassana the definition of addiction. The response was that yes, "addiction is a disease – it's a disease of the mind (Bowen et al., 2011, p. xiv)." This understanding made Dr. Marlatt realize that mindfulness meditation would be directly helpful for people with addictive behavior in terms of coping with urges and cravings.

This MBRP program represents the best of all therapies consolidated into one, and is specific to relapse prevention. The focus on applying mindfulness clinically is to help individuals with addictive behaviors see, and accept, things as they are instead of focusing on the future and looking for their "next fix." The roots of Buddhist psychology emphasize acknowledging, feeling, and accepting discomfort when it arises and experiencing it with curiosity and embracing it, instead of endlessly running away from it (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. viii). A mindful approach can also help reduce the default tendency of the mind to intensify negative emotions and lowers the stigma, shame, and guilt typically experience by people who struggle with addictive behaviors (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. xi).

The creators of the program looked deeply into the causes of relapse. They found that most relapse episodes were attributable to only a few categories. More than half the time, the relapse was triggered by an interpersonal encounter. One third of relapse situations involved an episode where the patient was frustrated in some goal-directed activity which caused them to feel anger (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. xi). Rather than expressing anger constructively, they resorted to drinking or using. Social influence was another category of relapse where patients couldn't resist the social pressure to drink. The

other category had to do with intrapersonal interactions, including giving in to cravings elicited by environmental stimuli such as going in to a bar. The common thread in all these episodes was that there was a need to self-medicate when strong negative emotional states, like anger, anxiety, depression and conflict are felt (Bowen et al., 2011, p. xii). A differentiating characteristic of MBRP is that it specifically teaches methods for confronting and coping with urges and cravings, rather than teaching identification and avoidance of triggers. Rather than feeling shame and guilt over experiencing urges to use, the mindfulness aspect of the therapy enables a person to understand that cravings are going to happen and that they have a choice as to how they will respond to their cravings. "Mindfulness practice provides an opportunity to observe the cresting of the craving wave without getting 'wiped out' by it (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. xvi)."

Research findings showed that incorporating mindfulness skills that are based on principles of self-compassion and acceptance of all experiences (including cravings and urges) are more successful than aversion approaches in lowering relapse risk (Bowen, et al., p. viii). Instead of only trying to avoid triggers and associate the drug of choice with negative consequences, they found that mindfulness practice provides the means for intentional behavior change while emphasizing kindness and flexibility (Bowen, 2011, p. viii). In describing his program, Dr. Marlatt explained that the Eightfold path in Buddhism lists eight desirable behaviors and associated mental states that are based on the practice of meditation. He found that the Eightfold path and Buddhist psychology in general deal with the very issues that often arise in the treatment of addictions and provide a foundation for understanding of addictive behaviors and also specific

interventions that address the problems that keep recovery at bay (Bowen et al., 2011, p. viii).

The MBRP program handles relapse with a compassionate view. Abstinence is certainly a valued state but when relapse occurs the individual is encouraged to learn from the experience, understand it to be a common occurrence in recovery, and to focus on further development of coping skills. It is emphasized that relapse is a transitional process and that there is no shame associated with relapse. The danger of relapse is thought to be decreased if a person recognizes that they can still choose to cope after a relapse and can return to their goals without shame. The program leaves it up to the participant to decide what changes they want to make in their lives. Participants in MBRP have typically already attended and inpatient or outpatient program where they were exposed to and practiced the abstinence model of the Twelve-Step programs. A general assumption is that they have likely already defined their goals when in those programs. When they enter MBRP treatment the focus shifts from setting "goals" to paying attention to one's thoughts, reactions and behavior patterns (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. xvi). Then, they have greater capacity to be aware, step back and make choices that align with their personal goals.

The MBRP program is intended as an aftercare program for individuals who have completed an initial treatment as an inpatient or outpatient, for substance use disorders. It is an eight-week course, consisting of weekly group sessions (2.5-3 hours in duration) with one day of silent mindfulness practice between the sixth and seventh session, as well as one hour daily of formal practices which include the body scan, mindful yoga, sitting meditation, or walking meditation. Each weekly group session has a specific theme (e.g.,

"mindful self-care," "origins of stress," etc.) and the homework sessions are augmented by a related workbook and CDs (Lehrhaupt & Meibert, 2017, pp. 60, 75, 149). The ideal size of the group is 6-12 people, with the idea that this will leave enough space for a person to share while also having enough people to experience comparative learning experiences. The MBRP program includes identification of personal triggers and situations where a person is particularly vulnerable and then equips them with skills to use at those times. In combination with these skills, participants learn mindfulness practices that foster a heightened awareness of and shift in an individual's relationship to their experiences to promote a greater sense of choice, compassion and freedom (Bowen et al., 2011, p. 5). They become more aware of their own habits of mind and patterns of behavior as they more deeply observe their experiences.

A crucial factor in facilitating MBRP is that the facilitator needs to have an established personal practice of mindfulness meditation, an ongoing daily practice, and formal training in MBRP, MBSR or MBCT (Bowen, 2011, p. 25). Their practice is at the core of the treatment they facilitate which differentiates this program from others. There are intense MBRP training sessions and workshops that are available for those who wish to facilitate but their direct experience is the most powerful support that they can bring to their patients. As with any other mindfulness practitioner, there may be times of doubt or self-judgement and they will need support of a teacher or community. To help them keep a central focus on experiential learning with a present-centered mindset, the practitioners will also benefit from participating in this program.

Facilitators find that participants/clients most often share about their experiences in recovery groups and facilitators work to keep redirecting the interactions to the

experience of the present moment. Just as mindfulness meditators try to stay in the present and have to redirect their thoughts back to themselves in the here and now, the inquiry and sharing in these sessions is the same thing. Observing direct experience is the primary intention and the facilitator does not get into problem solving.

The MBRP program is composed of eight sessions, each with a central theme that builds on the topic of the previous session. As with MBSR and MBCT the course begins week one with exploring our tendency toward going into "automatic pilot." Awareness of the role of automatic pilot in relapse is discussed in the first 3 sessions. Sessions 4 through 6 explore application of the practices learned in the first 3 weeks to the most relapse-vulnerable situations a client might encounter. Then, mindfulness practice is applied. Sessions 7 and 8 look at the bigger picture of creating and maintaining a lifestyle that supports both recovery and mindfulness practice (Bowen, et al., 2011, p. 26).

CHAPTER FOUR

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality as part of recovery is so integral to all of the recovery approaches that it warrants its own section, to ensure that its importance is understood. In recent years, physicians have increasingly recognized the significance that spirituality plays in the healing process. It has been found that the practices of prayer, meditation, and relaxation present extensive evidence of their power in alleviating stress, reducing pain, diminishing physical health symptoms and healing disease (Ryff and Singer, 1998, p. 22).

In the area of psychology, especially in the areas that are concerned with mental health, the view that spirituality was closely connected to health began to change approximately 30 years ago, when doctors and scientists realized that well-being extends far past being only disease free, and includes a holistic state of emotional wellness (Bhullar et al., 2014, p. 1). There has been a significant amount of discussion and research amongst physicians about the connection between the mind and body in healing. Many are now including spirituality as part of their compassionate care programs and into their treatment programs. There is acknowledgement that a patient's spiritual beliefs should be included in their therapeutic plans because practicing spirituality promotes healing (Bozek, et al., 2014, p. 1). Dr. Herbert Benson, a renowned cardiologist at Harvard School of Medicine declares that "an understanding of the patient's spirituality is integral to whole patient care" and has noted that spirituality decreases depression, insomnia, excessive worrying, and decreased appetite (Puchalski, 2017, p. 355). The message is clear that deep, comprehensive healing requires inclusion of spirituality to

increase the potential for a person to sustain recovery. Many physicians believe that spirituality helps people suffer less and people in recovery are suffering. They need all the help that can be imagined, forming a multi-dimensional approach to abstinence that includes spirituality and well-being.

It is undeniable that spirituality is foundational to both Twelve-Step programs and to mindfulness practice. My contention is that it should be augmented even more, especially in regard to how a person understands their purpose in life. Spirituality is a complex construct and is defined in different ways and measured with different tools (Lun and Bond, 2013). It is a multi-dimensional, personal experience of how a person understands themselves in relation to a Higher Power and with something greater than oneself. Spirituality can be understood as "a more general, unstructured, personalized, and naturally occurring phenomenon, where a person seeks closeness and/or connectedness between him/herself and a Higher Power or purpose (Joseph, et al, 2017, p. 2)." Other definitions describe spirituality in terms of a search for universal truth and as something that enables people to discover meaning and significance in their surrounding world (Woods and Ironson, 1999, p. 1) and a deeper and wider meaning of life (Hart, 2002, p. 23).

Spirituality addresses esoteric dimensions of one's personality and promotes positive assessments of oneself and one's past life (Self-Acceptance), a sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth), the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful (Purpose in Life), the possession of quality relations with others (Positive Relations With Others), the capacity to manage effectively one's life and the surrounding world (Environmental Mastery), and a sense of self-

determination (Ryff and Keyes, 1995, p. 720). It affects how someone sees themselves in relation to nature and their surroundings, and how a person goes through this life in companionship with God or their Higher Power. It impacts how someone will explore meaning and motives in their life. It also sensitizes people to those around them, influencing them to think less about themselves and more about others. This is a natural bridge, or intersection, with mindfulness. Interconnectedness and living in the present moment provide relief from pain. It has also been found that the actual practice of mindfulness and contemplation of our connectedness changes us. All this helps people recover from whatever they hope to recover from, from addiction to any illness.

Spirituality is directly associated with psychological well-being which also positively affects health-related behaviors (Bozek et al., p. 7). Health related behaviors are determinants of health potential (Binkowska-Bury et al., 2010, p. 145) and is any activity undertaken to prevent or detect disease or to improve health and well-being (Bozek et al., 2014, p. 3). People with substance abuse problems, when using, did not take care of themselves and once they enter recovery it is the time for them to try to learn, or re-learn how to care for themselves. Research has measured well-being by evaluating the following factors: how a person feels about leading a life of purpose, having quality connections to others, and having positive self-regard and mastery (Ryff and Singer, 1998, p. 1). Spiritual well-being is also positively associated with quality of life, decreased episodes of depression, anxiety and cognitive avoidance (Jawaid, 2014, p. 2).

The attributes of psychological health are very closely associated, even intertwined, with the positive feelings that spirituality promotes. Following are some

attributes that have been measured as indicators of psychological health (Bozek et al., 2014, p. 3), followed by notation on how these factors support recovery.

Leading a life of purpose – recovering people benefit from the hope, meaning, and inspiration of a purposeful life to help them be optimistic about their present and future. It helps people stay in the present and avoid negative feelings about past and future experiences.

Having quality connections to others – people in recovery need support groups with people who understand what recovery feels like. Forming relationships help people become more sensitized to others and increases their compassion. The people we are closely connected to not only support us but keep us honest in how we are practicing recovery. Being alone or isolated presents a vulnerability to any type of recovery.

Positive self-regard and mastery – positive self-regard is important for someone to believe that they deserve to have a good life, that they can love and accept themselves for who they are now, so they can make choices that support their health. When a person feels mentally and emotionally healthy they are more able to take care of their physical and emotional health by engaging in health promoting activities (Kasl and Cobb 1966, p. 246). They will have stronger coping skills, make positive lifestyle choices, such as selecting nutritious foods, having an exercise program, and will avoid unhealthy practices. They will engage in self-growth and experience a greater level of self-mastery, which leads to empowered self-efficacy, where a person can believe they will achieve their goals. They will have a greater level of confidence in their own self-determination (Ryff and Keyes, 1995, p 720). Both self-regard and mastery tie in to acceptance, accepting who you are with a compassionate view of oneself.

A positive view of how we understand ourselves in relation to God, the universe, and nature. Self-understanding of our place in this world affects our health and our choices. A view that the world is friendly is conducive to healing.

Spirituality can move people from these negative coping reactions to positive coping. Examples of positive coping are: asking for forgiveness, forgiving others, drawing strength and comfort from beliefs and finding/accepting support from a spiritual community (Pulchalski, 2001, p.355).

Scientific research shows that "spirituality can be an important element in the way patients face chronic illness, suffering, and loss (Pulchalski. 2001, p. 356)." Proof of these statements is supported by clinical and behavioral studies that have demonstrated the positive impact of spirituality on positive health outcomes such as subjective well-being (life satisfaction and balance between positive and negative effect) (Villani et. al., 2019, p. 10), health-related quality of life (Miller and Thoresen, 2003, p. 24), coping skills (praying, remembering that God is with you, trusting in a larger spiritual plan for your life) (Mancuso, posted 2019). The practices of prayer, meditation, and relaxation show extensive evidence of their power in alleviating stress, reducing pain, diminishing physical health symptoms and healing disease (Ryff and Singer, 1998, p. 22). Other studies show that the influence of spirituality helps the recovery process from specific conditions, if spirituality was part of a patient's belief system. Some of these include better recovery from mental illness and addictive behaviors (Unterrainer et al., 2014), stress-related disorders (Worthington, 2018, p. 1), obsessive compulsive disorder (Plante, 2018, p. 201) and chronic pain (Worthington, 2018, p. 2). Heart transplant patients who described their spiritual beliefs as important showed better physical functioning in their

12-month follow up, higher levels of self-esteem, less anxiety and fewer health worries (Pulchalski, 2001, p. 353). People who have faced life threatening diseases such as cancer, cardiac (myocardial infarction), and HIV/AIDS and who have identified as spiritual, described healing happening through them, in connection to their Higher Power and had better outcomes. Those who identified as religious were more likely to say that their healing happened to them (Woods and Ironson, 1999, p. 1). Lastly, it has been found that spirituality has helped suicidal people find hope and confidence in themselves and the world, which prevented them from taking their own lives (Balk, 2011, p. 246).

In conclusion, spirituality forms a person's belief system which then supports the development and maintenance of a person's psychological wellness. Psychological wellness promotes physical health in anyone who is recovering from an illness, inclusive of people recovering from substance abuse. Of all of the aspects of spirituality and psychological wellness, perhaps the most important to recovery is having a sense of purpose. This can sustain a person to continue to live, or continue to try for wellness. The benefits of spirituality are many of the same benefits found in mindfulness. If someone is strengthened by purpose, achieved in a spiritual connection, then close relationships with others become possible. This guides a person away from self-referential thinking to thinking about others. This leads to a greater awareness of connectedness to other people, to nature, and the world. As a person experiences their lives as part of a whole, connected to all sentient beings, it takes them out of the damaging ways in which many experiences are handled. Connectedness with nature and finding meaning in life become possible. Self-acceptance and healing become possible. People in recovery are already struggling with anxiety, depression, isolation and

hopelessness. Spiritual practice leads to mindfulness practice, helping to learn to live more in the present, providing relief from the pain and guilt of the past and worries about the future. In a recovery program, it is optimal to have a solid foundation of mental and emotional wellness in place as a recovery program begins. For a person in recovery, spirituality provides additional resilience to take on the challenge of making the life change of abstaining from substance use.

CHAPTER 5

INTERSECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES - INCORPORATING MINDFULNESS INTO A TWELVE-STEP PROGRAM

Blending a Twelve-Step program with a mindfulness practice to support recovery is logically sound. The concepts of each are quite compatible, even with the seemingly most problematic aspect, that of spirituality. There are differences in the approaches of a Twelve-Step program and a mindfulness practice, but these differences harmonize well. Adding mindfulness to Twelve-Step creates the potential for stronger outcomes rather than if only a Twelve-Step program is practiced.

Twelve-Step programs and mindfulness practice share a root cause similarity. Both identify desire as the root cause of suffering and they provide tools and enablement for a person to create a path for themselves where they will suffer less. Mindfulness has its roots in the teachings of Buddha, who taught sometime between the 4th and 6th centuries BCE. When he became enlightened he came to understand that the cause of all suffering is desire. He would teach that craving and desire come from not understanding reality and not knowing ourselves (O'Brien, July 2021, Lion's Roar). Much of the practice of mindfulness meditation is directed toward letting go of desire, and it is often understood as letting go of the desire for material things but it also includes letting go of your fears, any static sense of identity, views and opinions, destructive behaviors and negative thought patterns. AA most certainly recognizes desire as a powerful force that can take over people's lives, specifically the drive to use substances. People who are addicted to drugs (or other substances/activities) experience addiction as desire running

out of control. They might continue to act on their desires even as the impact disassembles the good in their lives.

Mindfulness strengthens a Twelve-Step program when applied to handling issues of control, letting go, and surrender. If an individual can learn to let go of the things that hold them back they become open to being able to break old, destructive habit patterns. Concepts of surrender are interwoven within the AA program, as seen in Steps 3, letting go and letting God, in Steps 4 and 5, letting go of secrets, shame, and dishonesty, and in Steps 6 and 7, letting go of character defects and making a commitment to doing something about the discoveries made (Griffin, 2004, p. 137). The awareness of one's own pain is what helps fuel the commitment. In AA, the community tries to support people as they heal from "desire gone mad" (Griffin, 2004, p.xviii). Adding a mindful view with meditation and practice helps an individual become aware of their suffering in the moment, enabling them to do something about changing that. In Mindfulness meditation a person hopes to notice how the suffering shows up in both the body and the mind. It helps take an honest look at oneself, even noticing when there is unwillingness to let go.

As one practices surrender, an individual can begin to learn to manage their impulses to act upon their desires which might sabotage their recovery. In fact, learning to live with desire may be the single most important practice that one might learn to manage their ability to stay in recovery (Griffin, 2004, p. 99). Mindfulness helps people learn that thoughts are only thoughts, not right or wrong, and that they can choose to not act upon them. Practitioners learn to allow desire to come and go, to not get tense or afraid, and to just learn to withhold acting on every impulse. Mindfulness teaches living

in the present moment. This helps a person find relief, by emphasizing the benefit of living in the present moment, in awareness, decreasing or eliminating fear of the future and regrets of the past. Present focus and learning to control attention will help a person stay open, positive, and hopeful, strengthening their potential to live each day in sobriety. It removes some anxiety and confusion that can take a person off course and propel them into old, destructive behaviors.

Spirituality is central to both approaches and combining the two creates a bigger spiritual resource, much like a library, upon which to draw spiritual meaning and reference. In AA, a person in program hopes to experience an "awakening" as part of Step Twelve. This Step traditionally relates directly to service and it is the step that encourages people to sponsor others, to do outreach activities, and to help others who are struggling (Griffin, 2004, p. 250). By Step Twelve, people have worked through Steps 1 through 11 and achieve a new perspective on their life. As this is happening they develop a spirit of service and compassion for others. This spirit of service is the cornerstone of the program and it's the cornerstone of spiritual growth (Griffin, 2004, p. 250). Spiritual awakening, guided by principles of wisdom and compassion, act as a bridge to a happy life (Griffin, 2004, p. 205). In contrast with an awakening, with mindfulness, a practitioner might hope to experience a state of "enlightenment." These two descriptors can be similar. In the Buddhist roots, there is a commitment stated in the Bodhisattva Vow that moves people to help all things achieve liberation and it places compassion as the central theme of the spiritual journey (Griffin, 2004, p. 250). The words enlightenment or awakening both imply that one's previous state was one in which they were not awake. Mindfulness emphasizes learning to become awake and uses that term

just like Step Twelve does. For a person in recovery, their previous state can be understood as one in which they were not totally conscious since they were numbing themselves with substances and abusing their bodies. Meditation helps stop the inner fight by helping a person observe and become aware of what the fighting and tension does to both the body and the minds. When in active addiction, a person may deny the impacts that the "disease" has on one's life, where they are not awake to the truth of their life. Spirituality helps a person become present for life's challenges and joys and this leads to the potential for a person to experience a higher degree of awakening, enlightenment, happiness and compassion.

Studies show that increased participation in AA predicted increased spirituality and that the best spiritual predictors of increased resilience to relapse were believing in a life purpose, a sense of well-being about one's future and being able to appreciate life (Hiernaux, 2022, p. 379). Mindfulness supports those spiritual predictors of supporting a person in having a purpose, feeling good about being in touch with oneself, and appreciation of life. Mindfulness adds the foundational understanding that there is a potential that one can become more aware of their connectedness to all others, to all living and non-living things on this earth and in the universe. This view takes an individual out of "the world of me" and decreases the activity in the posterior cingulate cortex (Brewer, 2017, p.123). When an individual takes their mind off themselves, it creates space to increase awareness of others.

A central topic within spirituality is that of God, a Higher Power, or whatever divine entity one looks to for strength and support. Some people have decided that there is no such entity. This is where one might dismiss accepting that there can be

compatibility between the spirituality of the Twelve-Steps that of mindfulness's eastern/non-Christian roots. However, the different views work together very well when thinking about them within a doctrinal framework that allows for flexibility in its interpretation. People who come from all faiths and outlooks can find ways of understanding a Higher Power that will help and support them as they become sober and sustain recovery.

In AA, the Higher Power is introduced in Step 2, which gives comfort and assurance that a person will be okay if they let go of their addiction. It encourages letting go – of views and opinions, thoughts, unhealthy relationships, your body, condemnation of oneself. Opening up spiritually to a Higher Power leads a person towards self-acceptance, greater ease, and forgiveness. It promotes a less self-centered view of the world and connectedness. Mindfulness is developed through meditation and helps a person see their relationship to their Higher Power, to other people, and their world. A person might come to understand that they can do their part to live according to their values as best as they can, and then the Higher Power will do their part to help them further. People often turn to God or a Higher Power when they are fearful and want to feel a sense of safety in an unstable world. A person might look to a "Higher Power," God, Buddha, nature, the dharma, or more. Mindfulness views and practice help explore and reconcile how one might come to understand a Higher Power and the energy for support and hope that it provides. In program, it is important for a person to realize that they are not a Higher Power.

Turning to a Higher Power is a stumbling block for may who begin recovery who are atheist, agnostic, or fighting with their Higher Power (Griffin, 2004, p. 34). It can be

problematic for anyone with a painful personal history around religion. Applying a mindfulness view to the idea of a Higher Power is helpful because as a person is encouraged to believe in God or the divine, they can try to surrender control and learn to trust in something greater than themselves. This might provide an individual with some relief. A person might commit to turning their will over to a positive power, rather than a destructive one, and commit to spiritual growth (Griffin, 2004, p. 52). Adding mindfulness to spiritual questioning has the potential to help a person become more open minded and accepting that they don't have to understand God or a Higher Power to pursue a spiritual and moral path. With an open mind, there are many positive ways in which a person might think of their Higher Power. They might come to understand that a Higher Power can help them stay sober and be a source of support and strength to free them from self-centered suffering. Some people in the program have said that working the Steps gives a person permission to find their own understanding of a Higher Power (Griffin, 2004, p. 35). When a person stops their inner war with a Higher Power then they might become open to letting the spiritual life take over and start to live from a place of love and awareness. The Steps and the practices of mindfulness provide a path to gently stop fighting, surrender control, and become open to life. Both encourage a person to have and develop their faith.

Both programs/practices require developing faith, in a Higher Power, and in oneself. This development of faith is rooted in spirituality, rather than religion, and contributes to one's well-being, and healing. Alcoholism has been called a disease of faith, which needs spirituality to address the healing (Griffin, 2004, p. 138). Faith helps step into the unknown of spiritual work, acting as a stabilizing force at times of change.

It also helps handle the destabilizing emotions that go with change. Faith develops as a person studies the steps, works with a sponsor, and practices meditation, all which contribute to a person's direct experience. Intention is the driving force behind spiritual growth and mindfulness illuminates the motivations behind a person's words and actions. A person may engage in prayer, in connection with their Higher Power and their faith. Praying with mindfulness intensifies the prayerful experience with concentration on the present, openness, acceptance, and intention as part of the conditions surrounding prayer.

Mindfulness helps a person enhance their experience in Twelve-Step meetings by bringing a commitment to attention and calm listening. It brings a peacefulness and consistency to the meetings (Griffin, 2004, p. 136). Meetings can become a version of meditation. As a person exposes themselves to others in their commitment to spiritual growth their personal exploration may deepen.

The AA view and a mindfulness view diverge when it comes to understanding alcoholism and addiction as a disease. The two views can be rationalized though, and a person can choose which outlook they reference, in accordance with what helps them the most. Mindfulness adds an openness of thought on the topic of disease, from which people might use to promote recovery. AA considers addiction to be a physical disease, an incurable disorder that is caused by genetic or biological abnormalities (Miller, 1993, p. 129). Addiction has also been described by addicts as a disease of self-hatred (Griffin, 2004, p.101). Genetically, it is said that alcoholism and addiction run in families. There is research that supports that people who come from parents of ancestors of alcoholics are 60% predisposed to a vulnerability to addiction (MacNicol, 2016, p. 141). The reason that members of AA declare themselves an addict is to participate in an individual and

communal act of surrender and acceptance. It is helpful to their recovery if they accept the truth of their disease and their inability to control it, and then surrender to a Higher Power. They understand that they will have to depend on something besides their own will and knowledge to stay sober and develop spiritually (Griffin, 2004, p. 3). This disease model works for many people who find it helpful to know that a genetic predisposition can make their challenge more than those without this vulnerability. If a person finds that useful, then it should be used.

The mindfulness view is different in a few ways. First, labels are not used to statically define someone and limit them by that label. Labelling goes against a core concept that people and things are ever changing and, that applying a label is limiting and has emotional impact. Labels affect how a person understands themselves and being labeled an addict with a disease has an implied negativity that may not help a person's self-esteem or self-efficacy. An individual who has been labeled as an addict might feel less than those who are not addicts. Even in the present world of diversity and sensitization to the characteristics of others, outside of the rooms, being called an addict is not a positive reference. Within the fellowship of AA however, people comfortably refer to themselves as addicts. Sharing this is an opportunity for them to bond with other addicts and also may lend a clarity that fuels a person's commitment to sobriety. This "disease" model of AA works well for so many but adding the mindfulness view offers more opportunity for a person to choose how they self-identify at any point in time.

Next, the mindfulness view thinks of the term "dis-ease" as a sickness of the mind, and one that can be brought to a better state of equanimity, and health (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 112). The view is not limited to, or focused, on addiction but rather on

suffering. Buddha identified dis-ease as stemming from the human suffering that is created in people's thoughts, and the suffering that goes along with being humans who get sick, age, and die. He suggested that people accept these unavoidable conditions of humanity and become awake and accepting. No matter what causes a person's "dis-ease," mindfulness is a tool that can help people try to stop anesthetizing themselves to the difficult things that happen in life and deal head-on with challenges through self-accepting mindfulness practice. Recovery is not easy because getting sober requires rebuilding one's life, which can be painful and difficult work. But, the work leads one down a path that offers the potential to get to a state of health and greater happiness.

Interweaving both the "disease" model and the mindful view of "dis-ease" into recovery releases greater potential together than only one view. When a person starts to see themselves more clearly, they may be able to free themselves from unproductive conditioned biases about themselves, and embrace recovery with a new view.

Fellowship and support are other areas of opportunity and intersection for the practices. A person who attends AA has predictable, sustainable fellowship and support. Although Zoom meetings are available, it is the in-person experience that makes it more impactful with personal sharing and conversation. Adding mindfulness practice, although typically solitary, actually gives a person more options to heal themselves by enabling them to see the suffering of others, to support others, and be more open to being a part of new relationships. It gives awareness to being other-centered rather than self-centered. Learning meditation practices like walking meditation, sitting meditation, and the body scan meditation give a person another set of tools to relate to oneself and also to others. These practices also expand a person's ability to practice at any time for whatever

amount of time that seems right. A person can be at home, or anywhere, to continue to practice their recovery mindset. If solitude is not wanted, there are retreats or group practices that are easily available. Pairing the two practices with flexibility also use different parts of the brain and have a wider scope of effectiveness. Blending the elements of fellowship with solitary practice expands the potential spectrum of benefits to a person.

One of the more fundamental differences between a Twelve-Step program and a mindfulness approach is how the programs view abstinence and relapse. These different views can be used to complement each other and offer a person a view that helps them the most. In AA, participants commit to abstinence as a requirement of participation. Relapse is viewed as a negative outcome that is the equivalent to treatment failure. Feelings of shame, self-blame, and hopelessness often emerge, even though the AA community is there to support them back into recovery. Feelings related to relapse can erode self-efficacy and the belief that one can lead a sober life. This dejectedness could result in an increased risk of relapse if the individual reverts to thoughts that they have already "blown it" and they might as well just keep using. This is called the "abstinence violation effect" where feelings of failure occur after violating a self-imposed rule and this puts the individual at increased risk of relapse (Bowen et al., p. 14). The compassionate view which mindfulness offers is useful to support a person back to abstinence and resolve any feelings of defeat and self-hate. Mindfulness considers abstinence to be an ideal goal but it is not a reason to self-condemn; rather, it is something that can happen on one's evolutionary path. The view would be that an individual would introspect and decide what changes they want to make in their lives. A

mindful view will recognize that a lapse is a natural part of the recovery process and a person can learn from it. They still have the choice to cope effectively following a lapse and they can return to their initial goals (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2005, p.44). The forgiving and understanding view of mindfulness and the relapse event is not seen as one of condemnation. It has been found that incorporating mindfulness skills that are based on principles of self-compassion and acceptance of all experiences, including craving and urges, may be more successful that aversion approaches in lowering relapse risk (Bowen, et al., 2011, viii). In fact, with mindfulness one can also experience greater awareness of personal feelings of shame, which are stressors to relapse. This awareness helps manage the feeling and has potential to help individuals develop shame resilience and self-acceptance (Biehl, 2020, p. 43). A person can participate in AA while deciding how they are going to choose to look at relapse, in their own individual way. They develop their inner empathetic awareness of themselves and others. Shame resilience may stop that automatic behavior of self-condemnation and keep a person believing in their accumulating skills to achieve sobriety. With more effective coping skills, a person develops increased confidence to handle challenging situations without alcohol and other drugs (i.e., increased self-efficacy) (https://www.recoveryanswers.org/resource/relapse-prevention-rp/, accessed 12/4/2022, p. 1).

The last topic of opportunity to highlight is that of forgiveness. Forgiving others, being forgiven, and forgiving oneself is not only part of Step 9 but also a core component of mindfulness. It is a strong area of intersection and opportunity. Mindfulness reminds a person that it is important to remember to make amends to themselves, besides only apologizing to others. Author Kevin Griffin explains that “the entire path to sobriety can

be seen as making amends to ourselves… working through each step is like an amend and we could search the whole world and not find a person more deserving of love than ourselves (Griffin, 2004, p. 203). Whether a person relapses, is unkind to others, or notices any "defects of character," forgiveness acknowledges that it is a part of being human to make mistakes. It is natural for people to frequently think that they have failed. Forgiveness helps us accept that we did our best and we will keep trying. Maintaining recovery involves an ongoing, intentional forgiveness of ourselves and the combined mindful and Twelve-Step view strengthen one another in their advisement.

There are additional opportunities in blending the programs/practices that are worthy of mention. Some of these are: as a person comes to understand powerlessness it helps them let go in their meditation practice. Investigating the mind in meditation helps a person do personal inventory work. Listening to the suffering and stories of others in the rooms helps develop a heart of compassion. Both programs/practices recognize that it is necessary to stop fighting anything or anyone if we are going to let in the peace of spiritual connection and live in a better place of love and awareness (Griffin, 2004, p.35). The skills of learning depth of concentration and awareness through meditation, in combination with the honest self-appraisal that AA guides one to, are practical skills for a person who lives in recovery

The focused topics of this chapter highlight the opportunities that I have found most compelling in combining approaches to recovery. There are more, and I find that the nuances of each approach relate to one another more closely every time I revisit them. Mindfulness practice helps us realize that life is practice. Recovery takes practice and

continual investigation of our awareness, intention, and spiritual condition helps a person experience peace and happiness.

CHAPTER 6

RECOVERING WITH A MINDFUL SPIRIT: INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS AND THE TWELVE STEPS

What follows in this chapter is an eight-week self-help program that explores the benefits and sensibility of adding mindfulness to a Twelve-Step program. This is largely a scholarly work but is an easily readable and accessible recovery program that is clear and simple. It supports engagement in the structure and community of AA and also in the wisdom of mindfulness practice. Embedded in the program are sources of ancient wisdom, of modern science, of behavioral understanding, and of scientifically proven strategies that address addiction from various angles.

In the earlier sections of this dissertation I presented a deep background of what the reader needs to know about addiction, brain science, and recovery programs to then explain why and how someone would use this program. The program goes beyond synthesizing the work I have read from scholars and practitioners, although I have used their wisdom as foundational. I have created an easy-to-use recovery handbook, which incorporates mindfulness into a Twelve-Step program, augmented with spiritual meditations and prayers. A premise of this program is the recommendation that a person would first focus on getting to a good place emotionally before their recovery can really blossom. Part of getting to that good state of being would be to begin to use some mindfulness practice in developing a more stable, inner happiness.

The advantage to starting recovery from a place of well-being has to do with perspective. Changing one's perspective can transform the entire experience of life, especially as an individual might become aware of a fundamental problem to growth.

This is a realization that people often rely on outside influences make them feel happy or sad, energized or frustrated. Mindfulness helps an individual learn to realize that happiness does not have to be tied to outside influences but comes from a deep place within oneself. Learning to use an integrated AA and mindfulness program enables a practitioner to learn about themselves, feel good about themselves, and walk a steadier road of recovery.

Studies have proven that people are most successful with their recovery if they start with an AA or Twelve-Step program and first experience the community and process of the program. The odds of success are increased by having a baseline for recovery in the structure, the community, and self-exploration that happens within working the steps and understanding the Twelve-Step program (Erikson, 2020, p.1 and Kelly et. al., 2020, summary). This program contains specific AA/Twelve-Step exercises that guide a participant to be more progressively involved in AA throughout the eight weeks of the program. These activities complement the mindfulness activities of each week. With a Twelve-Step foundation, mindfulness is introduced to evolve the recovery process.

The program in this dissertation recognizes the importance of spirituality, which contributes to mental health, and includes prayers and meditations each week that create an opening for people who want to pray in their daily recovery program. The prayers presented have different orientations. Some are taken from AA's Big Book, some are Christian prayers written by the author, and some are mindfulness-related prayers or meditations. Those from the AA program are aimed at enabling an enhanced awareness and functionality of one's personal orientation to God or Higher Power. Of the twelve

steps, six of them have direct references to God. These references include acceptance (Step 2), followed by surrender (Step 3), admission of wrongs (Step 5), readiness to have God remove character defects (Step 6), a request to have God remove these defects (Step 7), and finally, the seeking through prayer and meditation to improve conscious contact with God (Step 11). According to the AA program, working through the first 11 steps will lead to a spiritual awakening or new state of consciousness, one that is characterized by reliance on God and having a joy of living, in which giving is its own reward. The Twelve Traditions which embody the fellowship of sharing and support are principles applicable to the functioning of AA groups (Dermatis & Galanter, 2015, p.511).

Mindfulness contemplative prayers have a different orientation. They do not specifically exclude God or a Higher Power but typically address self-awareness, contemplation of relationality in the world and to others, and relating to oneself in a loving and accepting way. They explore personal reflection on the meaning of one's existence.

The weekly topics of focus blend AA views with mindfulness views with exercises or practices for each. Mindfulness encourages keen observation and acceptance of experience, without making judgments. AA encourages people to surrender to their "disease" and admit that they are an "addict" for the purpose of supporting surrender, opening up to change. The contrast of mindfulness lends a compassionate point-of-view for a person in AA to choose the view that helps and nourishes them the most. The foundational principles of the MBRP program show up in this program, incorporating elements of cognitive awareness and behavioral relapse prevention, which empower the individual to improve their coping skills, to understand where their trigger responses

originate, and to increase their self-efficacy (Bowen et al., 2021, p. 14). Studies show that self-efficacy, or a person's belief in themselves and their ability to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments, are powerful in sustaining recovery. As confidence in one's ability to exert control over one's own motivation and behavior increases, individuals are better able to restructure their perceptions about the relapse process (Larimer et al., 1999, p. 151). Mindfulness engenders and grows a person's feelings of self-efficacy and confidence to pursue their goals.

Resources and guided meditations are provided as references. As time goes on, silent practice may be attractive to participants where they might choose to create their own recording of a meaningful meditation. This handbook can be used independently or in a treatment center and the intent is that it is flexible enough to adapt to any setting. My vision is that the accessibility and simplicity of the program make it more easily used by more people.

I hope that those who use this program will encounter different aspects of themselves and new ways of looking at their recovery. They might wake up to the life they have, with new perspectives that help see the world in a different light, and one that further inspires recovery. They might operate from a different place than they have before, with a new outlook on life that extends past their recovery. With this program, they might become aware of an augmented AA experience, with mindfulness adding self-compassion, wisdom, and self-discovery to the recovery process. The mindfulness learnings may lead them to find more happiness in life, more than if they only becoming sober through AA. AA provides a strong foundation for recovery and then the

incorporation of mindfulness helps add so much more, with the potential for a deeper feeling of wholeness.

OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

Week 1: Automatic Pilot and Relapse

In this first week the topic of automatic pilot is discussed, a behavior that happens when a person acts unconsciously or according to habit, rather than acting in clear awareness. This is discussed in relation to patterns of habitual use of drugs and addictive behaviors. To practice increasing awareness, the exercises introduced here are the Raisin Meditation, eating with awareness, and the Body Scan which practices intentional connection to the body.

The AA aspect of the program is to begin attending AA daily, or as much as possible, and start becoming part of the AA fellowship and support system.

Week 2: A New Relationship to Discomfort

This session focuses on ways to recognize and experience triggers and cravings. The practice is pausing and not reacting, and then making conscious decisions about how to think and respond to them. The practices go through a focusing exercise and an "urge surfing" practice.

The AA focus this week is to make intentional connections in the fellowship and contemplation of Step 1, powerlessness.

Week 3: Relating to Our Thoughts and Relapse

This week the practice is to learn to relate to thoughts differently. This includes relating to one's body differently as the practitioner practices bringing mind and body together in awareness. Opening the mind to observe one's thoughts makes a person less

reactive. The role that thoughts play in the relapse cycle is examined. The practices this week include meditations on understanding thoughts as only thoughts, mental events that come and go.

The AA focus is on surrender and Step 2. The assignment is to look for a sponsor.

Week 4: Beginning Anew, Self-Efficacy and Relation to Relapse

This session is concerned with compassion, towards oneself and others. Mindfulness meditations guide through practices of lovingkindness and self-acceptance. The strength of one's recovery is directly related to self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well to their level of self-acceptance.

The AA focus is on Step 7 and humbly asking our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings.

Week 5: Using Your Tools: Mindfulness in Challenging Situations

During this week the focus is on revisiting situations which previously caused relapse and then learning to pause and respond in conscious ways. Mindfulness practice helps master the art of transforming difficult emotions, embracing the feelings, and perhaps understanding the root causes for why a person feels as they do. The practices this week include Walking Meditation and learning the SOBER Space.

The AA activity focuses on spirituality and Step 3.

Week 6: Acceptance and Skillful Action

The practice this week is to accept all that cannot be controlled, including unwanted thoughts or bodily sensations. This supports learning to make conscious, non-reactive choices and also supports learning to take care of oneself. Mindfulness exercises included are an "exploring difficulty" meditation, a body scan, and a walking meditation.

The AA focus is on Step 4 and doing both a moral inventory and a positive inventory.

Week 7: Self-Care and Lifestyle Balance

This session focuses on self-care and engaging in activities that are nourishing. Nourishing one's soul and body are essential for sustaining recovery. The practitioner prepares to complete the program and integrates mindfulness into their life. The practices this week include constructing a "mini-retreat" for oneself and going through an exercise to identify what activities are nourishing or depleting.

The AA activity focuses on Step 11, seeking God through prayer and meditation.

Week 8: Social Support and Continuing Practice

In this last session skills and practices are reviewed and the importance of a support system is discussed. The final "assignment" is to write your own recovery program, for continued practice and integration into your daily life.

The AA focus for this last week is on Step 12, a call to serve and help others.

WEEK 1 - AUTOMATIC PILOT AND RELAPSE

What does autopilot look like? Have you ever started to drive over to your friend's house, and find yourself driving to work? Deeply ingrained habits can take over when our attention is grabbed by something else. Automatic behaviors can happen without our awareness because our brains naturally create short-cuts over time with repetitive behaviors. Our minds have cleverly constructed a trigger, response, reaction pattern that has become deeply rooted over time and we want to develop awareness of this happening so we can choose how we will react. For those who have struggled with substance abuse using may be a deeply ingrained habit and a "go-to" response when feeling stressed or sad. Part of recovery is to train yourself to be aware of when your mind begins to wander and goes into a place of unconscious action, of autopilot. We want to learn to make conscious choices and stay ahead of the autopilot and reacting in unthinking ways.

What to Focus on This Week

This week mindfulness is introduced. We begin an exploration of becoming more aware of our senses, our bodies, and our environments. We will focus on recognizing when our minds go into "automatic pilot" and how we can bring mindful awareness to our choices. We'll explore the relationship between reactive behavior and informed conscious behavior – and their relationship to relapse.

Foundational to the program is to begin or resume attendance at AA meetings and join a community of those committed to recovery. It is a common dynamic that when people start going to AA meetings that they don't want to be there. Some people have been ordered by the court system or pressured into attending by family or friends. The most important thing is to go until you start to relate to the experience and those who

attend. It is optimal to go to 90 meetings in 90 days but do your best to attend consistently so that you make a lifestyle change that includes being part of a community of those who understand addiction and want to recover. However you may feel right now, happy or sad, isolated or integrated, you need connections and support to strengthen your recovery.

AA Plan for the Week

Begin attending AA meetings in person, and join a community of those committed to recovery. Studies have shown that the more you immerse yourself in the program, the more successful the outcomes. Make your best effort to go to a meeting each day. Focus on experiencing the community of support and noticing the interactions between yourself and others.

How the AA and Mindfulness Practice Work Together in Week 1

This week strengthen your recovery by going to AA meetings with people who understand your challenges. Connections with others opens our minds and takes us away from destructive, self-referential thinking. Awareness practices work nicely with noticing more about conversations with others, increasing empathy, which calms your brain. Awareness enables us to be more sensitized to what is going on around us and helps us connect better with others as we notice what they are going through.

Practices for Week 1

- The Twelve-Step component of this week is to begin attending AA meetings, every night or as frequently as you can. Commit to this aspect of your recovery, and the need for community and support.

- Introduce Mindfulness with Practice 1.1: The Raisin Meditation. This is an exercise in focused mindful awareness that is contrasted with automatic pilot.
- Mindfulness Practice 1.2: Mindfulness of Routine Activities
- Mindfulness Practice 1.3: The Body Scan. This exercise brings awareness of both the body and the mind at the same time.
- Habit releaser
- Prayers and Meditations

Week One

Introductory Contemplation

Spend a few minutes thinking about the answer to this question: "if treatment could help me have the life I want, what do I think would need to shift?" Give yourself time to jot down some notes, to help you think through it.

Practice 1.1 – The Raisin Meditation

For this week we will be going through an exercise that illustrates what it is to be focused on what we are doing in the present moment. The importance of becoming aware is that we have the tendency to behave unconsciously without full awareness of what we are doing. We might lose our focus, go into "autopilot" and repeat habitual behaviors. For someone in recovery, it is especially important to make intentional choices in responses to urges or cravings rather than falling back on behaviors that led to relapse.

The Raisin Meditation is our first practice (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 73) and it is designed to relearn how to bring awareness into everyday activities. Some people who have experienced this meditation have said that they suddenly realized how much of their life was slipping by, with so many details unnoticed.

Set aside five to ten minutes when you can be alone in a place and time when you will not be disturbed. Switch off your cell phone. You will need a few raisins and a piece of paper and pen to record your reactions afterward. Your task is to eat the fruit in a mindful way. Directions follow. The spirit in which you do the meditation is more important than following the directions exactly. As guidance, spend about 20 seconds on each of the following eight stages:

1. Holding. Take one of the raisins and hold it in the palm of your hand, or between your fingers and thumb. Focus on holding it and imagine you have never touched or held anything like it before. Can you feel the weight of it in your hand? Is it casting a shadow on your palm?
2. Seeing. Take the time to really see the raisin. Imagine you have never seen one before. Look at it with great care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it. Examine the highlights where the light shines; the darker hollows, the folds and ridges.
3. Touching. Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture. How does it feel between the forefinger and thumb of the other hand?
4. Smelling. Hold the raisin beneath your nose and see what you notice with each in-breath. Does it have a scent? Let it fill your awareness. If there is no scent, or very little, notice this as well.
5. Placing. Slowly take the object to your mouth and notice how your hand and arm know exactly where to put it. Then gently place it in your mouth, noticing what the tongue does. Without chewing, explore the sensations of

having it on your tongue. Gradually begin to explore the object with your tongue, continuing for thirty seconds or more.

6. Chewing. When you're ready, slowly take a bite into the raisin and notice the effects on the object and in your mouth. Notice any tastes that it releases. Fell the texture as your teeth bite into it. Continue slowly chewing it but don't swallow it yet. Notice what is happening in the mouth.
7. Swallowing. See if you can detect the first intention to swallow as it arises in your mind, experiencing it with full awareness before you actually swallow it. Notice what the tongue does to prepare it to be swallowed. See if you can follow the sensations of swallowing the raisin. If you can, consciously sense it as it moves down into your stomach. If you don't swallow it all at one time, consciously notice a second or even a third swallow, until it is all gone. Notice what the tongue does after you have swallowed.
8. Aftereffects. Finally, spend a few minutes registering the aftermath of this eating Is there an aftertaste? What does the absence of the raisin feel like? Is there an automatic tendency to look for another?

Now, take a few minutes to write down anything that you noticed when you were doing the practice. Following are some sample observations from others who have tried this practice: "I had never noticed the smell of a raisin before," "I never noticed how odd they looked, small and wrinkled, but the taste was very different from what I would normally have thought it tasted like." What did you notice and what was new for you?

The experience of eating the raisin is typically felt as transformative, simply because of the focus you gave to it. If the experience of eating one small raisin made

such a difference, just think of all the pleasures of seeing, hearing tasting, smelling and touching that are drifting by you unnoticed. Take the message of the raisin experience and apply it to the other experiences in your life. Think about the quality and depth of what this present moment holds and let go of any thoughts of your past or future that derail you from living in this moment.

Experiment with bringing a fuller awareness to your present and choose other routine activities to focus on. Some to consider are: brushing your teeth, doing the dishes, drinking coffee, washing dishes, meal preparation – the list is practically endless. If it is helpful to you, make note of what you choose to do and when, on your daily tracking sheet, and include your thoughts about the experience. Do either the Raisin Meditation, or another routine activity in a mindful way once a day, every day this week.

You just completed the first mindfulness practice. We used as many of our senses as we could and this created a new perspective on the experience. Why we did this exercise: the raisin practice helps you re-learn how to bring awareness into everyday activities. It changes your perspective and is a way to introduce mindfulness into your life. This matters because, when aware, you will notice when old behavior loops take over and you are not making conscious choices. You then enable yourself to find ways of dissolving the habits that drive most of your routine behavior because you now have greater insight as to what awareness can be. As your practice strengthens you will develop an awareness of all the steps that occur before using, such as the preceding cravings, thoughts, and feelings of discomfort that trigger substance use (Bowen, 2011, p. 40). You might also become aware of the emotions that drive your cravings such as pain, fear, boredom. You learn to have compassion for yourself and your suffering rather than

reacting to try to escape that feeling. You begin training yourself to control how to react to your emotions and decrease your suffering.

Mindfulness Practice 1.2 – the Body Scan Meditation (Bowen, 2011, p. 42)

The next mindfulness exercise is to practice awareness in both your mind and body. This is important for people in recovery who may react in unproductive ways to discomfort in the body. For relapse prevention the practice of paying attention to physical experience is valuable because cravings and urges usually manifest physically before the subsequent thoughts that lead to a chain reaction, heading toward using (Bowen, 2011, p. 37). Being aware of our physical sensations connects us with present experience and can help shift from habitual and reactive behavior to conscious decisions.

Lay down on the floor, on a mat or blanket, whatever feels best. Allow your eyes to close and rest. Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath. When you are ready, bring your attention to the physical sensations of your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the floor. On each outbreath, allow yourself to let go and to sink deeper into the floor.

The intention of this practice is to observe and not change anything or to feel different. The intention is to bring awareness to any sensations you feel as you focus your attention on each part of the body. If you find your mind wandering, gently just bring it back to awareness of your body.

Now bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your abdomen and become aware of the sensations each time you breathe in and breathe out. Take a few minutes to feel the changing sensations and how the inbreath feels different than the outbreath.

After connecting with the physical sensations of the abdomen, move your focus down your body, all the way to the toes of your left foot. Focus on the big toe and notice all the sensations in that toe. Allow the focus to move to each of the toes of the left foot, one at a time, and bring a curiosity to the quality of sensations you are feeling. You may notice the sense of contact between the toes, a sense of tingling, warmth, or no particular sensation at all. If there are areas you can't feel, just keep your focus there and notice whatever you do.

When you are ready, feel and imagine the breath entering the lungs and then going down the through the body, into the left foot, and to the toes of the left foot. Then imagine the breath coming all the way back up from the toes, through the body and out through the nose. You are sending your breath down to the left toes, then allowing it to come all the way back up through your body, and out your nose. Continue this for a few breaths. It might be difficult to get the hang of it but just practice the best as you can.

When you are ready, let go of your awareness of the toes and bring your awareness to the sensations on the bottom of your left foot. Bring a curious awareness to the sole of the foot, feeling all the sensations there. Now bring you attention to the top of the foot, then to the ankle. Feel the muscles, bones and tendons in the ankle. Now move you attention up to the calf and the shin. Feel the clothing against the skin of that area, or any sensations in the muscles. Bring attention to the knee. Detect as best as you can all the sensations in these areas, sending your breath to each area as you move up the leg. Maybe you feel the pressure of your leg against the thigh. Notice the sensations there. Maybe you feel the pressure of your hip bones or parts of your spine against the floor.

Throughout this exercise, the mind will inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time. That is normal and expected; it is what minds do. When you notice it, just acknowledge it and notice where the mind has gone off to. Then gently return your attention to the part of the body on which you are focusing. Now send your attention to the right leg, through the right foot, and into the right toes. Once again, picture the breath going down to the toes, then coming back up through the body and out the nose. Continue to bring awareness, and gentile curiosity, to the physical sensations, allowing whatever sensations are in the toes to just be here as they are. Notice now what you feel in the bottom of your right foot, in the top of the foot, and the ankle. Bring your awareness now up to your calf and notice the sensations there. Now to the right knee.

If you feel any pain or discomfort in these areas just be aware of it, and practice sending the breath there, and as best as you can, let the sensations be as they are. Now gently guide you awareness into your right thigh, noticing the sensations in this area. Then up into your hips and waist. Feel your weight o the floor and move your focus slowly up to your abdomen. Feel it rise and fall with each breath. Now move your awareness into your ribcage. Feel as many sensations as you can. Move that spotlight of attention around to your back, the lower back, and the upper back and feel any places where it touches the floor. Feel any places of tension or discomfort. Next, move up to the chest and shoulders.

When you become aware of tension, or of other intense sensations in a particular part of the body, you might try “breathing into” them, using the breath to gently bring awareness right into the sensations, and as best as you can, on the outbreath, letting go.

If you notice your thoughts wandering, or if you become distracted or restless, just notice that too. It's okay. Just gently guide your attention back to the sensations in your body.

Guide your attention now down the left arm and into the fingers of the left hand. Feel each finger and the places where they contact the floor. In the elbow, upper arm, the should notice any tension or tightness.

Next, move your attention across your body to the right side, down the right arm, and into the fingers of the right hand. Feel each of them separately. Notice any tingling or urges to move them. Notice if there are fingers you are unable to feel as well as others. Now guide your attention into the palm of the hand, and the wrist, the forearm and elbow. Now focus on the upper arm and shoulder.

Let your attention come into your neck. Feel where there is tightness or tension. Be aware of areas in which it is harder to detect sensation. Next bring your focus up the back of your head. See if you can feel the hair on your head. Bring awareness to the left ear, then over to the right ear. Now into the forehead.

Explore now the sensations in your face. Notice the sensations related to your eyes, your cheeks, your nose. See if you can feel the temperature of the breath and if that changes when you breathe in and out. Feel any sensation in your lips, your chin, any tightness in your jaw. Bring awareness to the very top of the head.

Now that you have "scanned" the whole body in this way, spend a few minutes being aware of the body as a whole, and of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body. Slowly and gently, while still maintaining an awareness of your body, when you are ready, move the body a little, wiggle the fingers and toes while stretching them. Then

allow your eyes to open and your awareness to include the room, and the people around you (adapted from the Body Scan Meditation, Guided Mindfulness Meditation Practice CDs, Series 1, Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2002). An additional resource for this guided meditation, led by Jon Kabat-Zinn, can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DTmGtznab4).

Practice the Body Scan once a day. Try doing it for 10 minutes first and as you continue to practice you may want to work up to 30 minutes.

Habit releaser

Each week you have a "habit releaser" exercise to practice once a day in your daily routine. This practice is designed to help you start the process of loosening up your habits by breaking them and then replacing some with new ways of doing things. If you're like most people, you won't like this one at all. We love the habits we have created and they are comforting. It can be uncomfortable to break them but it can also be refreshing when we try something new. As you start to experience the benefits of the habit releaser, you may want to experiment with identifying and changing some of your habits. See what it feels like.

This week the habit releaser is to change the chair that you typically sit in when you wake up in the morning and have your coffee or tea. If you don't spend time sitting right after you first wake up then change the chair that you sit in at work, in a meeting room, in a coffee shop or cafeteria that you usually visit. Try this all week. Changing our habits changes our perspective. You might want to jot down how you feel about the practice on your Daily Tracking Sheet each day.

Prayers and Meditations

Spirituality is an important part of a recovery program. Each week there is a section of prayers to choose from. Choose the one(s) that speak to you and use them as examples of how you might be led to pray. Prayer is encouraged twice a day.

AA Prayer

I pray that I might grow in understanding and effectiveness;

To correct mistakes when I make them;

To take responsibility for my actions;

To become more aware of my negative and

Self-defeating attitudes and behaviors;

To keep my willfulness in check;

To always remember I need Your help;

To be loving and tolerant of others, and

To continue to ask you in daily prayer how I can best serve You,

My Higher Power.

(modified from Step 10 prayer on: https://www.aacle.org/Twelve-Step-prayers/)

Christian Prayer

God, I am grateful to be here right now and I am intending to make recovery a foundation of my life. I'm scared and I don't have a lot of confidence in myself because I keep failing. I want to remind myself each day that you love me as I am right now, and that you understand me and give me strength. I ask that you help me feel your presence and teach me how to develop a deeper relationship with you. I hope you can teach me to

be calm and peaceful. I have wanted that for so long. I will lean on you and talk with you as I participate in my recovery and thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.

Meditation

I am taking some deep, calming breaths and go to that part of me where there is a place of peace and health. I'm seeking to understand and experience who I am and come to love and accept myself. I am aware that my old habits pull at me, upset me, and cause conflict in my soul. I am aware that staying present will help me avoid falling into my old patterns and will enable me to make informed choices. I feel happy and calm when I think of making good choices. I breathe in and feel my life force. I breathe out, smile, and feel how I have a place on this earth.

Review of Practices for Week One

- Attend AA meetings each day. Try to attend 90 meetings in 90 days ("90 in 90").
- The Raisin Meditation – perform 3 times this week. Try other foods and experience mindful eating.
- Mindful awareness of a routine daily activity. Do this each day and begin integrating mindfulness into your daily life.
- Mindfulness of the Body Scan – use the guided meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn to start: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WwdFAopxEg
- Habit Releaser
- Prayers and Meditations
- Keep a "Daily Practice Tracking Sheet" (Bowen, 2011, p. 48) if it helps you track your activities (see Handout 1.1).

Frequently Experienced Challenges

Some people find it challenging to do the Body Scan on their own. If you find it difficult or distracting, find a recording that you like and play it to guide you through the meditation. Give yourself the gift of setting aside time to practice.

Remember that sometimes a session that might feel like a failure is still a great workout for your brain. Here is a another 30-minute body scan by Jon Kabat-Zinn, as an initial reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DTmGtznab4

What Progress Looks Like in Week 1

You have started to go to AA meetings again. You are sober and beginning your engagement with the fellowship.

You are setting aside time to practice your mindfulness exercises. You are allowing yourself to feel open about mindfulness and its benefits. You are beginning to understand the relationship of automatic pilot to relapse.

How Week One Skills Will Show Up in Your Life (or, why you want to do these practices)

You will have greater awareness of your body and mind and begin noticing when you go into autopilot. You may experience greater joy as you notice more of the details in your life. Your mind may feel calmer, more settled, and focused. You will be able to use this awareness to respond to cravings and urges mindfully, and not fall into default habitual behaviors. You will begin to break habit loops/patterns and start seeing a new perspective. You will notice that you have a better handle on managing your focus and directing it back to what you want to focus on. This is helpful for your recovery, for your work, and for your self- esteem and happiness.

The Raisin meditation brings you to a more awakened state. Being fully engaged in the present calms the brain (the PCC and self-referential thought) and enhances the joys of daily life.

Now that you're equipped with your own mental flashlight you have a new tool to help aid your recovery. When you are in your AA meetings, focus your flashlight on the speaker, on the conversation, on the prayers. Notice if you start thinking about something else and direct your flashlight back to this moment and the intent of your focus. Notice if you are time traveling to the past or future and realize that there is no benefit to you "going there." Focus your flashlight on your positive thoughts, those that calm you and make you feel comfortable and happy. Focus your flashlight on your daily recovery activities as you do them and when your focus drifts, just gently bring it back. What we think about literally creates the life we experience.

When we are able to find our focus more easily we waste less time, experience fewer dips in mood and fewer spikes in stress, and worry less when we have something important to get done (Jha, 2020, p. 115).

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet- Handout 1.1

Week 1

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

WEEK 2 - A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH DISCOMFORT

This week the focus is to look at feelings of discomfort in a new way. We have been conditioned to move away from, or solve, any feelings of discomfort right away. This knee-jerk aversion response has led us to react and self-medicate, or do anything to stop feeling uncomfortable. Part of our recovery practice is to stop this behavior, learn to pause, and just sit with the discomfort. We will practice pausing and then making a conscious decision about how to be with that discomfort. This will lead to learning how to experience triggers and cravings differently. Last week the practices focused on awareness of both our minds and bodies and bringing them together. We began noticing when our minds go into autopilot. This week we will build upon our newly emerging awareness and begin to practice holding our attention on a subject of our choice. We also started working to dissolve the habits that drive much of our behavior by practicing a habit breaker. Remember that habit loops are comprised of trigger, behavior, reward. We will practice recognizing and breaking these well-worn habit loops, related to getting triggered and experiencing urges.

What to Focus on This Week

This week's mindfulness practice has an exercise to help us begin to recognize triggers and experiencing them without reacting. Triggers are often physical at first, and can lead to a chain reaction of thoughts and emotions with resultant behaviors. You'll identify emotional and physical discomfort and observe your reactions to them. The practice will be to learn to pause before we react. Choosing our reactions will be part of the skill set we learn as we experience triggers, urges, and unwanted thoughts. The idea is to enable us to deal with urges head-on and practice experiencing them with curiosity and

then with intentional reactions. It is possible to learn to not be afraid of urges arising and to calmly notice them with compassion. Somehow the simple act of pausing to look at them takes away much of their power.

AA Plan for the Week

Last week you began attending AA meetings. This week you will try to go to your AA meetings every day and arrive at least 30 minutes before the meeting to engage in conversation and try to meet people. The focus is on making intentional connections and devoting extra time to do that. A core philosophy of AA is an outward focus on helping others and this shift helps you get "out of your head" and your self-referential behavior. You will position yourself to be an empathetic listener, hear of the struggles and successes of those in your fellowship and share your own feelings and stories.

Turn your thoughts towards starting to work the Twelve-Steps and begin thinking about the First Step, "we admitted we were powerless over alcohol; that our lives had become unmanageable (Wilson, 2002, Alcoholics Anonymous: The story of how many thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism)." This step is a surrender to your addiction, to the truth in your inability to control it, and surrendering to a Higher Power (Griffin, 2004, p. 3). This surrender is a key element of recovery and of a spiritual journey. It helps us break limiting concepts we have accumulated over time, that limit who we think we are and what is possible. You will work this step when you have a sponsor but it is an important reflection as you begin your recovery program.

How the AA and Mindfulness Practice Work Together in Week 2

This week strengthen your recovery by expanding your support network and making connections with others who understand addiction and have the same intention

regarding recovery that you do. Making intentional connections in new communities can be its own source of discomfort. Extending the mindfulness practice of experiencing discomfort in new ways, you will practice thinking making connections and sharing yourself with others. Sharing thoughts about urges and reactions is an important topic of conversation within this community and it is beneficial to hear of the emotions and experiences of others. It is a great time to start building your connections in your support community. It has been proven that having an outward focus, rather than a self-centered/referential focus, makes for a happier person. The insula of the brain controls many features that we consider to be central to how we experience connectivity to others and is activated/ energized through meditation and relates to human connectedness and mediates empathy. Meditation strengthens the insula and helps it to grow and expand – at any age (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 49). By activating the insula, we are in a state of openness and empathy which means we are more open to recovery.

Practices for Week 2

• The Twelve-Step component this week is to attend meetings every day and arrive 30 minutes early to talk with others and connect with the community. You might even sign up for a commitment at your home group, like hosting coffee hour.

• Mindfulness Practice 2.1: Continue to build awareness and strengthen it with intentional practice of managing your focus, aided by a tool called "Find your Flashlight" (Jha, 2020, 117). Begin to build your attentional control and concentrative focus. Introduce the use of a bell to do a self-check on your attention.

• Mindfulness Practice 2.2: "Urge Surfing." Begin to practice forming a new relationship with your urges.

• Use the "Awareness of Triggers and Cravings Worksheet, Handout 2.2, and observe and note your reactions.

• Keep a "Daily Practice Tracking Sheet," Handout 2.3, if it helps you track your activities.

• Habit releaser for Week 2

•Prayers and Meditations

Introductory Contemplation

When will you practice your meditation exercises each day? Prepare yourself for this week's activities by making an agreement with yourself to give yourself time to practice. Whenever you think you don't have enough time to meditate for 10 minutes, you probably need 20 minutes. Many say that more meditation in their lives creates more time. Encourage yourself to rearrange your schedule and free up some time to invest in your emotional and physical health. At least at the beginning of starting your meditation practice, it is recommended that you pick a time of day where you will reserve for your practice. You will modify this/these time segment(s) over time as you see fit, as this becomes part of your life.

Mindfulness Practice 2.1 - Flashlight Exercise (Jha, 2020, p.115). Start this practice for 3 minutes and work up to 12 minutes.

In this chapter on developing a new relationship with discomfort, it is important to remember to stay with our present moment experience and not go into autopilot or mind wander. The intention of this next exercise is to practice strengthening your attention so you have a better handle on controlling mind-wandering. "Find Your Flashlight" is an exercise that supports this skill. To find your flashlight you'll rely on a foundational

mindfulness practice called breath awareness. Breath awareness cultivates concentrative focus. It also anchors us in the body. It allows us to experience the body sensations that are unfolding in the present moment. It seems simple: just focus your attention on your breath, and when the mind wanders, return it to your breath. Breath awareness helps us when our minds have wandered away from our present sensations to thoughts about the past or future. Our breath is always available to us to calm us down and focus our attention on the present moment. That's the practice. While this seems basic, the exercise is actually targeting all three systems of attention in the brain. When you do it you practice focusing while giving attention to the breath, then you practice noticing by staying alert and monitoring ongoing mental activity to detect mind-wandering and then redirecting, which engages executive management of cognitive processes to make sure we return and remain on task (Jha, 2020, 116). Getting more skilled at this exercise is beneficial to someone in recovery because you are learning to flex your brain muscles to direct your focus to productive thoughts and behaviors. Here's the practice:

• Get ready and sit in an upright, a stable and alert posture. Be comfortable but not overly relaxed. Sit up straight, shoulders back, in a posture that feels natural. Let your hands rest on the armrest or on the seat beside you. Close your eyes, or lower your eyelids to have a soft gaze in front of you. Breathe, and follow your breath. You are following the breath moving at its natural pace and not controlling it.

• Tune in to breath-related sensations. This might be the feeling of the air going in and out of your nostrils, the sensation of your lungs filling with air, the movement of your stomach as it moves out and in. Choose one area of the body that you notice the most and

focus on that for the rest of this exercise. Direct and maintain your attentional focus here, like a flashlight shining on this area with a strong, bright beam.

• Notice when your flashlight has moved and then move it back! The real work of this exercise is to keep noticing and redirecting your attention to the target you've chosen for your flashlight. Redirect it with your breath by simply nudging it back and imagine that you take your flashlight and place it back on your target, the area that you have intended to focus on.

This exercise helps you work with the constant and natural mind-wandering that happens to everyone. It enables you to practice redirecting your attention intentionally, which is a skill that can change your life. In review, the sequence is:

- Focus your flashlight,
- Hold it steady,
- Notice when it drifts, and
- Redirect it back to the breath.

The optimal amount of time to do this exercise is 12 minutes (Jha, 2020, p.273). Why twelve minutes? Studies have been done to determine the minimum effective dose of attention training and attentional benefits are realized when study groups practiced at least 5 days a week for 12 minutes (Jha, 2020, p. 273). Jumping right to twelve minutes with this exercise may seem too long at first so start practicing just 3 minutes every day. Then see if you can increase that over time so you get the full benefit of the changes that happen to the brain in training.

As you start to realize how much your flashlight is pointed somewhere other than where you want it to, try checking in with yourself every so often and notice when you're

on-task and when you're not. An optional tool, or aid, to help you redirect your attention is to sound a bell. You can download a meditation app that has a bell sound, or use an alarm on your phone to go off every 30 minutes (or at whatever increment you prefer) to see where your mind is and then redirect it. Make this practice a part of your daily life – noticing what you're focusing on and bringing it back to what you want to focus on. Over time it literally changes your brain (Jha, 2020, p.117).

The next two practices are to explore how you experience and react to cravings. Often, we give in to our cravings for a temporary relief which is soon replaced by negative feelings like guilt or self-hatred. We fall into a well-worn, deep pattern of behavior that is hard to break – unless you can adopt a new way of looking at and relating to your urges. This new view is to adopt a curious and compassionate frame of mind, being gentle and easy with yourself. Cravings and urges usually manifest physically before the subsequent thoughts that lead to a chain reaction, heading toward using (Bowen, 2011, p. 37). This next practice, called the "Urge Surfing" Exercise (Bowen, 2021, p. 68) guides you through thinking about ways to have a new relationship with discomfort and urges. We explore learning to experience triggers and cravings differently. First, we identify what triggers us and then observe how these triggers lead to all the sensations, thoughts, and emotions that follow and are part of craving. We practice observing the experiences without automatically reacting. Mindfulness helps bring this process into our awareness and allows us to disrupt the automatic chain of reactions that often follow a trigger and then give us greater freedom to make conscious choices that will ultimately make us happier.

Mindfulness Practice 2.2: "Urge Surfing" (Bowen, 2021, p. 62)

The intention of this practice is to stay present with cravings and urges without engaging in reactive behavior. The experience of craving is explored from both physical sensations to thoughts and urges wto dismantle an experience that can feel overwhelming and typically generates reactivity. Lastly, the practitioner explores what lies beneath the craving for underlying needs (example: relief from challenging emotions or a desire for peace and freedom).

Picture a situation that you find challenging that goes on in your present life, one that you know triggers you. It might be a situation from the past where urges caused you to be reactive in a way that didn't align with your goals. Choose a situation that is challenging but not overwhelming. On a scale of 1 to 10, pick something that feels like a 3.

As you picture this scene, imagine that you do not engage in the reactive behavior that is about to launch. Bring yourself right up to the point of reactivity, where you are tempted to react, but pause right there and explore the experience. Take time with noticing what goes on in the pause. If you become overwhelmed at any point, simply ground yourself with three long breaths, going back home to your calm state of being, and focus your flashlight on your breathing.

Next, close your eyes and take a few moments to feel your body right now in the chair, or wherever you are sitting. Notice how your body makes contact with certain parts of the chair. Notice sensations and let your breath flow easily in and out. Now, bring the scenario you have chosen back into your mind and take time to really picture yourself in that place or situation, with whatever and whomever is involved. Then let the scenario

play out in your mind, starting with the events that leads up to the point of reactivity. Maybe someone says or does something that triggers you, or something happens around you. Next – pause before the reaction comes and sit with the experience for a bit. Find a balance and just stay with and observe the experience without reacting.

You might notice some physical sensations come into your awareness. What does it feel like? What thoughts are coming to mind? Observe what emotions you're experiencing. Is there one that is more dominant than the others? Is there anything you're experiencing that feels intolerable? Try to stay with it gently, with curiosity, and see if you can you disassemble the emotions so they are now tolerable. The practice here is to stay with this feeling and be gentle with yourself. We pause to observe what is happening in the body and mind and what this discomfort or urge actually feels like.

If the urge gains momentum and starts to overwhelm you, imagine it as a wave in the ocean. You are riding that wave, safe, and floating on top of it. Your breath might be your surfboard, keeping you steady and calm. Your job is to stay with the wave from the time you catch it, through the crest and the intensity and speed of that, onward as the wave naturally subsides and fades, with you riding safely to shore. Notice that all you had to do was stay present with this wave instead of immediately reacting to it, without giving in to the urge, without acting upon it, without having to make it go away.

As you complete the practice ask yourself "what is it that I really need in this situation?" You don't have to have an answer to this, but just ask yourself the question and see what you notice.

Take the time you need to come back from the scenario you've imagined. Bring your awareness back to your body in the chair and take a deep in breath and out breath. Open your eyes when you are ready.

After the exercise, reflect on what you just experienced. Were there any overwhelming emotions that came up? Any surprising realizations? Were you able to dismantle any overwhelming thoughts that would typically generate a reaction of fear, defeat, or loss of control? After the exercise, look to explore any deeper needs that arise within you that make you want to revert to using a substance, like relief from unpleasant emotions or a desire to just be happy.

Mindfulness Practice 2.3 – Mountain Meditation (Bowen, 2021, p. 70)

The intention of this exercise is to imagine the qualities of a mountain, such as its stability and resilience to challenging weather, conditions and circumstances. Then we contemplate that we have these inner resources available to us at any time.

• Settle into a comfortable position, sitting with your spine straight but relaxed, your head balanced comfortably on your neck.

• Either close your eyes or assume a soft gaze ahead, on the floor. Choose whatever will keep you more wakeful and attentive.

• Bring your attention to the sensation of your breath as it flows naturally in and out of your body. Observe the feeling of your body breathing. Come into stillness and sit with a sense of completeness.

• When you are ready, bring to mind an image of a mountain. Picture the most beautiful mountain that you can imagine and allow it to come clearly into your mind's view. Feel the rootedness, massiveness and solidity. Notice how unmoving it is, how

beautiful in its own unique shape and form. Maybe your mountain has snow or trees on it. It may have one prominent peak, or several. However it may appear to you, just sit and breathe with the image of this mountain and observe its qualities.

• See if you can bring the mountain into your body so that your body sitting here and the mountain in your mind become one, as if you are becoming or blending with the mountain. Your head becomes the mountain's peak, your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain, your hips and legs the solid base that is rooted to your chair. Experience in your body a sense of uplift from the base of the mountain up through your spine. With each breath, become more of a living, breathing mountain that is still, complete, centered, rooted, and majestic.

• Through periods of change, light and darkness, storms and tranquility, the mountain just sits. At times it may find itself covered by fog, pelted by rain or bombarded by powerful storms. People may come to see the mountain and be disappointed if they can't see it clearly or if it's not what they expected. They may comment on how beautiful it is, or they may disrespect or ignore it. Through all this, the mountain just sits solid and steady.

• As you sit holding the image or these qualities in your mind, you can embody the same unwavering stillness and rootedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives, over seconds, hours, days, and years. In our meditation practice and in our lives, we experience the constant change all around us and in our own minds and bodies. We have our own periods of light and darkness. We experience clouds and storms. We endure periods of darkness and pain as well as moments of joy. People sometimes

appreciate us and other time criticize us. Even our appearance changes constantly, like the mountain's, experiencing a weathering of its own.

• By being our own kind of mountain in our meditation, we can tune into these qualities of strength and stability that we already have inside of us.

• In the last moments of this practice, continue to sit with this image of the mountain, embodying its rootedness, stillness, and majesty. When you are satisfied, you might choose to sound a bell, in calm conclusion of the practice (Bowen et al., 2021, p. 70, adapted from Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Habit Releaser – Go for a Walk

Walking is a great exercise and an excellent stress reliever and mood booster. A good walk will help you gain a fresh perspective on your day and soothe your nerves. Going for a walk in the snow or on a windy day is even better!

Over the next week, go outside on several days and take a 15 to 30-minute walk. There is no need to rush or feel rushed, the aim is to walk in awareness and in peace. You might focus your awareness on your feet as they land on the ground, or feel the movements of your muscles and tendons in your feet and legs as you move. Pay attention to all of the sights, sounds and smells that are all around you. Notice the birds and animals that are all around you, even if you are in the city. Try to be open to all of your senses and see what you smell, what you hear, what you see. Try stopping and looking upward, seeing trees or tall buildings. Notice your breath. You may feel grateful for this experience. What made you feel good? Was anything uncomfortable?

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer - First Step Prayer

Dear Lord,

I admit that I am powerless over my addiction.

I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it.

Help me this day to understand

The true meaning of powerlessness.

Remove from me all denial of my addiction and give me an open heart towards healing and in believing that healing is possible (https://www.aacle.org/Twelve-Step-prayers/).

Christian Prayer

Dear God, learning to sit with discomfort is very difficult. I have some tough work ahead as I take a deeper look at why I have used in the past and what drove me into addiction. I know you are here with me as I delve into this exploration. I am gaining some new and helpful insights and perspectives, by your grace. I will willingly go where you lead and I hope to learn from each step in this journey. Thank you for the opportunities you give to me.

Urges assault me all day but with your help, I am learning to recognize my triggers and my reactions to them. This may be the most important work I will do. I am noticing that I have been making some good choices that support my recovery, which gives me hope. I believe that with your help and the help of others I can stay sober. If I falter, I will get up, keep trying, and ask for your help. Please help me recognize good choices and all the possibilities they provide, and give me the strength to pursue them. Amen.

Meditation

I am aware of my urges and experience them with curiosity; I observe them like clouds floating by in the sky. I see them, they fade, and then they dissipate in the sky. I accept these urges as part of being human and I know that I don't have to react to them. Each time one comes and goes I develop more confidence in knowing that they are temporary and will go away. Their hold on me loosens and I enjoy the experience of not reacting. I stay present and feel freedom in the moment.

Review of Practices for Week 2

- Sign up for a commitment at your Home Meeting.
- Find Your Flashlight meditation. Start with 3 minutes and try to increase your practice time up to 12 minutes.
- Use the *Flashlight Tracking Sheet* (Handout 2.1) to track your attention.
- Use a bell sound at 30-minute intervals to gain awareness of your attention
- The Urge Surfing meditation – 3 to 12 minutes
- Use the *Noticing Triggers Worksheet* (Handout 2.2) each day and note the thoughts, urges, cravings, emotions, physical sensations you experience. Note if any triggers come up each day, and if they don't you may note that too.
- Mountain Meditation, practice for 20 minutes. You may use a guided, audio track by Jon Kabat-Zinn if you wish; one can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW_-d84Igxw .

- Continue with your mindfulness of a daily activity practice. You can use the same one (eating, brushing teeth, etc.) or choose different ones. Bring your full attention to that activity and notice sensations, sights, sounds, thought, and emotions that arise.
- Habit Releaser – Take a walk
- Prayers and Meditations. Spend time with the written prayers and/or create your own. You might choose to enter any of your prayers into a Prayer Journal for personal reflection.

Frequently Experienced Challenges

Challenges related to your Twelve Step meetings can arise when you try to meet people and find support. Going to AA and making friends can be uncomfortable for some. You may find that initially there is no one that you connect with. Give it time and simply keep showing up, talk to people, and some connections will start to form which will help you develop a support group.

In practicing mindfulness, there are some challenges that are so commonly found that it is worth mentioning to help avoid discouragement. These challenges arise for anyone who meditates, even those who are experienced in their practice. Learn to just observe them with curiosity and non-judgement. You might feel aversion, or the experience of not wanting or not liking. These feelings elicit a reaction to make that go away. Thoughts or feelings like fear, anger, irritation, defeat, or resentment typically create a reaction of aversion. Feelings of craving or wanting may arise, including wishing for peace. You may become restless and uncomfortable physically or mentally as you engage in meditation. You might become sleepy and even fall asleep while meditating. You might feel doubt about your ability to do these practices and ultimately,

to be able to stay in recovery. You need not feel scared or discouraged because these are predictable and typical feelings for someone embarking on this mindful recovery journey. Just observe the feelings non-judgmentally. Stay positive and believe that you can do this and that you are right where you need to be.

What Progress Looks Like in Week 2

• Attend AA meetings each day and start making connections with people. If you are comfortable, you might share some of your experiences regarding your heightening awareness. You are becoming attuned to attentional control and its relation to relapse.

• Begin to engage with your uncomfortable thoughts and physical sensations and learn to pause before reacting. Sit with your feelings and observe them calmly and nonjudgmentally. Make notation in your *Awareness of Cravings and Triggers* worksheet.

How Week Two Skills Show Up in Your Life

You will be noticing that a wider variety of sensations show up in your body, such as stress, anxiety, happiness, fear, sadness, excitement. All of our emotions have associated physical sensations. You'll begin to notice what sensations precede or bring about a triggering event. You might gain insights as to what emotions lead up to a triggered response. You will feel good that you realize that you can pause before reacting. With this awareness you can make choices. You will begin to be less intimidated by cravings and urges.

You are meeting people at AA and beginning to form relationships. You may remember that too much attention on the self has been proven to decrease one's overall happiness and an outward focus on others enhances happiness. Establishing close relationships is important. Scientists have found that as people continue to meditate over

several years that their emotional thermostat is fundamentally reset to be happier, energized, and more at ease (Farb, et al., 2007, p.313). Be encouraged!

Flashlight Tracking Sheet – Handout 2.1

Examples:

Time	Task	Flashlight
10 a.m.	Finish writing report	Thinking about where I am going to meet my friends tonight.
12 p.m.	Call with my friend	Listening to how her sons are now getting along well. Fully present and happy that she has this family happiness.

Time	Task	Flashlight

(Jha, 2020, p. 112)

AWARENESS OF TRIGGERS AND CRAVING WORKSHEET – HANDOUT 2.2

Day/Date	Situation / Trigger	What sensations did you feel?	What moods, feelings or emotions?	What were your thoughts?	What did you do?
Example: 3/30/xx	*An argument with a friend*	*Tightness in chest, heart beating fast*	*Anxiety, craving*	*I need help getting through this*	*Took a walk, called a friend*

(Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 72)

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 2.3

Week 2

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

WEEK 3 - RELATING TO OUR THOUGHTS AND RELAPSE

What to Focus on This Week

Last week we started pausing when we imagined a triggering situation and became aware of making conscious choices. You have been learning about stabilizing your mind and focusing your attention. This, along with waking up to routine activities, has been laying the groundwork for everyday mindfulness. The next step in the recovery journey is to begin to develop a new way of understanding our thoughts. Our thoughts are not us, but are things of impermanence that capture our attention. Thoughts are just thoughts and they don't represent the truth or who we are. We don't have to react to them. Realizing this, it is possible for us to liberate ourselves from their control.

This realization is an important, even central, concept in mindfulness practice. We will practice noticing our thoughts and how we relate to these thoughts, our feelings, and behaviors. As you practice this week, allow your thoughts to be the primary object of your awareness. You will notice them and step back from their content and observe the nature of your thinking and how you relate to them. Something that we want to come to understand is that thoughts are only mental events – they are simply a word or an image in our mind until we think it is so compelling or exciting that we can't get it out of our heads. A craving is just a craving unless we get sucked into it (Brewer, 2017, p.115). How we relate to our thoughts and feelings makes all the difference because managing our thoughts leads us to consciously choosing our behaviors.

In recovery and in everyday life we can get caught up in the push and pull of our experiences and literally get tripped up on our thoughts. Our brains might call upon our default mode network and go into a habitual way of ruminative thinking where we relate

to our thoughts in unproductive ways. In AA, this is called "stinkin' thinkin'" and we will learn to avoid it by redefining how we relate to our thoughts.

AA Plan for the Week

This week's Twelve-Step practice is to be intentional in looking for a sponsor. Having a sponsor is not mandatory, but is highly recommended since the relationship strengthens your recovery. A sponsor is a member of AA or NA who has been in recovery for at least a year. They help you understand the recovery process of AA. They answer your questions and partner with you in working the 12-steps. A sponsor is also a confidante who understands where you have been and what you are going through. Now is a good time for you to start working your steps. If you haven't already, start looking for a sponsor. Think about the people you know in AA and see if any seem to be a good fit as a guide, confidante, and mentor. Another way to help yourself find a sponsor is to go to Speaker Meetings, where people speak who have ten years or more of sobriety. Hearing those people share their stories will help you find a good fit as someone who can support your recovery. Notice if you are able to let yourself lean in to the support community. Try your best.

As you prepare yourself for getting a sponsor, also spend time thinking about Step 2. Step Two addresses being part of something more than yourself: "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." We are encouraged to "let go" and it leads us toward a less self-centered view of the world and toward seeing ourselves as part of a supportive community. In this community, your viewpoint might be that you will do your part (not drinking or using drugs) and your Higher Power (God, Buddha, nature…) will do its part (Griffin, 2004, p.33). When you begin to let go of addictions

and control, Step Two gives comfort and a sense that you'll be okay if you let go. In Step One you admitted powerlessness in being able to stop using drugs or alcohol. While that opens you up to letting go of your addictions, it also makes you vulnerable. When you begin to let go of your addictions and the control, Step Two gives comfort and a sense that if you let go you will be ok. You make yourself vulnerable when you open up to someone and this Step is good to pair with beginning a relationship with a sponsor. Step Two shows us a new and more reliable form of protection as you are encouraged to open up to God and/or Higher Power (Griffin, 2004, p. 33).

For any atheists or agnostics who struggle with the Higher Power idea, you can find your way with this by letting your spiritual life take over and begin to live from a place of love and awareness. The idea is to stop fighting your surrender and begin to embrace your spiritual self. You don't have to get hung up on the type of Higher Power you believe in. You may not have a sponsor to work your steps with yet, but this is a good time to think about letting go of what keeps you in chains. This focus on spiritual surrender pairs nicely with the mindfulness practice this week of learning to relate differently to your thoughts.

How AA and Mindfulness Work Together in Week 3

Thoughts and relapse are closely tied together and thoughts play a strong part in the relapse process. By learning to see that thoughts are not necessarily reality we also learn that they are not trustworthy. You will learn to relate to your thoughts differently and will begin to redefine yourself as you understand that your thoughts are not you and are not necessarily reality. You will be less prone to react and less vulnerable to relapse. Your AA program works in partnership with those notions because Step 2 asks our

Higher Power to restore us to sanity and give us a closer understanding of who we are, our truth, behind all the thoughts. Our thoughts, urges and triggers can bring us to place of insanity. Managing your thoughts as mental events outside of yourself will help restore your sanity. A sponsor is your supporter on your journey to recovery. The surrender helps you accept your relationship with a sponsor and become open to working the steps.

The practices this week will lead you through observing your thoughts and will begin to bring together mind and body in awareness and self-compassion.

Practices for Week 3

There are three different meditations on relating to thoughts, each adding more context to one another. The harmonize and each one adds something unique.

- 3.1 - Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings – thoughts as separate, mental events
- 3.2 - Sitting Meditation on Thoughts– thoughts as impermanent
- 3.3 - Sitting Meditation on Thoughts with Stream Metaphor
- 3.4 – Stretching Without Striving
- Habit Releaser
- Prayers and Meditations

Introductory Contemplation

Imagine how you might let go of some of the actions or behaviors of your past. Imagine putting them all in a raft and then push that raft off a dock, out into the sea. Give it a big shove! Spend a few moments thinking about how that feels. You might think about all the space you now have to be aware of this moment, with new possibilities for new thoughts and experiences. What are the sensations you feel as you think of this?

Mindfulness Practice 3.1 – Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings (adapted from Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 72,73).

This meditation will take you through experiencing your thoughts in new ways. We will begin to relate to thoughts differently, as just words or images. They are simply mental events and our mind can choose to believe them or engage with them – or not. Our thoughts can impose limits on ourselves and erode our self-confidence, or, can open us up to our potential and increase self-efficacy – and happiness.

• When your attention is relatively stable on the breath, try shifting your focus to feature the process of thinking itself. Let the breath sensations move into the background and allow the thinking process itself to come to the foreground, placing it center stage in the field of awareness, observing thoughts arise and pass away like clouds in the sky or like writing on water – allowing the mind to function as a thought mirror, simply reflecting and registering whatever comes, as it comes, and whatever goes, as it goes.

• See if you can perceive these thoughts as separate events in the field of awareness, arising, maybe lingering, and then passing away.

• Note their content and their emotional charge while, if possible, not being drawn into thinking about them, or thinking the next thought, but just maintaining the "frame" through which you are observing the process of thought.

• Note that an individual thought does not last long. It is impermanent. If it comes, it will go. It is helpful to be aware of this observation and let this register with you.

• Note how some thoughts keep coming back.

• It can be especially instructive to take note of those thoughts that are centered on personal pronouns, especially I, me, or mine thoughts, observing carefully how self-

centered the content of those thoughts may be. How are you in relationship to those thoughts when you simply note them as thoughts and don't take them quite so personally? How do you feel about them when you observe them in this non-judgmental way? Is there something to be learned from this?

• Note those moments when the mind creates a "self" to be preoccupied with how well or how badly your life is going.

• Note thoughts about the past and thoughts about the future.

• Note thoughts that are about wanting, grasping, or clinging.

• Note thoughts that are about anger, disliking, aversion, or rejection.

• Note feelings and moods as they come and go.

Mindfulness Practice 3.2 – A Meditation on Observing Thoughts (Kabat-Zinn, mindfulnesstapes.com, Series 3, to accompany "Coming to Our Senses, 2005)

Before you begin this contemplation, read and reflect on the following:

Our thoughts are just thoughts, not the truth of things, and certainly not accurate representations of who we are. In being seen and known, they cannot but self-liberate, and we are, in that moment, liberated from them (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

In this next meditation simply observe thoughts arising and passing. Your thoughts are events in your field of awareness. Intentionally treat them as if they are all of equal value. The practice helps to step back from the content of your thoughts and allows greater understanding of all of the different forms that your thoughts can take. Think about beginning to relate to your thoughts as just words or images that we may or may not choose to believe or engage in (Bowen, 2021, 128-129).

• Take a few moments to settle into feeling the body as a whole, sitting and breathing, or lying down and breathing, riding the waves of the breath moment by moment, resting in awareness. An awareness that features the entirety of the body scape and the breath scape as they express themselves, moment by moment. Life unfolding here and now in the body, in awareness.

• And when you're ready, let go of the breath and the body as a whole. Allow them to recede into the background or rest in the wings, as we've been saying, still very much present but less featured while we invite the whole domain of thoughts and feelings and mood states to be center stage in the field of awareness.

• Observe the stream of thought rather than being carried away by the content or emotional charge of individual thoughts. Instead, rest comfortably on the bank of the thoughts, like a river or the thought stream itself, allowing individual thoughts if and when they arise to be seen, felt, recognized and known, as thoughts as events in the field of awareness.

• Recognize them as mental events, occurrences, secretions of the thinking mind, independent of their content and their emotional charge, even as that content and emotional charge are also seen and known.

• See any and all of these fleeting thoughts as bubbles, eddies and currents within the stream, rather than as facts or as the truth of things, whatever the content, whatever the emotional charge, whatever their urgency or their tendency to reappear, whether they are pleasant or seductive, unpleasant or repulsive, or neutral and harder to detect at all.

• Expand the metaphor and see any and all of these evanescent thought events more like clouds in the sky or bubbles coming off the bottom of a pot of boiling water. Or

like writing on water, arising in a moment, lingering for the briefest of instances, and dissolving back into the formlessness from whence they came. Relate to their content as if each were of equal importance and relevance to what you had for dinner three nights ago. Apply this view to the thoughts that are particularly compelling and insightful. Practice this especially on the most compelling and insightful thoughts.

• For now, just let any and all thoughts come and go. Just let sounds come and go. Or sensations come and go. Not preferring some to others, nor pursuing some over others, not pursuing anything. Just resting in an awareness of thinking itself and the spaces between thoughts. Moment by moment, breath by breath, as we sit here or as we lie here.

• It might be helpful to be especially sensitive to the steady stream of commentary and advice you may be giving yourself as you sit here, and recognizing it as such. You might think of it as scaffolding to a running commentary, and take a position in relationship to it that resembles turning down the sound on a television set, so that you're just watching the game and aren't being sucked into the endless stream of commentary and interpretation and opinion that is so characteristic of televised sports events.

• Rather, you now detect the individual secretions of commentary on your moment to moment experience merely as thoughts, or as judgments, and you rest in recognizing them without being pulled into the past or into the future or into opinions or fears or desires. You simply see them and know them as thoughts and emotions, not as the truth.

• Watch how easily thoughts manufacture or fabricate views, opinions, ideas, beliefs, plans, memories, stories, and how easily they proliferate. If we feed them one

thought morphs into the next, then into the next, we suddenly realize that we've been carried downstream and off our topic of focus. The process of thinking involves observing and recognizing thoughts, being carried away by them, and then returning to what we want to think about.

• Over and over, we come back to this moment, to the field of thought itself, which is beyond all the content of the endless thinking and proliferating and fabricating and the emotions that accompany them springing from whether they are pleasant unpleasant or neutral and from what's going on in your life in this moment.

• Allow all of this to be held in bare attention and awareness as we sit here resting in the awareness itself, in the knowing of thoughts and feelings. We accept our thoughts and feelings and whatever their content and emotional charge, just as an experiment in cultivating greater intimacy with our own interiority with what's on our minds and in our hearts. Become aware of new dimensions of the possible.

• If we learn to observe carefully rather than identifying with the content of thoughts and feelings, seeing them more impersonally as weather patterns as ripples and waves on the surface, we feel grounded.

• Rest in awareness and observe the arising and passing away of thoughts and feelings in the mindscape. Some are overwhelmingly obvious, some quite subtle, some masquerading as commentary, others as scaffolding, others as neither, and simply returning over and over again to the frame, whenever the mind is carried off, not looking for thoughts or emotions or mood indicators, just resting in awareness and letting them all come to you.

• Let them arise on their own in the field of awareness to whatever degree they do.

Mindfulness Practice 3.3 – Sitting Meditation on Thoughts with Stream Metaphor (adapted from Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 139-140).

• Begin by sitting in a chair and close your eyes if you'd like. Sit with a calm, dignified, and wakeful presence, with your spine upright and body relaxed. Take a moment to become aware of yourself in your room, in your chair, at this moment. Bring awareness to your body.

• Gather your attention and bring it to your breath. Notice the inbreath, the outbreath, the waves of breath as they enter and leave your body. Continue to stay with the sensations of breathing for the next few moments and do not be concerned that anything should happen – do not strive for a particular experience.

• Let the breath fade into the background of your attention and allow awareness to focus on the thoughts that are arising in your mind. See if you can notice the very next thought, then let it naturally pass, and then see if you can notice the next thought, allowing that to pass by too, without becoming involved in it or following it.

• To support this practice, I am adding a metaphor to try if you find it useful. If not, modify it however you'd like. You might imagine that you are sitting by a stream. Take a moment now to picture this stream in your mind. It might be a familiar stream, or you can just make one up. As thoughts begin to arise, imagine you are sitting on the shore watching them float by as though they were leaves on the water. As you become aware of each thought that appears, just gently allow it to float by, like leaves on a stream.

• The thoughts might be words, an image or a sentence. Some thoughts might be larger or heavier, some smaller, quicker, or lighter. Whatever form the thought is in, as

the next one appears, do the same, allowing it to float by. Just doing your best with this. If you find that you are worrying about what this should look like or whether are you doing this right, just notice that these are also thoughts that are drifting down the stream. If thoughts come quickly, you might picture the stream rushing with white water. As the thoughts calm down, the stream might slow down and flow more smoothly.

• If you find that you become lost in a thought or your attention has been carried downstream by a thought, you might congratulate yourself for becoming aware again, noticing what thought pulled you away and then just step back out of the stream and resume sitting on the bank, observing passing thoughts.

• Something you can try is labeling thoughts as they appear. They might be judgments about yourself, your experience, or how you are doing on this exercise. If so, just label that thought as "judgment" and let it pass. Maybe you have a memory that arises. If so, just label it as "memory." If plans come to mind about what you are going to do after today's session or what you are going to say to someone in the future, you might label that as "fantasy." We imagine scenarios that might happen or that we would like to happen. Just recognize the thoughts as judgments, memories, plans, fantasies, or any labels that you identify with and then allow the thoughts to pass. Try practicing this now. If no labels come to mind, that is okay too, just observe that.

• If you find you are lost in one of the thoughts that has arisen, notice what that thought was that carried you away, then gently bring yourself back to the exercise of observing.

• When you are ready, allow your awareness to focus on the room you are in, your body in your chair. Give yourself time to gently allow your eyes to open. Hold this awareness as best you can as your eyes take in the room and your surroundings.

Mindfulness Practice 3.4 - Stretching without Striving: The Mindful Movement Meditation (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 120).

Movement has a profound and soothing impact on the mind. Let's finish our meditations today by getting back in touch with our bodies. This meditation involves anchoring awareness in the moving body. There are four stretching exercises that are carried out over just a few minutes. They realign your muscles and joints and release stresses that you naturally accumulate over the course of your day. The accompanying sound track to this meditation can be found online at: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/mindfulness-meditation-downloads/?ref=PRH81F7A703FA&aid=randohouseinc3361-20&linkid=PRH81F7A703FA , Track 3.

PREPARATION

• Stand in bare feet or socks with your feet about hip-width apart and parallel to each other. Your back is straight but not stiff. Your head is balanced and the shoulders relaxed, with your hands down by your sides.

• Remember that it's important to be gentle with yourself as you do these stretches. Let the wisdom of your body decide what is ok for you to do, how far to go with any stretch, and how long to hold it.

• See this practice as a chance to cultivate awareness of the body in even the smallest movements.

• As you're standing, notice the contact between your feet and the floor. Unlock your knees slightly and see how this feels.

RAISING ARMS

• On an in-breath, slowly and mindfully raise your arms out to the sides until they are parallel to the floor. On another in-breath continue to raise them, slowly and mindfully, until your hands are above your head, with the palms turned toward each other. Stretch upward, feet firmly grounded on the floor, as you breathe. Stretch up for a few breaths, but stay within your limits of comfort.

• When you are ready, slowly, on an out-breath, begin the journey back. Allow the arms to come down. Breath by breath, tune in to the changing sensations as the arms move. Feel your clothes move on the surface of your skin. Feel the changing landscape of sensations from the muscles in the arms, until your arms come back to rest, hanging from the shoulders.

• If your eyes have been open, close them gently to help you focus attention on the sensations throughout the body as you stand. Be aware of the aftereffects of doing this stretch and of the movements and the breath in the body.

PICKING FRUIT

• Open your eyes and stretch your right arm up, as if you were picking fruit from a tree that is just out of reach. Look up beyond the finders and bring your full awareness to the sensations throughout the body and to what the breath does as you stretch. Allow the left heel to come off the floor as you stretch. Feel the stretch right through your body.

• Next, allow the heel to come back to the floor and begin to lower the hand. Follow the fingers with your eyes and notice what colors and shapes your eyes see as they follow your hand down.

• Move your face to the center, and let your eyes close for a few moments as you tune into the aftereffects of this stretch, along with sensations of the breath moving in the body.

• Open your eyes again. Stretch up to "pick fruit" with your left hand and allow the right heel to come off the floor to help the stretch. See if you can notice what parts of the body are involved in this stretch. Note where the edges are and become aware and then let go of even the slightest tendency to push beyond your limits.

• Allow the heel to come back to the floor and the arm to return slowly to your side. Follow it all the way with your eyes and notice what your eyes see as they follow your fingers down. Then, when the arm has come to rest, allow the face to come back to center. Let the eyes close. Tune in to the aftereffects of doing this stretch.

BENDING SIDEWAYS

• Now, on an out-breath, put your hands on your hips and allow your head and shoulders to bend over to the left very slowly and mindfully. Let your hips move a little to the right. Bend sideways, feel how the body forms a curve that extends from the feet through the hips and torso. Breathe in this position.

• Remember that it's not important how much you bend, it's the quality of attention you bring to each small movement.

• On an out-breath, return to standing upright. Remain here for a moment. Then on an out-breath, return to standing upright and let your arms rest by your sides. What aftereffects of this stretch are you aware of as you stand here?

SHOULDER ROLLS

• Next, try some shoulder rolls. Raise the shoulders toward the ears as far as they will go. Then allow them to move backward, moving the shoulder blades toward each other. Let the shoulders drop down completely and squeeze them together in front of your body, as if you were trying to touch them together.

• Now combine these movements in a smooth rolling motion. Go up, back, down and forward. Let the breath determine the speed of rotation. Breath in for half the movement and out for the other half. At a certain point, change so the shoulders move in the other direction.

STANDING IN STILLNESS

• Let's return to stillness while standing straight. Become aware of any and all sensations. You will notice the aftereffects of doing these stretches and the sensations of the breath moving freely in and out of the body.

Mindful Movement has varying effects on different people. Some find it comforting, some find it uncomfortable. Remember that the reason to do these exercises is to notice how you relate to the sensations. It does not matter if you couldn't stretch some muscles very far or if you felt protective or cautious about certain body parts that are very tight. This exercise provides the raw material for you to expand your awareness and teach you about your limits and how you can relate to them more skillfully. You can

translate this to daily life by embracing slight discomfort and offer yourself goodwill and compassion.

Habit Releaser - Appreciate the television

Watching TV can be a mindless habit, involving channel surfing, and something to do when there is "nothing to do." You might even criticize yourself for how much you watch TV. This week we are going to appreciate it and respect it for the wonderful source of entertainment that it is.

One day this week go online and pick a program that really interests you. Find out what day and time it is available and plan to watch it at that time. On that designated day only watch the program that you have intentionally chosen to watch. You can use the time before or after that program to take a walk, phone a friend, or read a book. Watch the program and turn off the TV when you are done.

Jot down in a notebook how it went; did it feel good or bad to watch only that one show? What did you notice? The intention here is to help dissolve old habits that have grown slowly over time. Did you feel like the awareness of this practice might free you up to watch less TV and appreciate watching the things you intentionally choose with more appreciation? This exercise doesn't ask you to make any big changes, it is only to learn to do some of your routine things differently and surround your tasks with the fresh air of awareness and choice (Williams and Penman, 2017, p. 134-135).

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer from the Second Step

Heavenly Father,

I know in my heart that only you can restore me to sanity.

I humbly ask that you remove all unhelpful thoughts and addictive behavior impulses from me this day.

Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

From https://www.aacle.org/twelve-step-prayers/

Christian Prayer

Dear God, for the first time, I am considering the notion that my thoughts are only mental events and that they are not actually part of me. The understanding of this separation is new and important. My thoughts and urges have controlled me for so long that the understanding that I don't have to act upon them is new. This calms me. I am thankful to know that with awareness I can learn to observe myself carefully, pause, and make productive choices. God, thank you for the gift of awareness and for the realization that it is possible for me to change my life. I ask for your guidance and companionship as I practice this new understanding of the relationship between me and my thoughts, and thank you for the hope that it gives me. Amen.

Meditation

Each morning I am going to smile as soon as I wake up. I am going to breathe in calmness and as I breathe out I will smile. I will experience the wonderful moment. When I smile it helps remind me that my life is not all suffering, but so much more. My smile says that my suffering is not the end of the world. Everything is impermanent, including my suffering and this too, will pass (Hanh, 2022, p. 158).

Research in neuroscience has shown that smiling sends a clear message to the brain that there is nothing to worry about, so smiling helps us feel better. We can welcome each new day with this awareness. Waking up in the morning with a smile

might remind us that we have a precious gift of twenty-four, brand-new hours to live. We are still alive, and we want to make good use of the time given us. We do not want to waste it. We can live those twenty-four hours fully, and touch peace, joy, and wonder, despite the pain and suffering we may be experiencing. As we go through our day, we can generate the energy of understanding and compassion that has the capacity to heal us and everyone with whom we come into contact.

Reciting the following practice verse every morning before getting out of bed may help you start the day with more lightness and energy. You might like to write these words out and put them somewhere you can see them first thing in the morning.

Waking up this morning I smile.

Twenty-four brand-new hours are before me.

I vow to live fully in each moment

And to look at all beings

With the eyes of compassion.

Review of Practices for Week 3

• Begin looking intentionally for a sponsor and deepen connections in the AA community. Socialize with a mindful view, in a good-hearted spirit.

• Practice the various three meditations on relating to thoughts at least 5 times this week. You may pick one favorite, or all of them. You may use the following guided meditation, which is similar to the meditation written here and is also led by Jon Kabat-Zinn: Mindfulness of Sounds and Thoughts Meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyAoCtvm6VA&t=123smeditation

• Mindful Movement – practice the Stretching Without Striving exercises at least 3 days this week. Pick a time of day when you might practice.

• Use your Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet and continue to note your triggers and reactions each day.

• Habit Releaser – Appreciate the TV. Do at least once this week.

• Use your Daily Practice Tracking Sheet

Frequently Experienced Challenges

If you find that there are too many meditation exercises, you may choose those that resonate the best. If you find it difficult or distracting to guide yourself through meditations then seek out guidance, such as the recordings included here, or find others online. Don't let yourself fall into a striving or chasing mode. You may have had some good sessions where you felt particularly "successful" in your practice. Mindfulness practice won't always feel like it's progressing to a higher level of "success" and it shouldn't. It is best if it is an act of non-striving. Remember that just the practice of meditating holds value for you, and even a less-successful session was a good mental workout for you.

What Progress Looks Like in Week 3

You will be making connections at meetings and intentionally thinking of who might be a good sponsor to start with. If no one comes to mind then you'll attend Speaker Meetings so you can meet more people who are potentially good sponsors for you. Maybe you are even ready to ask someone. Your motivation to start working the steps may add incentive.

You are keeping track on your worksheet of the emotions you have that set off your triggers. You are noticing a whole new vocabulary of sensations in your body and mind. You are practicing your meditation and stretching exercises and are starting to feel the benefits.

How Week 3 Skills Show up in Your Life

Over the last few weeks you have probably begun to realize that there is a power in mindfulness that is showing up in your life. You might be sleeping better, you might be noticing more of what is going on around you as you wake up to routine activities, maybe you are feeling less irritated and are enjoying people more. Opening yourself up to empathy is important, as you experience more compassion for others and for yourself. You might find that you are developing relationships in your AA community and that it is becoming easier to do so. Mindfulness is about re-orienting your life to experience more joy and less suffering.

You will find that making time for your daily practice is becoming easier. You will start to notice your thoughts as outside of you, as mental events, maybe even visualizing your thoughts and emotions like clouds moving by. You will feel calmer and less frantic. You may find that meditating gives you greater focus where you are making less mistakes at work, are able to get your tasks done quicker, as you redirect your flashlight to what you want to focus on. You are noticing more around you and feel more peaceful.

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 3.1

Week 3

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet – Handout 3.2
(Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 72)

Day/Date	Situation / Trigger	What sensations did you feel?	What moods, feelings or emotions?	What were your thoughts?	What did you do?
Example: 3/30/xx	*An argument with a friend*	*Tightness in chest, heart beating fast*	*Anxiety, craving*	*I need help getting through this*	*Took a walk, called a friend*

WEEK 4 - BEGINNING ANEW, SELF-EFFICACY AND RELATION TO RELAPSE

What to Focus on This Week

By now you are starting to relate to your thoughts differently. You are relating to your body differently as you practice bringing your mind and body together in awareness. You may see that you are noticing your triggers and even pausing when they occur. If you think you haven't made that much progress yet, remember that the value of practice is to spend time practicing, so allow yourself to take that time. Progress or achievement is not a goal of your practice. This week we will continue to challenge our old ways of thinking and use our mindfulness awareness to see ourselves as new, emergent beings – which we are. We are going to question how we see ourselves and the world with a new mind. Our thought patterns dictate the ways we perceive and explain reality, including our relationship to our self and to the world (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p.243). We are practicing living in the present and questioning old notions we have about ourselves, about how we think and maybe even about what happiness means. Mindfulness advocates the removal of notions. Notions are ideas that we have formed which might have been constructed based on thoughts which are not true. Direct experience is really the only thing that reveals the truth to us. According to the teaching of Buddha, our notion of happiness may be the obstacle to our happiness (Hanh, 1999, p. 75). How is that so? Because we have a notion of what happiness should look like (having a wonderful spouse, a beautiful house, meeting career goals) and with that fixed, close minded notion we might remain unhappy for our entire lives. This is why it is important to be aware of your notions, especially about yourself, that may keep you stuck being less happy and healthy than you could be. We aim to liberative ourselves from notions and perceptions, including those

that have to do with our own happiness, so we can make room for our truth, through our direct experiences in the present (Hanh, 1999, p. 77).

The strength of our recovery is directly related to how we feel about ourselves and how much we are open to trust and accept ourselves (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p.245). This is why we try to leave behind our notions or self-perceptions that might be unencouraging or self-defeating and that can sabotage recovery. A particular aspect of self-esteem is called self-efficacy. It reflects confidence in your ability to make things happen, even when you might have to face new, unpredictable and stressful occurrences. Self-efficacy increases when you succeed at something and then you become encouraged to do more. Let's say that you're practicing the Body Scan and after a session you felt more in touch with your body and more relaxed. That feeling of success or accomplishment will inspire you to keep practicing. Translate this to recovery and think about another example. Let's say that you noticed that you were triggered when you found yourself at a restaurant with friends who were drinking. You paused and were able to name this as a trigger and carefully chose your reaction. So, you ordered a soda, and experienced a positive and sober night of socialization. Your self-efficacy increased through that positive experience and your confidence in yourself increases. You will be happy that your recovery practices have been effective in helping you make better choices. Studies have shown that a strong sense of self-efficacy is the best predictor of positive health outcomes (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 245). Self-esteem, our "notions," and our degree of self-efficacy are strong factors that influence recovery and that knowledge can help you strengthen your recovery.

In the Buddhist tradition there is a very important practice called Beginning Anew, which is a wonderful concept to bring into recovery. To begin anew means we are reborn fresh and new and able to start again. This concept introduces hope to someone working to be sober, contemplating the idea that the shame and negative feelings of oneself might be let go. The teaching of Buddha and the ways of mindfulness offer ways to be reborn in each moment. Central to the idea of rebirth is the theme of learning to love again, including ourselves. "If we have the energy of love then we will be filled with life. We will be strong; not afraid of anything because love will help us overcome all difficulties and despair (Hahn, Coming Home, 1999, p. 67-68)."

In most ways AA's Twelve-Step program and mindfulness practice harmonize. On the topic of self-esteem and self-image, they differ somewhat and this week we will point out some differences where your mindfulness practice can super-charge your Twelve-Step program. Mindfulness offers additional points of view regarding self-efficacy and self-perception.

AA participants are encouraged to surrender to their Higher Power and admit that they are an alcoholic or addict. Surrender and acceptance go hand-in-hand and mindfulness strongly encourages accepting yourself and the world as it is. A point to consider: giving yourself a label like "alcoholic" may have connotations for you that are not positive or encouraging. Labels, like notions, are to be questioned as you look to discover your truth, about yourself and others. Mindfulness would suggest that you consider not affixing a label to yourself, identifying with all the attributes of that label. Different people have different notions, or definitions of what an alcoholic or addict means. Let's say that earlier in your life you associated an alcoholic with someone who

was incoherent, mean-spirited, or a host of other undesirable characteristics. Those images of our past color our present understanding and we can't help it. These images may not apply to you at all. Do you see that is not good for you to label yourself that way? As part of your recovery you are discovering who you are as a sober person each day. Going forward, notice when you label yourself and the meaning affixed to it, which is the meaning you've created over time. The meaning has been conditioned also by parents, teachers, and friends – by our culture and our genes. Notice if you feel good, neutral, or bad about it. If a label like "addict" or "alcoholic" is stifling to you, you can let it go and redefine yourself. You might decide to think of yourself who is a person that is in recovery. You may not need a label to know that you want to be in AA for all of its benefits and to be a part of a community committed to sobriety. You only have to be a person who wants to be sober to participate. Once we see the habitual, relative, and conditioned nature of our opinions, it becomes easier to be open to new ideas, such as how a Higher Power might restore us to sanity, or to peace. One last thing about letting go of old, conditioned ways of thing about yourself, it also means trying to stop judging ourselves and quiet the inner war going on inside (Griffin, 2004, p. 36).

Another philosophical difference between AA and mindfulness is the categorization of addiction as a disease. AA defines alcoholism as a disease of the body, genetically or physiologically inherited (Miller, 1993, P. 129). The mindful view would consider addiction as a disease of the mind. You may find that thinking of your addiction as a disease is helpful if it helps you understand that there is a genetic predisposition to your addiction, or if it helps you make sense of how addition came into your life. However, if you find that thinking of your addiction as a disease carries some negative

implications then you don't have to decide that you have a disease, you don't have to categorize it. Your truth might be that you acknowledge that you have a history of abusing substances and that you want to stop. This week's practices explore and support looking at ourselves with newness.

AA Plan for the Week

This week we are strongly tying in self-esteem and self-belief to our recovery program to strengthen our success. In this "becoming anew" chapter, let's engage with Step 7 – "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." This asks God to take away our defects of character so that we can be more useful in the world and do God's will. This is more about showing our commitment and intention to let go of our negative qualities and this is an ongoing process (Griffin, 2004, p. 157). Blend together the mindfulness thoughts of the prior paragraph, a compassionate view of yourself applied to a person whose intention is to do good. AA might say that members strive to become better where mindfulness advocates non-striving and living in the truth of direct experience. This is not a stumbling block for participants in this program. In AA, Step 7 teaches us to hold on lightly, and to let go gracefully. As one member of AA put it "we watch our identity change over time, we start to take pleasure in discovering how different aspects of our personality and character appear and disappear (Griffin, 2004, p.165)."

This week's Twelve-Step practice is to move ahead and establish a relationship with a sponsor. Last week you began looking; this week do your best to have that relationship in place. In addition, make another step forward and intentionally socialize with people from the program. See if you have any opportunity to talk with them about

their daily practices and compare experiences to see what is working for them as they stay sober. There is tremendous strength in the energy of the community.

How the AA and Mindfulness Practices Work Together in Week 4

The beginning of this chapter discussed the interplay of AA and mindfulness views and invites you to explore what feels right for you. Is it helpful for you to understand your addiction as a disease of the body or of the mind? Does it help you to think of yourself as an addict, or, is that not helpful? These are personal decisions and neither is right or wrong. You decide what helps you experience yourself as a person in recovery. Notice what thoughts about your self-identity bolster your self-efficacy. Specific to your AA program, with better self-esteem you are more open to interacting with others and making connections. Feeling connection to others is proven to strengthen your recovery (Machell, 1988, p. 1). As you think about Step 7 and your hope that your Higher Power will help you remove your shortcomings, understand with compassion that work like this is ongoing and worthwhile.

Practices for Week 4

- Sitting with Sound
- Three-Minute Breathing Space
- Walking Meditation
- Lovingkindness
- Habit Releaser
- Prayers and Meditations

Introductory Contemplations

Take two minutes to think about a time where you felt content and safe, free of yourself and any worries. Breathe into it and feel yourself in that place. Dwell on that feeling so that you can then return to it when you like.

"When we practice mindfulness, we touch freedom – freedom from remorse and regrets, freedom from anguish and fear. Freedom is the basis of happiness: without freedom, there can be no true happiness. Every step you make, every breath you take, every minute of sitting or walking mediation, and every action you take in mindfulness can bring you more peace, joy, solidity, and freedom (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2021, p. 141)."

Mindfulness Practice 4.1 – Sitting with Sound (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 72).

The reason for this practice is to continue opening yourself up to awareness and away from habitual thinking. Begin by sitting in a comfortable position and center yourself on your breath. Next, try paying focused attention to what you hear all around you and make this the center of your awareness. This doesn't mean listening for sounds, but rather simply hearing what is here to be heard, moment by moment, without judging or thinking about what you are hearing – just hearing sounds as sounds. Imagine the mind as a "sound mirror," simply reflecting whatever arises in the domain of hearing. You can also experiment with hearing the silences within and between the sounds you notice.

You can practice this way with music too, hearing each note as it comes and also hearing the spaces between the notes. You might focus on the sounds of the bass guitar, or the drums, or any instrument that interests you. Try breathing the sounds into your body on an inbreath and letting them flow out again on the outbreath. Imagine that your body is transparent to sounds, that sounds can move in and out of your body through the

pores of your skin. Imagine that sounds can be "heard" and felt by your very bones. Sit with this and observe how it feels.

Mindfulness Practice 4.2 - Three-Minute Breathing Space

We do this meditation because the breathing space meditation concentrates some core elements of mindfulness into three steps of one-minute each. It is something that you can draw upon anywhere and at any time. It is especially useful if you get feelings of being overwhelmed, over-stimulated, or if you can't hold your attention on that which you want to. Practice this twice a day and see if you can set up a regular time during which you can practice.

Three-Minute Breathing Space (Williams and Penman, 2017, p. 132).

This practice is designed to help you when you feel over-stressed, angry, or tired and feel like you cannot devote 30 minutes to a meditation. Use this mini-meditation as one of the tools in your recovery toolbox.

Step 1: Becoming aware

Deliberately adopt an erect but relaxed posture, whether sitting or standing. If possible, close your eyes. Then bring your awareness to your inner experience and acknowledge it, asking: what is my experience right now?

- What thoughts are going through your mind? As best as you can, acknowledge thoughts as only mental events. Observe them and name them ("hello worry, I see you").
- What feelings are here? Turn toward any sense of discomfort or unpleasant feelings, acknowledging them without trying to make them different from how you find them.

- What body sensations are here right now? Quickly scan the body to pick up any sensations of tightness or bracing, acknowledging the sensations, but once again, not trying to change them in any way.

Step 2: Gathering and focusing attention

Next, redirect the attention to a narrow spotlight on the physical sensations of the breath, move in close to the physical sensations of the breath in the abdomen, expanding as the breath comes in, and falling back as the breath goes out. Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out. Use each breath as an opportunity to anchor yourself into the present. And if the mind wanders, gently escort the attention back to the breath.

Step 3: Expanding attention

Now, expand the field of awareness around the breathing so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture and facial expression, as if the whole body was breathing. If you become aware of any sensations of discomfort or tension, feel free to bring your focus of attention right in to the intensity by imagining that the breath could move into and around the sensations. In this, you are helping to explore the sensations, befriending them, rather than trying to change them in any way. If they stop pulling for your attention, return to sitting, aware of the whole body, moment by moment (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 132-133).

Mindfulness Practice 4.3 – Walking Meditation

We do this meditation because walking meditation can release you from the negative energies that make you suffer when you are upset or angry. Any time you feel caught up in these emotions, practice walking meditation for thirty or forty minutes and you will always feel better. The practice of mindful walking is a profound and

pleasurable way to deepen our connection with our body and the earth. “We breathe, take a mindful step, and come back to our true home (Hanh, quoted on Lion’s Roar.com, 2022).”

There are a lot of different varieties of mindfulness walking practice. Some stress taking very slow steps for 10 minutes, like walking in slow motion, and thinking only about the step and what you and your body feel. Others prefer taking longer walks in nature, still with focus on the steps, but might suggest that you also notice yourself stepping and breathing in nature, noticing birds, animals, sounds, sunbeams. The practice is intended to release us from negative energy, negative notions and feelings of disconnectedness, the longer nature walks are particularly helpful. Neither approach is “right” and all approaches are available for you to choose what suits you. As part of this program I am influenced by walking meditations by Thich Nhat Hanh, who saw walking meditation as being not only an experience within ourselves but that in which we experience our connectedness with nature. He suggested that we think of the earth as a holy sanctuary when we walk on it. I will paraphrase some of his words…we are nourished by each step and we have to notice each step, which brings us back to the here and now. We are encouraged to go slowly and without rushing. Remind yourself that you are right where you are supposed to be. Each mindful breath, each mindful step, reminds us that we are alive on this beautiful planet. We don’t need anything else. It is wonderful enough just to be alive, to breathe in, and to make one step. We have arrived at where real life is available – the present moment. All of us are looking for solid ground, our true home. The earth is our true home and it is always there, beneath us and around us. Breathe, take a mindful step, and arrive. We are already at home. (Hanh, 1999, p. 78).

This week, if possible, go for a mindful walk each day. You do not have to set a time limit and you can walk wherever you want. This exercise should not be thought of as work, but as a gift you will give to yourself. Optimally, you will be able to go outside to experience the energy of the earth. When we walk mindfully and see the beauty and the wonder of the earth around us, we wake up. If our mind is caught and preoccupied with our worries and suffering, we miss these things. If you notice your thoughts going to worries, or mind wandering to places you don't want to think about, you might say "hello, worry" and gently direct your attention back to your steps. Notice how each foot feels as it touches the earth. Notice how your legs feel and the sway of your body as you walk. We can value each step we take, and we can think that each step brings us happiness. When we look at the earth and the sky, we see that the earth is a wonderful reality (from Thich Nhat Hanh on Walking Meditation - Lions Roar.com https://www.lionsroar.com/how-to-meditate-thich-nhat-hanh-on-walking-meditation/).

Keep in mind that walking meditation unites our body and our mind and makes us whole again. Following is a walking meditation that you can start with.

- Start by standing still and taking in the sensations of your body. Breathe. When you are ready, start walking. Notice how each step feels when it comes in contact with the ground. How do your ankles feel as you walk? How about the bottom of your feet, how do they feel?
- Combine your breathing with your steps. Count your steps and notice each breath and the number of steps you take as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Don't try to control your breathing. Allow your lungs as much time and air as they need, and simply notice how many steps you take as your lungs fill

up and how many you take as they empty, mindful of both your breath and your steps. Just pay attention to what is comfortable for your body.

- As you walk you may say "breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I bring peace into my body." Calming the breath calms the body and reduces any pain and tension.
- Practice conscious breathing by counting steps.
- When we walk like this our breath brings our body and mind back together peacefully. When our mind and body have calmed down, we see more clearly. We see our sadness or frustration clearly and then it dissipates.
- We begin to feel more compassion for ourselves and others. We can only feel this when the body and mind are united.
- Here is a new concept: practice smiling while you are walking. Your smile will bring calm and happiness to your steps and your breath, and help sustain your attention. After practicing for half an hour or an hour, you will find that your breath, your steps, your counting, and your half-smile all blend together in a wonderful balance of mindfulness. Each step grounds us in the solidity of the earth. With each step we fully arrive in the present moment.

From Thich Nhat Hanh on Walking Meditation - Lions Roar.com
https://www.lionsroar.com/how-to-meditate-thich-nhat-hanh-on-walking-meditation/

I will share an example of my own inner dialogue when walking, influenced by Thich Nhat Hanh:

I'm going to take a new step, one I have never taken before. There are no patterns, there is no autopilot, and no tangled emotions. I am aware. I take

> peaceful, happy steps and I am the happiest person in the world. I have no goal, no destination, and I have inner and outer space to walk as long as I need to. Each step brings me back to the present moment, where I am alive. Each step is new and unique. I emit peace into the ground with every step I take. My steps have no trace of anxiety or sorry. I am here, now, with the Holy Spirit as I breathe in this moment. I am home.

If you are inspired to do so, you might record your own dialogues for walking meditations and future listening.

Mindfulness Practice 4.4 – Lovingkindness Meditation

We practice lovingkindness to experience feelings of empathy, compassion, and love for ourselves and then also towards others. We can see ourselves and others in the moment, through a lens of love (Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. 215-216). There is a power of evoking feelings of kindness, generosity, goodwill, love, and forgiveness, and directing them first and foremost towards yourself. This helps us cultivate strong positive emotions within ourselves and helps us let go of any ill will and resentment. It builds our self-efficacy and grounds us in a positive way.

To practice lovingkindness meditation, first become aware of your breathing. Then invite feelings of love and kindness toward yourself, perhaps remembering a moment when you felt completely seen and accepted by another human being and invite those feelings of kindness and love that you received to re-emerge out of your memory and be held in awareness and felt in the body. Say to yourself: “May I be free from inner and outer harm, may I be happy and healthy, may I live with ease (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, 215).” If you really let yourself experience these sentiments, notice what you feel when

you touch on these deeply held feelings and give yourself over to the process wholeheartedly, or as much as you can.

You might wish to extend these sentiments to someone else that you care deeply about. Think of them and say "may you be free from inner and outer harm, may you be happy and healthy, may you live with ease." You might choose different invocations such as "may he/she be happy, may he/she be free from pain and suffering, may he/she experience love and joy, may he/she live with ease." You can continue to choose different family members and friends to whom you would like to extend this lovingkindness mediation.

Taking this a step farther, you might next extend these feelings to someone with whom you have feelings of difficulty, even aversion. You can intentionally cultivate feelings of kindness towards them and remember that they are also a human being that deserves love and kindness, who also have feelings of hope and of fears and who feels pain and anxiety just as you do. You may not want to do this as you begin your lovingkindness meditations, but someday you might be moved to.

Lastly, come back to yourself, to your own body, and breathe for a few minutes. Notice and accept whatever feelings may be present and take particular note of whatever feelings of warmth, generosity, and love that you find flowing out of your heart. The release of all the love calms us and frees us as this positive energy is sent out into the world. It is only we ourselves who suffer by carrying around feelings of hurt and anger and learning how to offload that is a gift that we give to ourselves and also to those around us.

What we are trying to do is to bring awareness to our own thoughts and feelings and their physical, psychological and social consequences *as we observe them* (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 267- 268). If we can observe negativity of certain of our beliefs or patterns of thought then we can work to lessen their hold on us. Knowing something about what we observe might motivate us to look more closely at those moments when we find ourselves thinking pessimistically about other people or ourselves. We might bring mindfulness to the consequences of the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as they arise in us. If we can be aware of how we are affected by our positive and negative feelings then we might choose to feel good by drawing upon compassion, kindness, and good feelings about other people. We might see crises or threats and urges as challenges and opportunities if we mindfully develop these qualities of how we will choose to see the world.

Habit Releaser – Grocery Shopping

This week, go food shopping at a store where you have never previously shopped. Allow yourself plenty of time to accomplish this task so that you are not concerned about time. The experience will be rich with new sights and sounds as you walk through the aisles and find the items that you need. There will be many new sensory experiences that come to you as you experience finding the things you need, and your brain will definitely not be on autopilot.

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer from the Third Step:

God,

I offer myself to Thee

To build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

Take away my difficulties,

That victory over them may bear witness

To those I would help of Thy Power,

Thy love and Thy way of life,

May I do Thy will always!

(From https://www.aacle.org/twelve-step-prayers/)

Christian Prayer:

Dear God, I am thankful to be learning new ways of thinking about myself that can release me from the chains that I didn't realize I had put upon myself. There is more joy in my life than I had imagined and it feels like it has been buried by all the notions, rules, and judgements that I've made about myself. I am aware of the shame and guilt that I still carry from my past and with your help I hope to learn to forgive myself. I have a new awareness of others and their needs, now that I can see through the veil of dissociation I've created. I'm finding that I am now open to the offers of help that others extend to me. I feel more connected to what you taught us while here on earth Jesus, and I am thankful to you and so grateful. Amen.

Meditation

We are all connected and that means that all of our actions, thoughts and words affect each other. We are like candles for one another, each shining our light. Our kind thoughts and kind deeds travel in many directions and are never ending. These thoughts, words, and actions live on long after we are no longer here. With this in mind, I hope to

have this awareness as I interact with others and also the awareness to feel the gifts that others give to me.

As you experience more prayers, prayerful thoughts and meditations, you are likely thinking of your own prayers. You might start a prayer journal if you enjoy the act of writing your thoughts to God, to the earth, to an ancestor. It is up to you.

Review of Practices for Week 4

- Sitting with Sound – practice three times this week for 12 minutes. You may also want to listen to a guided meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn on Mindfulness of Sounds and Thoughts which can be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyAoCtvm6VA
- Three-Minute Breathing Space – practice this twice a day. If you would like a guided, audio file to lead you through it go to: http://bit.ly/rodalemindfulness on track 8.
- Mindful Walking – go on a mindful walk, for whatever duration, each day or as much as possible.
- Lovingkindness Meditation – practice lovingkindness on yourself this week, every day.
- Habit Releaser – Grocery Shopping at a new location
- Continue to track Urges and Triggers on your worksheet this week
- Start a prayer journal if you are moved to. As you review the prayers each week you may want to write your own.

Frequently Experienced Challenges

You may be feeling that you have too much "homework" to do as the weeks go by. Think about how some of your activities are naturally becoming a part of your life, such as noticing more about routine activities, noticing triggers and making conscious choices, grounding yourself with a breathing meditation when you get overwhelmed. Some activities or meditations will take "extra" time but some will not. Which ones are your favorites?

What Progress Looks Like in Week 4

You will have begun working the steps with your sponsor. You have signed up for a commitment and are feeling more involved in your fellowship. You are making time to track your urges on your worksheet and keep up with your *Daily Activities Tracking* log. The information you write down is there for you and has value.

How Week 4 Skills Show up in Your Life

You are developing a new perspective on how you or others have labeled you and the impact on your self-worth. You are thinking differently about thoughts and beginning to see that they are not actually you. You are now aware of some notions that you have, ideas that you have formed which might not serve you. They may not even be true! You are noticing that your direct experiences reveal the truth to you. You may be "owning" your good qualities and feeling more comfortable about yourself, more willing to engage with other people. You are talking more openly with others in recovery and sharing your successes and struggles, and going to them for support. Your awareness and empathy towards others have expanded.

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 4.1

Week 4

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet – Handout 4.2

Day/Date	Situation / Trigger	What sensations did you feel?	What moods, feelings or emotions?	What were your thoughts?	What did you do?
Example: 3/30/xx	*An argument with a friend*	*Tightness in chest, heart beating fast*	*Anxiety, craving*	*I need help getting through this*	*Took a walk, called a friend*

(Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 72)

WEEK 5 – USING YOUR TOOLS – MINDFULNESS IN CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

What to Focus on This Week

Last week we discussed the power of your beliefs in yourself and how they affect you and others. We learned more about self-efficacy. With these insights, you are exploring what it is to be honest with yourself. You have awareness of notions you have created about yourself, your happiness, and how you relate to the world. You can break away from some of your conceived notions, or stories, you have made up about yourself and realize that they are not the "truth." Make it your intention to question those notions and experience yourself as you are, right now, without labels.

This week, equipped with some of your mindfulness learning and increasing spirituality, you are ready to tackle practicing how to deal with vulnerable or high-risk, recovery-threatening situations. The practice is to be present with challenging situations that have triggered you before. Remember that mindfulness practice helps individuals learn how to transform difficult emotions. The practice of stopping and looking deeply, and embracing difficult feelings is important. It has been said that this practice can save lives (Thich Nhat Hanh, Coming Home, p 148).

Goals this week are to increase your awareness of your own, personally challenging situations that provoke a reaction and hold close the various emotions and thoughts that arise. You will practice staying with uncomfortable sensations and emotions instead of avoiding them. In Chapter 2 we talked about identifying triggers and cravings and now we take a step further and practice dealing directly with these feelings.

We will revisit using skills to keep focused and avoid mind-wandering. We will practice awareness of cravings and choosing reactions.

AA Plan for the Week

Combining the management of challenging situations with spirituality work together is the focus this week and Step Three is introduced. It reads "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." Step Three completes the surrender initiated in Step One. In the first step we acknowledge the ways in which we're powerless over substances. In Step Three we seek out and commit ourselves to accepting a spiritual power (Griffin, 2004, p. 52). We move from trying to cope with the world by using drugs to tuning in to a spiritual realm where a closer alignment to the truth brings a deeper transformation. Step Three turns our will over to a constructive power, or to our spiritual growth, rather than to a destructive power like drugs and alcohol. When you do your step work with your sponsor, you will revisit this step in a comprehensive and deeper way.

The Third Step encourages surrender to God as a powerful spiritual commitment and you begin to try to figure out how to act within your faith. Putting a mindful view on this surrender, a person might turn their will and life over to the care of God, but might do it out of a sincere and healthy opening of the heart and not as a need to be fixed (Griffin, 2004, p. 83). Studies have proven that a strong spiritual practice within one's recovery strengthens that recovery, so let yourself explore your spiritual self and this realm (Kelly, et al., 2011, p.2). The possibilities of spiritual growth are endless, especially with an open mind that is willing to explore.

How AA and Mindfulness Work Together in Week 5

As you practice the emotional and physical encounters with challenging situations, your surrender and commitment to a positive, spiritual power will strengthen you in your recovery. Studies have shown that spirituality is that which gives meaning and purpose in life (Puchalski, 2003, p.7) as well as a sense of personal identity and transcendence that motivate individuals beyond the practicalities of daily living (Galanter et al. 2011, p. 510).

Within your AA fellowship this week, continue to deepen social connections by joining a social event with some in your AA community. Local meetings will set up social events like Sober bowling, disk golf, volleyball, barbeques, and more. The encouragement here is to extend yourself a little more for more connection with others in your sober community. If you cannot find events like this scheduled, plan to meet with others in your recovery community and have coffee, go for a walk, or meet at a diner. Try to open up and discuss your experiences in recovery.

With spirituality as a foundation to your recovery, we will use the tools and skills you have been developing and move ahead and practice dealing with your most challenging situations to your recovery. This week's practice will ask you to focus on pausing and choosing reactions to situations that have been high-risk for you in the past.

Practices for Week 5

- Twelve-Step practice – go to a sober event with friends, outside of your usual meetings. Talk about surrender to a Higher Power.
- The SOBER Space (Bowen et al., 2021, P. 90-91).
- Sober Space in a Challenging Situation (Bowen et al., 2021, P. 101).
- Sounds and Thoughts Meditation (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 146)

- Walking Meditation – "Going Home"

Introductory Contemplation

Take a few minutes to think about how God, or your Higher Power, has been present in your life while involved in this program. Have you noticed any changes? Do you have new questions? What sensations do you experience when you think of God or your Higher Power?

Mindfulness Practice 5.1 – Sober Space (Bowen, 2021, p.90).

The practice is called the SOBER space, where the intent is to practice shifting away from autopilot and into awareness, especially in situations where we tend to be reactive. The SOBER space helps you develop a clear and focused practice to apply to higher-risk situations. Consider this practice as a tool to use to cope with everyday challenges and stressful situations.

1. The first step is to **stop** or slow down right where you are, and make the choice to shift out of automatic pilot by bringing awareness to your experience in this moment.
2. **Observe** what is happening right now, in your body, your thoughts, and emotions
3. Gather your attention and focus only on the sensations of your **breathing**
4. **Expand** your awareness to check in on your whole body, and then on your thoughts and emotions. They may be the same as before or they may have changed.
5. Next, notice that whatever you are experiencing in your body, mind, or emotions, you can have a choice in how you **respond**.

Try this now. You may close your eyes or keep them open.

1. Mindfully shift out of autopilot mode
2. Next, observe what is happening in your mind and body. What are you feeling from your body? What emotions are surfacing? This is what your current experience looks like.
3. You are grounded in what is going on with you at this moment. Gather your attention now and focus attention on sensations of your breath for the next several breaths.
4. Allow your awareness to expand and include a sense of your entire body and any thoughts you are having. Notice any emotions. Just hold all of this in an expansive awareness.

When you are ready, allow your eyes to open slowly.

Mindfulness Practice 5.2 – Apply the SOBER Space in a Challenging Situation (Bowen, 2021, p. 107)

The intent of this practice is to take the SOBER space one step further and apply it to a specific situation of your past that has caused you to be triggered. In this exercise, you will experience pausing at the moment when you typically would become reactive. You will learn that it is possible to stay with an experience, even when it feels intolerable. You will practice looking at the situation with curiosity and kindness and then feel how greater awareness allows you the space to make a more mindful, intentional choice.

- Sit or stand for a few moments and either close your eyes or hold a soft focus on the ground in front of you

- Bring your mind to a situation that has been, or remains, challenging for you. Take a moment to imagine that person, place or situation and feel it. Imagine yourself at the height of your discomfort.
- The first step is to stop. Breathe. Shift out of autopilot. Bring your awareness to what you are experiencing.
- Next, observe your physical sensations and any arising thoughts. Are there urges? You are not pushing any emotions away, just observing what is happening to you.
- The third step is to gather your attention and focus on sensations of your breathing, the movements of your abdomen, the rise and fall of each breath. Use the anchor of the body to stay present.
- You've gathered your attention, now expand this awareness to include a sense of your entire body and mind, including tightness or tension, emotions and urges. Hold all this is suspension in your awareness and then go back to that situation that presents risk.
- Look at your choices. You have the ability to respond how you will choose.
- What is the best choice for you? What choice aligns with who you want to be in this life?
- As you make your choice, notice the sensations in your body and the thoughts and feelings you have.
- Gently let the scene go and return to where you are.

Note your reactions and thoughts on your Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet. Have you noticed any new thoughts or insights? What has this exercise done for you?

Mindfulness Practice 5.3 – Sounds and Thoughts Meditation (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 146)

The intent of the Sounds and Thoughts meditation is to reveal the similarities between sound and thought. They both appear as if from nowhere and can seem random. It feels like we have no control over their coming and going. Both are quite powerful and can gather incredible momentum. They trigger powerful emotions that can run away with us, like an avalanche of associations and feelings (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 144). The key thing to notice and learn is that sounds and thoughts come and go. By experiencing a different view of the transient nature of sounds it gives the brain a different way of understanding thoughts and knowing how they do not have to overpower you.

The Sounds and Thoughts meditation helps you discover this for yourself. It also helps you feel that you can relate to uncomfortable thoughts in the same way that you relate to sounds. You may hear an advertisement on the radio and you dismiss the message because you have no interest in the topic. You can do the same thing with thoughts, and choose not to validate them as the truth or something that you are compelled to react to. Thoughts are only thoughts and no matter how loud they shout, they are not your master. This realization should give you a new freedom that takes your finger off the trigger of autopilot and leaves you room to make decisions when your mind is in full awareness.

The Sounds and Thoughts practice has two elements – receiving and noticing. When receiving we receive sounds as they come and go. Next, think of receiving thoughts and emotions the same way that you receive sounds. They appear, they dissolve.

With noticing, we notice the meaning that we add to the experience of sounds. We might see that we label them as pleasant, or unpleasant. As soon as we notice the labeling we can stop ourselves and seek neutrality and then just go back to listening and receiving sounds. In the same way, we notice thoughts and feelings and then stop, become neutral, and non-judgmentally notice.

The Practice:

- Start by sitting for a few moments, grounding yourself by paying attention to your posture, and bring your attention to the breath and body. When you are settled, bring the focus of your attention to hearing and take in all the sounds you hear in front of you, behind you, to the sides, close and far away.
- Notice any tendency you have to label sounds and react in attraction or aversion. Notice how easily distractions can come and how easily sound can create a story. If you notice this, try to bring your attention back to the sounds themselves and let them be just the way they are.
- Imagine hearing these sounds for the very first time, as if each sound you heard were new to you. You might discover a sense of wonder for this ability, which you have taken for granted for so long. Listen for pitch, for sounds within sounds, vibration.
- At a point of your choosing, let the sounds fade into the background and bring your awareness to your thoughts.
- These may be thoughts about what you're doing now, or what you're going to be doing or thoughts about the past. They might be worries or anxieties, or sad, happy, or neutral thoughts.

- There is no need to try to control your thoughts in any way. Let the thoughts come and go on their own, just as you did with sounds.
- When thoughts and images come to mind, experiment with seeing them as clouds passing across the sky. See your mind as if it were the sky, and the thoughts like the clouds. They are sometimes large and sometimes small, but the sky remains.
- You might also imagine that you're sitting on the bank of a stream, seeing your thoughts as leaves floating past and being carried downstream by the water. They were here, they are gone.
- Whatever thoughts you have, try to see them as mental events that arise, stay for a few moments, and then move on.
- You may also be aware of emotions coming and going. If you find that your mind keeps getting drawn to a story that you create remember that you can always return to the present and return to the breath. This is an anchor to stabilize your awareness in the present moment.
- For the last moments of the practice, focus on your breathing. Remember that wherever you are and whenever you find your mind scattered and dispersed by the events of your day, the breath is always available to help bring you back into the present moment. You can view thoughts and feelings coming and going in your mind from your safe space in the present. You learn to see your thoughts as mental events that arise and dissolve and your foundation underneath them all is a place of deep stillness and peace (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 146-147).

Mindfulness Practice 5.3 – Walking Meditation – Going Home

The intention of this week's Walking Meditation is to introduce the idea of "going home" as a helpful aid to ground yourself with your body in motion. There are times in life where we all might feel isolated and cut off from everything around us. The work you are doing to practice recovery is a big job and hopefully you have found a community that makes you feel supported. Still, we have a deeper longing for connectedness and belonging and some of us spend many years feeling that we are continually looking for our home. We want to have a home to go to, a place where we feel peaceful and loved. This feeling of home is achievable as you practice your mindfulness.

Our true home is something we want to find and go back to, over and over again. In this practice we will experience the practice of going home. When we are mindful, fully living each moment of our daily lives, we might realize that everyone and everything around us is our home. We are connected to each other, to the things that live in nature – the animals, the water, the sky. We are in an interwoven relationship with all these others and are not alone. "When you practice walking meditation, walk in such a way that you recognize your home, right here and now. See the trees as your home, the air as your home, the blue sky as your home, and the earth that you tread as your home. This can only be done in the here and now. When we practice looking deeply, we realize that our home is everywhere (Hanh, 1999, p 41)." The practice shows us the connection between personal inner peace and peace with all that surrounds us on our earth.

The Practice:

- Decide where you will begin your walk. You may want to drive to a park, a lake, or wherever you will feel happy to be in nature and with yourself.

- Get ready to walk. Stand with your knees soft, take a big in-breath and smile. Pause and take a few moments to connect to your body and feel your feet on the ground.
- Notice how the soles of your feet feel. There is the weight of your body and there is your source of energy present, waiting to walk.
- You might take a moment to connect with God, or how you relate to your Higher Power, and then begin your walk together.
- Start walking and notice all of the muscles, tendons, ligaments in motion. You might marvel at the divine engineering that is part of your wonderful body.
- Notice every step. Notice how your arms swing and balance the strides of your body.
- If your attention wanders from your body movements, gently bring them back to your body.
- After having spent some time focusing on your body movements, make a shift in awareness. Next, notice the beauty that surrounds you as you walk.
- You are connected to the earth and all of its elements. You are on your way home.
- Breathe in and feel the happiness of your lungs and they inhale and exhale. Smile.
- Notice sounds around you and how they connect you to those beings or entities that send those sounds out into the world. You are on your way home.
- Experience your present moment, all the fullness of right now. You are home.
- Experience the connectedness with God, you are home.
- Feel your comfort. Look deeply and realize that your home is everywhere.

This week's Walking Meditation practice led you through the experience of what it means to come home and why it is important. You will be the one to decide what it means to come home and you will notice what that contemplation feels like and what it means to you. Apply this to your recovery as something that will strengthen how you honor yourself and your commitment to sobriety.

Habit Releaser – Care for a Plant

This week focus your attention on caring for a plant. If you don't have one, go buy one or buy some seeds. You might even choose a plant that will yield food you can eat, like tomatoes, or herbs that you can use to enhance the meals you make. It is your responsibility to give it enough water, the optimal amount of sunlight, and plant food. Observe the soil and feel it. What does it smell like? When you water your seeds or your plant, notice how the water appears in the light, on the soil or leaves of the plant. When you are deeply attending to your plant, notice if you feel calm or tense, and what feelings you notice as you take care of it. Studies have shown that the simple act of caring for another living thing will improve your life (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 184).

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer

Today, I heal my body, my mind, my spirit, my life. Drugs are a part of my past; they are not part of my now, they are not part of my future. Today, I am clean. Today, I am clean and free.

Today, I am becoming strong one second at a time, one thought at a time, one action at a time. I am learning how to live and to be the best part of myself today. Today, I am clean

and free (Willowroot, The Recovery Prayer, https://faithinrecovery.com/2019/10/30/prayers-to-stay-sober-when-temptation-is-strong/).”

Christian Prayer

Dear God, I so often forget that I am not alone and that you are with me. I am learning how to handle myself in situations that have caused me to relapse and am making choices that support my sobriety. Please be with me as I make my decisions. I will remember that you are with me in challenging situations and delight in my successes.

When I feel connected to you, I feel at home with myself, and with others. I have more capacity to be compassionate and feel aligned to who I want to be. Thank you for your many gifts, including all that I notice and the many others that I may not even be aware of. With joy, gratitude, and bright attention, Amen.

Meditation

Lovingkindness meditation

May I be filled with loving kindness

May I be peaceful and at peace

And may I be happy.

May you be filled with loving kindness

May you be peaceful and at peace

And may you be happy.

May we be filled with loving kindness

May we be peaceful and at peace

And may we be happy.

Thich Nhat Hanh, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5luvQp--B8U

I am committed to cultivating loving-kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am committed to practicing generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need (Hanh, 1999, p. 127).

Review of Practices for Week 5

- Spend time thinking about Step Three. Deepen social connections in AA and socialize with others in the program.
- Sober Space with Challenging Situations – at least 5 times this week
- Sounds and Thoughts – at least 5 times this week http://bit.ly/rodalemindfulness track 5
- Walking Meditation/Coming Home – 3 times this week
- Habit Releaser – daily attention to your plant
- Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 5.1
- Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet – Handout 5.2

Frequently Experienced Challenges

By this time, you are learning a lot of meditations and tools to help you maintain sobriety. You may have anxiety about exposing yourself to high-risk situations which have caused you to relapse in the past. Just continue to practice the exercises and don't worry about actually going out to those real-life scenarios until you are ready.

What Progress Looks Like in Week 5

You have been able to identify and face your triggers and situations of vulnerability. You are leaning in to these experiences and seeing that you have a choice.

Your awareness of yourself and how you think is increasing. You are experiencing ways in which you can calm yourself. You are practicing your daily exercises and are perhaps sharing your experiences with others in the program.

You may be spending more time in your prayer practice.

How Week 5 Skills Show up in Your Life

Your spiritual life is deepening in sobriety. You are developing your own language for how you relate to God and your Higher Power and are finding connection. You are experiencing deeper levels of honesty with yourself and others. You are integrating mindfulness practice into your week by using your new SOBER space meditation. Your feelings about what it means to "go home" may be causing you to shift to a place of feeling more connected to others and more accepting of who you are, right now. You are feeling more peaceful and confident about your ability to recognize a reaction about to occur and being able to pause. You may even be waking up with a smile on your face.

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 5.1

Week 5

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet – Handout 5.2

Day/Date	Situation / Trigger	What sensations did you feel?	What moods, feelings or emotions?	What were your thoughts?	What did you do?
Example: 3/30/xx	*An argument with a friend*	*Tightness in chest, heart beating fast*	*Anxiety, craving*	*I need help getting through this*	*Took a walk, called a friend*

(Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 72)

WEEK 6 - ACCEPTANCE AND SKILLFUL ACTION

What to Focus on This Week

Last week you practiced increasing your awareness of your own personally challenging situations, and then practiced dealing directly with them and choosing your reactions. This week the focus will tie in acceptance, which allows your mind to embrace a true and deep understanding of how things really are and what you cannot control. When we fight against things that happen to us we feel frustrated, angry, sad, or defeated. These emotions can be triggers for substance abuse and put us in a reactive mode. If we learn to recognize and accept what we can't control we are allowing what is already true, but without struggle or resistance (Bowen et al., 2021, p.113). Acceptance is an important factor that helps bring about change. Self-acceptance is a powerful type of acceptance which opens us up to change and increases our potential for happiness and hope.

Practices for week 6 focus on learning to recognize and ***accept*** the present moment as it is, and bring attention to our reactions. As you begin to let go of your struggle to control things, you will stop resisting what is true (Bowen, 2021, p. 117). Practicing acceptance is a gradual process, so be forgiving of yourself. Letting go in this way can free you from a struggle that you cannot win and allows you the freedom to respond rather than react. Practicing acceptance is particularly effective as you practice your mind and body connection. As you bring more attention to the body and physical experience, other emotions might reveal themselves such as hurt, vulnerability, anxiety, and fear. Recognizing this can be a powerful way to show us the places where we are stuck or hurting and open the door to change. Goals for the week are to apply acceptance

to your continued practice of experiencing challenging situations, and augmenting the practice with the concept of non-striving.

AA Plan for the Week

As we focus on practicing acceptance we will introduce Step 4. It reads "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." Combining acceptance and non-striving with taking an inventory of ourselves brings about a deep and focused look at honesty.

With a mindfulness lens, being honest with yourself is looking at what is happening in this moment of your existence, not adding anything and not taking anything away, but only seeing what is. Applying this view can become a life changing experience.

Many people say that it is painful to reflect on some of your "wrongs" and see them in a different light. You will work this step very intentionally and take all the time you need with your sponsor, who will guide you through it. But in this program and for this week, you will begin to reflect on your moral inventory. Often the acknowledgement of how you caused others to suffer results in a breakthrough, as you start to accept your "failures (Griffin, 2004, p. 92)." People in the program say that performing the inventory experience doesn't seem like a problem when a person looks back, after they have had the breakthrough of getting sober and finding a sponsor (Griffin, 2004, p. 93). But, going through it for the first time is hard. It is an exercise of admitting your failings, feeling the suffering you have caused others and also, very importantly, seeing the suffering in oneself that triggered your behavior. When you see destructive patterns of behavior, thought and speech, you begin to change and those habits start to unravel and you begin

to act in ways that might no longer require inventory writing. Doing the moral inventory is important and many have said that admitting their failures freed them of pain, confusion, fear, and stress (Griffin, 2004, p. 96). This contributes to the spiritual awakening that is referred to in program. It leads to setting the intention to do better in the future.

Mindfulness tells us to find joy in our lives in this moment and in this spirit, so please also write a Positive Inventory of yourself. This adds balance to the value of being honest with yourself about past wrongs and counterbalancing any self-hatred or shame that may be evoked while working on your moral inventory. We want to diffuse self-hatred and make an inventory of your positive qualities and actions, which are also real. Writing your Positive Inventory can also be difficult but it is also right that we derive happiness from doing the right things. As you notice your positive actions, you might become aware of them and say "hello, generosity" or "ah, there is patience." Notice the recipients of any of these kindnesses, those that were impacted by your actions that intended to help others. You might also reflect on the people in your life that have brought out the best in you, and thank them. It will help you reveal more about yourself, to yourself.

This week, begin a road to accepting yourself, just as you are. Begin to write down your inventories, be honest, and notice what it feels like. Work with your sponsor. Try to write a page a day to help you get started.

How AA and Mindfulness Work Together in Week 6

Acceptance and self-acceptance will be practiced both in meditation exercises and with examining your moral inventory. You have spent the last five weeks practicing

meditative processes of examining your mind, of letting go of old habits and notions, and becoming aware. You are ready to augment your understanding of how you cannot control everything, how you might look to accept that which is, and continue your walk towards self-compassion and acceptance.

Practices for Week 6

- Acceptance and Non-Striving in the Body Scan Practice
- Exploring Difficulty Meditation
- Mindful Walking in Nature
- The Connection Practice

Introductory Contemplation

Self-acceptance is a complicated matter and even as we tell ourselves intellectually that we should forgive ourselves, our emotions may be slow to follow. Imagine your 5-year-old self, look at yourself back then, and feel the love and compassion that you have for your young, true self.

Mindfulness Practice 6.1 – Acceptance and Non-Striving in the Body Scan Practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p.95-97)

When practicing the Body Scan, the best way to get results from the meditation is not to try to get anything from it but just to do it for its own sake (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 93). The encouragement is to try to practice every day and let go of expectations about trying to have a "successful" meditation. This exercise is one of non-striving. We want to practice a new way of seeing and feeling without holding up standards of success and failure. We want to shed old ways having expectations of how you think you *should* be feeling and all the rules you have created for yourself that tell you that you have to

achieve. We are trying to heal and grow and get away from hoping for things to be other than they actually are. Practice the Body Scan as a way of being with your body as it is, a way of being with yourself as you are in this moment and as a way of being whole right now (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 95).

- Lie down on your back in a comfortable place. This is a lying-down practice and the intention is to "fall awake" rather than to fall asleep. Check that you will be warm enough and get a blanket if needed, before you start your body scan meditation.
- Allow your eyes to gently close.
- Gently let your attention settle on your abdomen and feel the rising and falling of your belly with each inbreath and each outbreath. Imagine you are "riding the waves" of your own breathing with full awareness for the full duration of each inbreath, and the full duration of each outbreath.
- Take a few moments to feel your body as a whole, from head to toe. Feel your skin and how it covers your entire body. Feel the sensations that are experienced by your skin and body as you notice the contact you are making with your bed, or the mat you may be lying on.
- Bring your attention to the toes of the left foot. As you direct your attention to them, see if you can direct or channel your breathing to them as well, so that it feels as if you are breathing in to your toes and out from your toes. It may take a while for you to get the hang of this so that it doesn't feel like a big effort. It may help to imagine your breath traveling down the body from your nose into the lungs and continuing through the torso and down the left leg, all the way to the

toes and then back again and out through your nose. Actually, the breath does take this and every other route in the body, all through the bloodstream.

- Allow yourself to *feel* any and all sensations from your toes, perhaps distinguishing between them and watching the flux of sensations in this region. If you don't feel anything at the moment, that is fine too. Just allow yourself to feel "not feeling anything."
- When you are ready to leave the toes and move on, take a deeper, more intentional breath in – all the way down to the toes and, on the outbreath, allow them to "dissolve" in your mind's eye. Stay with your breathing for a few breaths at least, and then move on to the sole of the foot, the heel, the top of the foot, and then the ankle, continuing to breathe in *to* and out *from* each region as you observe the sensations that you are experiencing, and then letting go of that region and moving on.
- Bring your mind back to the breath and to the region you are focusing on each time you notice that your attention has wandered off, after first taking note of what carried you away in the first place and what is on your mind when you realize it has wandered away from the focus on the body.
- Continue moving slowly up your left leg and through the rest of your body as you maintain your focus on the breath and the sensations within each region as you come to them. Breathe with them, and then let go of them.
- Practice the body scan at least once a day. You can use a guided body scan meditation to assist you. One example, by Jon Kabat-Zinn can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15q-N-_kkrU

- As you continue to practice the Body Scan, you may want to increase your practice to forty-five minutes a day, six days a week, for two weeks. See how that feels as you find a good balance for yourself.

Mindfulness Practice 6.2 – Exploring Difficulty Meditation

The meditations so far have acted as practices that are necessary to build your practice of attention, enhanced your ability to concentrate, and increase your awareness. This foundation makes you ready to practice the Exploring Difficulty Meditation and this includes working with acceptance and non-striving.

In this exercise, you are invited to bring unsettling situations to mind, observe how your body reacts, and try to accept it. It is more skillful to work with the body because the mind can become too goal-oriented when directly facing a difficulty (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 171). It will want to help by suppressing negativity or by trying to analyze and solve whatever is troubling you. Be mindful of the thoughts and recognize things that are beyond your control. Focusing on the body puts a bit of space between you and the problem so that you don't become entangled in it.

- Sit for a few minutes. Focus on your sensations of breathing then widen your awareness to take in the body as a whole.
- As you sit, notice if your attention is continually pulled away to any particular painful thought or emotion.
- This time, don't pull your thoughts back to your breath but instead, allow the thought or feeling to remain in your mind. Next, shift your attention into your body and become aware of any region of the body where there is tension or contraction, aches or pain where there are physical sensations that accompany the

thought or emotion. These sensations might be obvious, or subtle. Stay with this and see if you notice what sensations arise with a particular difficult thought or emotion.

- When you've identified these sensations, deliberately move the focus of attention to the part of the body where the sensations are the strongest. The purpose is not to change the sensations, but to explore them and see them clearly.
- As you sit, if you haven't been pulled into awareness of difficult thoughts or emotions then take the opportunity to bring to mind a difficulty that you are presently experiencing in your life. It can be small or large, something you worry about in the future or something of the past that troubles you.
- Allow it to sit on the "front burner" of your mind and see it vividly. Tune into physical sensations that come with this difficulty, as you think of it. Try to move closer to the feelings that arise in your body.
- Intentionally direct the focus of your attention to the region of the body where the sensations are strongest. Breathe into that part of the body on the inbreath and breathe out from it on the outbreath. Explore the sensations and hold them in awareness as you watch their intensity change from moment to moment.
- Hold your emotions in a compassionate awareness. Remember that you are not trying to change the sensations but are only exploring with a gentle curiosity. Notice if your thoughts are related to your desire to change things and see if you feel urges to step in and exert control over situations.

- Give yourself space to feel your reactions in compassionate awareness. You might tell yourself that it is OK to feel what you are and that it's OK to allow yourself to be open to these feelings.
- Give the sensations your full attention and breathe with them and let them be. Remember that you don't have to like the feelings you have in your body and that it's OK to not want to have them with you. Try to let go of the tendency to tense and brace against these feelings. You might say the words "softening" and "opening" as you take each breath.
- See if you can stay with the awareness of these bodily sensations and your relationship to them. Breathe with them, letting them be just as they are.
- If you notice the sensations fade, choose whether to come back to the breath or to bring the same difficulty, or a new one, to mind. When it has arrived in the mind, allow it to remain, and shift your attention to see where it is affecting the body.
- If you don't feel any powerful body sensations then you can experiment with "breathing into and out from" any sensations you notice in your body, even if they don't seem to be linked to any particular emotional charge.
- When you are ready, return your focus to the breath and to the sensations of the breath that are moving in and out of your body, whenever you feel it most vividly, in each breath (Williams and Penman, 2011, pp. 172-174).

  http://bit.ly/rodalemindfulness track 6.

Mindfulness Practice 6.3 – Mindful Walking in Nature and Acceptance

In this practice we will bring attention to the sensations in the body while moving and walking. You have already practiced Mindful Walking and it is best to keep this as a

frequent practice. This time we will be incorporating the same practice as the Exploring Difficulty Meditation that precedes this one. This is another way to practice becoming aware of sensations in the body that arise when thoughts come to mind. Practice this walking meditation in the same way as the last practice, the Exploring Difficulty Meditation.

Practicing the exercise while walking adds a different dimension to the experience, as you observe and take in all the sights, sounds of the outdoors. You feel your feet touch the earth and are reminded of the vastness, power and beauty of God's creation. This awareness sets a perspective and reminds us that there is so much beyond our control. Being in touch with the earth and the universe is both humbling and comforting because it reminds us that we can't control so much of what we might want to. It helps us let go, accepting what is around us and accepting ourselves, just as we are, in this life on earth. It opens our potential to change and grow.

Find a place to walk in nature or where you feel connected to nature. If you live in a city there may be a park or a place where you are able to see birds, grass and plants, any place that feels to you like you are experiencing a connection with the earth.
Before you start, pause for a few moments and ground yourself and get centered. That might mean to breathe, to think of your mind and body joining, and to intentionally switch your mind to be ready to embark on a healing walk. The walking should be slow and gentle, allowing time to notice everything from the intention to move to the sensations that are created by the movement and the reactions of the mind. While you walk and feel yourself in this experience, let go of the things you can't change. Feel your

connection with God and the earth and embrace what makes you unique, knowing that you are loved just as you are.

Walk for at least 15 minutes but you might aim to walk longer for perhaps 30 to 45 minutes. It is helpful to focus on walking this week and immerse yourself in the practice, while noticing its benefits. You might try 5 times a week, if that suits you. There is no set guideline for the duration or cadence of your walks, but call upon your awareness as you are walking and follow your heart as to when you would like to experience your mindful walking again.

You may want to note some of your feelings, thoughts and emotions in a journal after the walk to review and digest any insights.

Mindfulness Practice 6.4 – The Connection Practice (Jha, 2021, p. 255)

The last new practice this week is to cultivate your ability to connect and offer goodwill toward others and to yourself. We have already practiced a lovingkindness meditation in Week 4 and this one, slightly different, helps you practice self-acceptance and an outward expression of love to others.

- Begin the practice by sitting comfortably and move yourself to become alert
- Shift your attention to bringing a sense of yourself into your mind, as you are right now in this present moment
- Silently repeat the following phrases to offer yourself well-wishes (for three minutes). The point is to *offer* yourself these well-wishes and not make requests of demands for them.
    - May I be happy
    - May I be healthy

    - May I be safe
    - May I live with ease

The phrases and their order are not important. The important thing is that you choose phrases that speak to you and convey a feeling of goodwill to you.

- Next, allow this sense of yourself to recede from your focus, and call to mind someone who has been very good to you in this life. Think of someone who had been kind and supportive, a benefactor or mentor. Silently repeat the phrases below, offering them to this person:
    - May you be happy
    - May you be healthy
    - May you be safe
    - May you live with ease
- Now let your feelings of this person recede and bring to mind someone with whom you have no real connection and might think of the relationship as neutral. You might see them now and again but have no particular feelings for them one way or another. Mentally offer them the phrases.
- As a sense of that person recedes from your focus, next bring to mind an image of someone with whom things are challenging at this point in your life. It doesn't have to be the most challenging person in your life. Remember that you don't have to endorse their views and don't necessarily have to forgive hurtful actions of the past. You are simply offering kindness to them as a practice that is aimed at strengthening your ability to take another's

perspective and realize that they too, just like you, wish for happiness, health, safety and ease. With this in mind, mentally offer them the phrases.

- Now move on to everyone in your home, community, state, and country and continue to spread outward until you include all beings everywhere. Spend a few moments visualizing each place and then offer the phrases to everyone there.
- Throughout the practice, notice when your mind wanders away from the chosen focus and gently guide your attention back.
- When you're ready, spend a few moments anchoring on your breath to end the practice (Jha, 2021, pp. 255-257).

There are profound implications to this practice, about connectedness to and acceptance of oneself and others. There has been a substantial amount of research done on studying the effects of this practice on the brain and the body, such as improved positive mood and feelings of well-being and an improved ability to take the perspective of someone else, which contributes to pro-social emotions and stress reduction (Jha, 2021, p. 257). Most recently, several studies have reported that this connection practice provides a powerful antidote to one's implicit biases (Jha, 2021, p. 257).

Habit Releaser

Use your walking meditation commitment to shift your daily schedule. If you usually get up an hour before work, perhaps get up two hours early and use the time for a Mindful Walk, in an unhurried manner. You might choose to stop your daily work promptly at 5:00 p.m. and take your walk before dinner. Experiment with finding a set time in your schedule, break your current schedule habit, and fit in a walking meditation.

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer: "Serenity Prayer," credit to Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.

I am realizing that there is so much that I cannot control and so much more that I can stop fighting against and accept. God, also please grant me opportunities to help and serve others.

Christian Prayer

God, thank you for loving me, just as I am. Please help me accept myself and others the way that you do. I remind myself that all I have to do is ask your forgiveness and I am forgiven; I don't have to ask again. Will you help me learn to forgive myself? I seem to hold on to my past wrongs and continue to punish myself from those transgressions. Your persistent love sustains me and helps me open myself more to loving to others. Thank you for the awareness and inspiration that helps me begin to see better ways to live and serve. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13, New King James Version.

Meditation

I will continue to take small steps in the direction of acceptance and letting go of control. I will gently notice when I am tempted to drive away unsettling thoughts and sensations. Instead, I will breathe into them and breathe out of them. I will explore them and welcome them into the compassionate place I have for them. I will watch them without judgment and allow myself to remain open and in fuller awareness.

Review of Practices for Week 6

- Begin writing down your moral inventory and your positive inventory Work with your sponsor. Try to write a page a day.
- Practice the Body Scan at least once every other day. Use this link as guided meditation that was recorded by Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose text was relied upon in writing the Body Scan in this chapter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15q-N-_kkrU . There are also many other Body Scan meditations to be found that have been recorded on YouTube.
- Practice the Exploring Difficulties Meditation at least 5 times a week. http://bit.ly/rodalemindfulness track 6.
- Practice Mindful Walking in Nature with Acceptance at least 5 days a week.
- Connection Practice – daily, each morning.
- Continue with SOBER Space as you encounter overwhelm or a need for peace
- Daily Activities Tracking Sheet and Awareness of Urges and Triggers Worksheet.

Frequently Experienced Challenges

It can be difficult to revisit all of your past behaviors and their impacts during times when you were using. The encouragement is to work on this and move ahead as you can. You are not alone because you have a sponsor and a community of people who have gone through the same process. Today, at this moment, you are here, a sober person who is continuing to learn and love.

What Progress Looks Like in Week 6

You are experiencing more awareness of your connectedness to others. This has a soothing and calming effect. You understand more of the impacts of how our actions, good and less good, affect other people. You are working through creating your inventory in your AA program and are gaining new insights about the impacts of past behaviors.

How Week 6 Skills Show up in Your Life

As your practice becomes deeper and further integrated into your life you will begin to notice when you experience aversion and any attempts to exert control. You might even begin to welcome awareness of these feelings and smile because you have skills to handle these feelings. You are making time for your meditation practice and are feeling more peaceful and collected. Your knee-jerk reactions are occurring much less frequently and you are pausing frequently in awareness. You are feeling better about yourself, which gives you energy. You are experiencing a deeper level of compassion and forgiveness with yourself and others.

Daily Practice Tracking Sheet – Handout 6.1

Week 6

Day/Date	Twelve-Step Activity	Mindfulness Activities	Observations
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	
	What activity?	What activity?	

Awareness of Triggers and Craving Worksheet – Handout 6.2

Day/Date	Situation / Trigger	What sensations did you feel?	What moods, feelings or emotions?	What were your thoughts?	What did you do?
Example: 3/30/xx	*An argument with a friend*	*Tightness in chest, heart beating fast*	*Anxiety, craving*	*I need help getting through this*	*Took a walk, called a friend*

(Bowen, et al., 2021, p. 72)

WEEK 7- SELF-CARE AND LIFESTYLE BALANCE

At this stage in the program, you have worked to rebalance your life. You have gone on a deep exploration of yourself and shared deeply with others in your fellowship, to your sponsor, friends and family. You have acknowledged ways of life that were not working for you and have been making changes that support the life you now want to lead. You have been practicing creating a new, restored life for yourself and have sought to bring closure to the past so that it won't continue into the future. You are no longer nagged by secrets and guilt and are experiencing some new freedom where you feel greater degrees of confidence and joy. You worry about the future much less and you have become more progressively accepting, while also questioning the notions you have formed.

We have spent several weeks paying attention to specific situations that have triggered you. Now, you've learned to turn towards them, recognize, pause, and choose your reactions. You know that thoughts, urges, triggers come and then they go. You know enough about mindfulness now to know that it brings greater happiness through practicing. Mindfulness practices train the brain to operate differently by *default* (Jha, 2021, p. 264) and this is what is happening to you.

Taking care of yourself and engaging in activities that nourish your soul and your body are essential for your recovery and that is the focus this week. The mindfulness activities are not as prescriptive as the previous six weeks. This week your assignment is to take a "mini-retreat" where you will set aside 3 hours or more in one day, to practice a selection of the activities that you have learned over the weeks. A sample agenda will be provided, as an aid to help you customize your own. As you choose your mindfulness

activities for that 3-4-hour period, focus on intentionally including activities that you find nourishing, meaning that they relax you or you just feel good while doing them. You might choose another practice that was challenging or didn't resonate with you before, if you want to try to practice it again and see if you get more out of it. Create your own program for your mini-retreat, and this will be a preamble to next week when you will be asked to put together your recovery program as you complete the eight-week program.

AA Plan for the Week

The Twelve-Step practice this week is to focus on Step 11, "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." This step ties most closely into this program's interwoven approach to integrate AA and mindfulness practices and acknowledges meditation as a practical tool. It is a tool for developing calm, acceptance, self-inquiry, and examination. A key aspect of meditation is the way that it helps you connect with your own inner wisdom and then engage more fully with life (Griffin, 2004, p.227). Meditation helps us sustain ourselves and by now you may feel like you can trust meditation and see its importance in your life. Step Eleven connects our spiritual practices with our connection to the truth and our Higher Power. Step Eleven is important in our spiritual maintenance (Griffin, 2004, p. 225).

How AA and Mindfulness Work Together in Week 7

Step Eleven works in harmony with the mini-retreat this week as participants seek through prayer and meditation to improve contact with God, and ourselves. As we remove ourselves from the distractions of daily life we become open to seeing beyond the

understanding of life that we have at this moment, opening ourselves to other vistas of understanding about ourselves, others, and our entire world.

Practices for Week 7

- The Kindness Practice
- Activities Awareness Worksheet – Nourishing and Depleting Activities
- Half Day Retreat – set aside 3 or 4 hours (detail following contains sample agenda)
- Habit Releaser
- Prayers

Introductory Contemplation

Think about what meditation now means to you. Do your experiences suggest that you will keep it in your life? If yes, what aspects of meditation mean the most to you? Think of those positive experiences and notice how your body feels. Are there any changes that you might wish to make in your practice?

Mindfulness Practice 7.1 – Kindness Meditation. Emphasis is on friendliness, goodwill, compassion (Adapted from Bowen et al., 2021, pp.152-153).

Some say that lovingkindness meditation may be the most important practice for addicts and alcoholics because of the importance of getting beyond self-centeredness and reactive, judgmental emotions (Griffin, 2004, p. 35). Especially for those struggling with addiction, it helps develop a loving and compassionate heart and helps learn to react with kindness rather than with judgment or anger. This compassionate view is critical to your sobriety and serenity. The practice of noticing negative thoughts towards someone else, shifting focus to the other person and how we might view them and their behavior

differently, seeing it from their view, helps us become more loving. It is recommended that you make this part of your daily practice and integrate it well into your life.

The next meditation is slightly different from the other lovingkindness meditation we practiced in Week 4. It includes a "friendliness" or kindness practice that focuses on developing a kinder, gentler attitude toward ourselves and others. This way of being supports all the other mindfulness practices.

It is important to remember that there is no special way that you are supposed to feel when you do this meditation. We are just noticing what happens as we engage in this practice. There is no striving to do it "right." Whatever comes up for you is fine; just be aware of it and curious about it.

- To begin, find a position that is comfortable for you. Think about releasing any tension – in your arms and shoulders, neck, face, jaw and scalp.
- Take a moment to think of your intention and why you are engaging in this practice.
- Feel your body against the floor or the chair. Feel the solidity of the ground beneath you and allow your body to release into the chair or the ground and feel a sense of safety here, allowing the ground to support you in this moment.
- Now bring to mind someone you know with whom you feel friendliness and caring. It is best to pick a friend or family member rather than someone with whom you are romantically involved. The dynamics of the latter are more complicated and can be emotionally charged. You might also choose a mentor, a sponsor, or a pet.

- Imagine that this someone is sitting next to you, by your side, or in front of you. If you are unable to picture this person or being, just allow yourself to focus on the feeling and the sensations you might experience in the presence of this being. Take a few minutes to pay attention to how you feel and sense where in your body you experience feelings of compassion and caring. This might be in the center of your chest, where your heart is, or in the abdomen, or your face. Wherever you feel the experience of caring or kindness in your body with each breath, allow this area to soften. If you have trouble sensing this or finding the area where these feelings might be centered, it's OK. Just keep your focus on the general area of your heart and notice what, if anything, you can sense there throughout this exercise.
- If it feels comfortable to you, send this person or being well-wishes. You might say:
    - May you be safe and protected.
    - May you find true happiness.
    - May you be peaceful.
    - May you live with a sense of ease.
- You can use these well-wishes or you can create your own, whichever feels most genuine. Continue to repeat them mentally. *May you be safe and protected. May you be happy. May you be peaceful. May you live with a sense of ease.*
- The idea is not to make anything happen; you are simply sending well-wishes.

- Now you might imagine that same person is sending you the same well-wishes. *May you be safe and protected. May you be happy. May you be peaceful. May you live with ease.* Notice how that feels.
- Shift your attention to yourself and say *May I be safe and protected. May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I live with ease.* Again, you can replace these words with any of your own that might also resonate with you.
- Imagine yourself as a young child who is receiving these well-wishes. Notice any resistance or anxiety and allow that resistance to soften. See if you can have compassion for your experience, just as it is. Continue to experiment with this on your own for a few more minutes.
- Next, if you'd like, send well-wishes to a larger group of people you are in the same area with, or people who may not be with you. *May we all be safe and protected. May we be happy. May we be peaceful. May we live with ease.* There is no need to force a particular feeling here; just simply extend wishes to yourself and others who are with you or who you are thinking of.
- Take a moment to receive these wishes. When you are ready, let your eyes gently open (adapted from Bowen, 2021, pp. 152-153).

Mindfulness/Awareness Practice 7.2 – Noticing Nourishing or Depleting Daily Activities (Reference Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 219.)

As we emphasize self-care this week, and prepare for next week when you write your own program, the next exercise is to increase your awareness of what energizes and nourishes you and what depletes you. We want to do a check on the depleting activities

and make sure they are not taking up most of our time. We can then make adjustments and tip the balance back to those that nourish us.

In the following sheet, list ten or fifteen activities that you engage in on a typical day and then note if you find them nourishing (N) or depleting (D). When you have your list completed, ask yourself these questions:

1. Of the things I've written, which nourish me? What lifts my mood, energizes me or makes me feel calm and centered? What increases my sense of actually being alive and present, rather than merely existing? These are your nourishing activities.
2. Of the things that I've written, which deplete me? What pulls me down or drains my energy? What makes me feel stressed or fragmented? What makes me feel like life is a struggle and I'm just trying to exist? These are depleting activities.

The purpose of this exercise is to inform you of the balance in your life between these nourishing and depleting activities so that you can make decisions to keep the scales tipped to the nourishing activities. The next step is for you to take action and make a plan for change.

Daily Activities Worksheet

Handout 7.1 from *Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Addictive Behaviors, Second Edition: A Clinician's Guide* by Sarah Bowen et al., 2021, p. 154)

A. List activities, people, and situations that you associate with distress, challenging emotions, or self-doubt, and describe how you tend to feel when you engage in these activities.

Activity, person, place or situation	How do you tend to feel?
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B. List activities, people, and situations (that don't involve substance use) that you associate with pleasure or joy or that increase your confidence. Note how you tend to feel when engaged in these activities.

Activity, person, place or situation	How do you tend to feel?
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- **Mindfulness Practice 7.3 – Half-Day Retreat**

This week the gift you will give to yourself is to take a minimum 3-hour retreat, and give yourself even more time if you can. The intention is to create a time of inner solitude to open you up to a place of stillness, calm, and wisdom inside of you. Intentionally remove yourself from the distractions of your daily life and experience life in a new way. You may become aware of new personal truths, or you might find you are experiencing forgiveness differently; you may experience some clarity on what give you deeper joy. You may find that your everyday vision of life is only one version of the way things are. Retreats act as a foundation for spiritual development, and this strengthens recovery.

Pick a time, or create a time, where you can be undisturbed for hours. Tell your friends and family well in advance that you will be engaged in this mini-retreat and ask them to not call or reach out during that time. Turn your cell phone off and create a peaceful space for yourself. Wear comfortable clothes, prepare to have your meal(s) on hand for your time alone. You will pick a series of mindful activities to practice during these 3 hours. If you would like to have quiet time for any AA or program activities, you can do these at the end of your mindfulness practices, unless you find that they integrate to your benefit.

You may put together any activities for whatever time segments you want. Create your schedule and you can follow it however you see fit. A sample of a mini-retreat might look like this:

- Mindful meal – 20 minutes

- Walking – 60 minutes
- Silent sitting – 20 minutes
- Prayer or Journal Writing – 30 minutes
- Full body scan – 30 minutes
- Stretching – 30 minutes. You may wish to add music like a Gregorian Chant or select music that is on a particular energy vibration (example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owVazx83hcc)
- At the end of your meditative time, take another 20 or 30 minutes to write down any new feelings, emotions, realizations, and sensations. Notice how it felt to have this time.

Habit Releaser – Do a good deed for someone else

Carry out a random act of kindness. It can be small, like tidying up a place that you share with others, bringing someone a snack or coffee, or helping a neighbor carry in their grocery bags. You might get together some items for donation, or share your phone number with an elderly neighbor who might need help or support from time to time. You don't have to tell anyone about your act of kindness but experience it yourself and feel the love and warmth that it creates.

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer - the Eleventh Step Prayer

Higher Power, as I understand You,

I pray to keep my connection with You

Open & clear from the confusion of daily life.

Through my prayers and meditation, I ask especially for

Freedom from self-will, rationalization, and wishful thinking.

I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action.

Your will Higher Power, not mine, be done.

(From https://www.aacle.org/twelve-step-prayers/)

Christian Prayer

God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I need to learn to practice self-care. Please help me understand its deep value and learn how to practice it; I am told that it is essential to my recovery. My recovery is important to me and I ask your help as I search for and discover what nourishes me. I hope to be open to change and ask for your wisdom as I change my life, making choices to minimize how much time I spend on depleting activities. I will intend to value myself enough to invest the time and intention into my self-care practice. God, thank you for loving me and helping me in this endeavor. Amen.

Meditation

May I live in safety. May I be free from disturbance, fear, anxiety, and worry. May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love. May I be able to recognize and touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself (Thich Nhat Hanh, The Nine Prayers, 2020).

Review of Practices for Week 7

- The Kindness Practice – practice daily
- Write down your nourishing and depleting activities on the accompanying worksheets. Create an action plan for any rebalancing needed.
- Create the agenda for your mini-retreat and take that retreat!

- Habit Releaser – an act of kindness

What Progress Looks Like in Week 7

You have experienced your first mini-retreat and have made note of how it affected you. You might find that you are interested in doing it again or might also want to explore doing a Mindfulness Retreat with others. You have greater awareness of the time you spend on nourishing versus depleting activities and are making efforts to create more happiness in your life regarding how you choose to spend your time. You may already be looking ahead to creating your own recovery practice program.

How Week 7 Skills Show up in Your Life

You are feeling more at ease with and accepting of yourself. You have learned that having compassion and love for others is a strong foundation of a happy life. You are using your awareness of what nourishes you as you select not only your daily activities but also look towards creating your own mindfulness recovery program. You may start to feel that it is important to tend to your own care and take the time you need to pray, meditate, and rejuvenate.

WEEK 8 - CONTINUING PRACTICE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Week Eight is the rest of your life (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 243).

Congratulations, you are completing your eight-week recovery program! But, this does not mean that your growth comes to an end. Recovery and mindfulness practice are lifelong endeavors that require commitment and ongoing attention. Going through this program has provided you with a lot more tools to support you on your recovery journey. It is my hope that recovery is actually a bit easier because of what you have learned about yourself and what you need. You now know about influences and situations that put you at risk and you have tools to manage them. We've discussed the importance of creating and maintaining a lifestyle balance and you're using meditation practices and nourishing activities to balance your life. Your spirituality has likely intensified, as influenced by AA and the mindfulness aspects of the program. You have the benefit of AA, and the fellowship who supports you, which is so important in keeping you on your recovery path. Recovery communities help you recognize signs of relapse and provide honest feedback. They also provide support when you feel at risk and they help you see when you are starting to get in your own way. We have learned that many of our troubles arise because we get in our own way with the knee-jerk choices we have made in our lives. Practicing mindfulness regularly helps us be less reactive and more aware in our choices which then gives us more freedom. Anxiety, stress, unhappiness and exhaustion are often the symptoms of deep, unrealized hurts or fears and you have explored that during this program. You have spent many weeks bringing awareness to specific situations, thoughts, and emotions that put you at risk for relapse. Now, take a look at the broader picture of your life and identify what supports a healthier, more vital life as well as what puts you at

risk. There will be times that maintaining your practice may not be easy. You may want to connect with other mindfulness practitioners in continuing your practice. Remember that any practice is good practice. Treat yourself with compassion.

You have learned the truth that now is the future – the one you promised yourself last year, last month, last week. Now is the only moment you'll ever really have and you've begun to wake up to this. And you have done an incredible job in working through this course to live a better now in each of your moments.

What to Focus on This Week

You will write your own mindfulness program and use it in partnership with your AA activities. Use the Eight-Week Program Overview matrix, at the end of this chapter, (Handout 8.1) to get a view of the various mindfulness practices that you have used over the last eight weeks. You can use that as a reference as you select what practices you will use to create your own program. This program will be your first draft, a program that you'll use based on what you think you need now. Experiment with it and see how it serves you. Over time your needs will change and you will simply change this program to respond to those needs. Continuing with the idea of you creating your own customized program, I encourage you to also create prayers and contemplations that come from your timeless and ever-changing inner self. Also, continue to look for new habit breakers to keep your mind fresh and your perspective renewed.

AA Plan for the Week

For your AA program, continue to work with your sponsor on the steps. If you haven't yet made amends, talk with your sponsor and just give some thought as to what you might want to do before you think you are ready. As you continue in your recovery

you may eventually want to become a sponsor and give of yourself in that way. Maintaining and growing your support network is a proven way to reduce your risk of relapse.

This week there is one last AA activity and that is to visit Step Twelve.

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Step Twelve is a call to service, an intentional call to help others who struggle with addiction. I believe that this call extends to helping all others too. AA members have said that working the steps brings them to a true spiritual awakening that includes the emergence of a new version of oneself. In your program work you have become less self-centered, which is a dominant characteristic associated with "addicts." You have been practicing acts of service and very importantly, have also been developing a heart for service. As you continue forward in your recovery, rely on your community for support and strength and give back to your community with generosity and gratitude.

How AA and Mindfulness Work Together in Week 8

Reflect on your spiritual self. Have you experienced some form of spiritual awakening? From a spiritual view, do you feel different than when you started the program? Notice any ways in which you feel better, more grounded, more connected to others, less scared, whatever those feelings might be. Notice the amount of time you are spending at AA meetings, activities, and in conversations. Check in and see how much time you're spending helping others in or outside the program. Allow yourself to feel good about where you are now and how you were when you first began this program,

eight weeks ago. Practice cultivating a sense of completeness and whatever sense of peace and contentment that comes to you.

Practices for Week 8

- Mindfulness Practice 8.1 - Body Scan
- Mindfulness Practice 8.2 - Explore obstacles to asking for help with SOBER Space
- Mindfulness Practice 8.3 - Intentions for the Future
- Mindfulness Practice 8.4 – Continue Your Practice - Develop Your Own Program

Introductory Contemplation

Take a few moments to think about how you feel about yourself, your life, and your recovery as compared to how you may have felt when you started the program. Think about how you spend your days, and how your inner world has changed. If it feels right, smile and sit with this feeling.

Mindfulness Practice 8.1 – The Body Scan

The Body Scan was practiced early in the program, in the very first session. As you finish this program, it is interesting and useful to revisit the practice and pay particular attention to how it feels when you do it now, compared to how you remember doing it the very first time. Do you notice any changes of how you experience it, over the past two months? What has stayed the same? When you think of doing the body scan, notice if your body has a reaction to that thought.

Mindfulness Contemplation 8.2 – Asking for Help and Anticipating Obstacles

By now you may have been learning how to ask for help if you need it. This is commonly hard for people to do. Take a few moments to anticipate what might get in your way of asking for help as you continue in your recovery. Write down a list of family, friends – both new and old – and friends that you know from your recovery groups. As you look at that list you might see if you have been holding back any questions or requests for conversation where your underlying feeling is that you would like their help or feedback. You might take these thoughts and experience them in the SOBER Space in Difficult Situations (Practice 5.2), imagining a situation where you have needed help and are working through it. Prepare yourself for a time when you notice that you hold back in asking for help, so that when it comes you will be able to breathe, become aware, and move to ask for the help you need.

Other support resources can be found on websites, in books, journal articles, and audio resources. There are also always new AA or NA groups that you can visit as you continue to find the place or places that help you sustain your recovery. You will find a short list of resources as Appendices to this program in Handout 8.2, which is a resource list.

Mindfulness Practice 8.3– Intentions for the Future

It makes sense to acknowledge that we all need positive reasons to continue with our meditation. It is likely that you have liked aspects of meditating, are practicing, and are feeling some benefits. But it is important to ask yourself why this is important to your whole life. In this practice, let's explore that.

- Begin this brief meditation by closing your eyes. Imagine that you are dropping a stone down a deep well. The stone represents the question: what is it that is most important to me in my life that this practice could help with?
- Sense the stone dropping down into and beneath the surface of the water. There is no rush to find answers. If one answer comes, let the stone fall further. See if other answers come. When you hear more answers – even if you have to consider their importance, take some time to reflect and then write them on a piece of paper. Set it aside so it is available to be looked at if you ever become despondent about the practice. What comes up as the reasons why you will continue your recovery and meditation practice? Some answers that have come up to some people in this practice are:
- To safeguard my sobriety and happiness
- For my parents
- For my children
- To remain calm and energized
- To remain freer from anger, bitterness and cynicism

(Sections based on William and Penman, 2011, p. 246).

The reason to experience this exercise is to show you how sustaining your recovery and practice will help you to keep reclaiming your life, every day. Writing your own answers down and keeping it safe ensure that you have reminders of the positive discoveries you have made and your original motivations.

Mindfulness Practice 8.4 – Continue Your Practice - Develop Your Own Program

It is time for you to decide which practices or combinations of practices you think will sustain you today and going forward. You only need to decide on the practice that you will start out with, as you complete this course. Remember that you can change your practice day to day or week to week and tailor it to match the demands of your life as they ebb and flow. You have this program to reference, much like a menu of practices you can call upon. Most people find it most helpful to combine some regular, every day practice with practicing your mindfulness out in the world (such as awareness in everyday tasks, deciding to do a quick Three-Minute Breathing Space while stressed at work, etc.). You might feel the need for reconnecting with your body in the Body Scan, or, at other times decide you want to use the Exploring Difficulty meditation to help you handle worry. Many find that making space in the day for the Breathing space is a great blessing (Williams and Penman, 2011, P. 249). That quick practice is always there for you in moments of stress or unhappiness and is a way to check in with yourself during the day. Having an everyday practice may mean that you meditate formally most days of the week and give yourself that space to be by yourself for a period of time. How long should you practice? The practices themselves will teach you what gives you what you need. Listen to your mind's reaction to each practice.

Your "homework" is to design the first version of your program. You may start by making selections from Handout 8.1, which outlines the various areas of focus each week. When you pick your selections, look online for guided audio meditations and experiment to find the ones you like the best.

Prayers and Meditations

AA Prayer – A Twelfth Step Prayer

Dear God,

My spiritual awakening continues to unfold.

The help I have received I shall pass on and give to others,

Both in and out of the Fellowship.

For this opportunity I am grateful.

I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day

On the road of spiritual progress.

I pray for the inner strength and wisdom

To practice the principles of this way of life in all I do & say.

I need You, my friends, and the program every hour of every day.

This is a better way to live.

(From https://www.aacle.org/twelve-step-prayers/)

Christian prayer

Dear God, I have greater awareness of all of the people in my life who support me and help me sustain my recovery. I am thankful for the joy and love that have become a part of my life because of them. I am learning how to accept help and give help more readily. As I complete my recovery program and continue on my own, I ask your help as I practice and grow. Please help me notice when others need help. I feel committed to helping others and I pray that you open my eyes more each day for opportunities to serve. Thank you for the blessings you have given me that help me feel newness and hope for my life. In my deepest self I meet you; I find you there. Amen.

Meditation

I remind myself that love is in the center of everything. Compassion flows from love. “Mindfulness is about love and loving life. When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion for life and your actions happen in accordance with that (Jon Kabat-Zinn, quoted in “Everyday Gratitude” by McClory et al., 2018, p.100).”

Review of Practices for Week 8

- Read, review, contemplate Step 12 and your spiritual awakening and call to service
- Body Scan to connect mind and body. Compare to earlier experiences.
- Think deeply about how you feel about asking for help and how you might become even more open to that.
- Revisit your intentions going forward and remind yourself of what is most important to you in your life.
- Develop your program

What Progress Looks Like in Week 8

You are ready and equipped to write and execute your continuing practice. You are aware of what nurtures you and will build those activities into your daily life. You are clear on your support network and feel connected to them. You are revisiting your understanding of what it is to ask for help and seeing its value. You feel open to exploring the suggestions for this week.

How Week 8 Skills Show up in Your Life

You are feeling more complete or whole, just as you are. You are active in your support community, both giving and receiving, asking for help and offering it. You notice

that you are happier. You have a good sense of what meditation practices nourish and help you.

At the end of this chapter is a list of all the mindfulness practices that have been learned and you can use the list to select those that will become part of your own program. Continue to do some sort of practice each day to maintain and continue to build on the skills you have gained during the course. Go out of your way to engage daily in a few nourishing activities that you have listed in your Daily Activities Worksheet (Handout 7.1).

It is suggested to continue to integrate the SOBER space into your life, especially in situations where you feel overwhelmed or reactive. It is helpful to augment your practices by using guided audio recordings, some of which have been provided. Search for favorite practitioners, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, Thich Nhat Hanh, Jack Kornfield, and any others whose guided meditations enrich you. Rely on them as you would a trusted friend.

Congratulations on engaging in and completing this course. You might make note of all the positive discoveries you have made in the practice of mindfulness. There will be times when your commitment to practice may wear thin. At that time, you can revisit your original motivations and what you want your life to be like. You now have the skills to guide yourself to your best state of health and happiness.

May you be happy

May you be healthy

May you be safe

May you live with ease

Amen.

Eight-Week Program Practices - Handout 8.1

Week 1	Raisin Meditation	Mindfulness in Routine Activities	Body Scan	
Week 2	Find Your Flashlight	Urge Surfing	Mountain Meditation	
Week 3	Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings	Sitting with Thoughts as Impermanent	Sitting with Thoughts with Stream Metaphor	Stretching without Striving
Week 4	Sitting with Sound	3-Minute Breathing Space	Walking Meditation	Lovingkindness Meditation
Week 5	The SOBER Space	SOBER Space in Challenging Situations	Sounds and Thoughts	Walking Meditation - "Going Home"
Week 6	Body Scan and Acceptance	Exploring Difficulty Meditation	Mindful Walking in Nature	The Connection Practice
Week 7	Lovingkindness Meditation	Nourishing and Depleting Activities	Half-day retreat	
Week 8	Body Scan	Explore obstacles to asking for help with SOBER Space	Intentions Meditation	

HANDOUT 8.2

RESOURCE LIST

WEBSITES

Alcoholics Anonymous.
https://www.aa.org/

Mindfulness Resources from Jack Kornfield Webpage
https://jackkornfield.com/

Mindfulness Resources from Jon Kabat-Zinn. Also visit YouTube for many guided meditations.
https://jonkabat-zinn.com/

Mindfulness Resource for all mindful topics, such as guided meditations on the Body Scan, on compassion, on awareness. Jon Kabat-Zinn on the board of advisors, as well as Richard J. Davidson.
https://www.mindful.org/

Mindfulness Resources from Plum Village and Thich Nhat Hanh
https://plumvillage.org/#filter=.region-na

AUDIO TRACKS

Guided meditations from *Mindfulness, An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World,* Williams and Penman, 2011.
http://bit.ly/rodalemindfulness

Guided meditations from *Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Additive Behaviors, Second Edition*, Bowen et al., 2021.
www.guilford.com/bowen-audio

MEDITATION APPS

- Headspace
- Ten Percent Happier Meditation
- Calm
- Insight Timer
- Buddhify
- Unplug
- Simple Habit

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CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS OF FURTHER EXPLORATION

During the writing of this dissertation other areas of potential study emerged as topics that would extend the efficacy of bringing mindfulness into recovery.

- Training recovery counselors to become practitioners of mindfulness and then training them on how to facilitate this integrated program.
- Mindfulness training for victims of stroke, who can use the tools to assist in learning new ways to experience their mind-body connection and develop new neural pathways.
- Further exploration of self-esteem and self-efficacy as foundational to recovery.

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