



MINDFULNESS WORKBOOK

Basic Advice & Strategies

IMEE CONTRERAS

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By Imee Contreras

What is Mindfulness?

The clinical definition of Mindfulness is “paying attention to something, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2003.

“Paying attention” in this sense means paying attention to certain things you are surrounded with at or in the present place and time. “On Purpose” means you intentionally decide to pay attention to something specific. “In the Present Moment” means you focus on the here and now and get rid of any thoughts from the past or future. Being “non-judgmental” means you are not going to compare, judge or be critical of yourself or what arises while paying attention.

As you make your way through this workbook, you will develop your own sense and personal understanding of what Mindfulness means to you.

Some people believe that Mindfulness is completely about meditation and that can be a huge deterrent especially if you are someone who has a hard time sitting still for any length of time.

More so, Mindfulness is about dismissing your distracting thoughts and learning how to incorporate meditation as a tool to assist you while practicing your Mindfulness.

In this eBook, we are going to be looking at tools to help you with:

- Specific Mindfulness Actions
- Mindfulness Skills for Specific Mental Health Disorders
- Simple Questions, Thoughts and Exercises
- Journaling your Mindfulness journey

This book will attempt to improve your mindfulness skills to improve your mental, physical, and spiritual health and keep you grounded in the present. With regular practice, you won't find yourself letting your thoughts wander and you won't get distracted by or caught up in the past or future negative thoughts.

Imee Contreras
Sta. Rosa, Laguna
Philippines
www.imeecontreras.com
www.mindfulnessasia.com

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Part 1 - Mindfulness Actions

Chapter 1 - Where do I begin?

Since Mindfulness is something that you can start at any time, it is just a matter of finding time or making sure that you consciously think about incorporating it into your daily routine. This book will give you basic ideas but is not intended to be an official reference guide.

You have to remember that you are walking around with so many thoughts swirling around in your head at any given moment in time that you can feel as if you are unfocused, in a fog, overwhelmed and your mind never having a chance to truly rest.

Mindfulness will help to declutter and clear your mind, calm your brain and allow it to settle down for a spell.

Have you ever picked up a snow globe and shook the snow until the entire globe becomes so filled that you can barely see the object inside? That is what is going on inside your mind.

Once you start practicing Mindfulness, it will be as if the snow has settled at the bottom of the globe and you can think and see more clearly.

To get you started practicing Mindfulness, completely use these simple exercises to get a jumpstart and overall feel for what Mindfulness is and how it can help you:

- Choose something to focus your attention on
- How will you focus: using your visual, auditory, or tactile senses
- Focus “on purpose”
- How are you going to stay focused in the present moment?
- How does it feel not to be “judgmental?”
- Write what your definition of Mindfulness means to you

Let’s break each of these down to discuss the technique for each step.

Choose something to focus your attention on. By focusing your attention you are choosing a goal you wish to achieve by using Mindfulness. Are you taking a walk? Are you focusing on each step you take? Are you a runner? Are listening to each breath you take? In doing tasks such as these, you are focusing your attention on that task and that

task alone. You don't let your mind wander but instead return your attention to the task over and over again.

How will you focus: using your visual, auditory, or tactile senses? You can use Mindfulness in all areas of your life and surroundings. We pass up so many beautiful moments by listening to all the noise inside our head and not fully appreciating the beauty of any given moment. Before you start, decide what your intention is. Use your eyes to observe the color of the sky, water, buildings, etc. Notice everything about the sky, the clouds, etc. Listen intently to trains in the distance or jets overhead. Are they carrying passengers to a far off destination with family and/or friends? What do those sounds mean to you? Are you making something with your hands? Are you feeling every brushstroke, every knit stitch, etc.? What do you hope to accomplish?

Focus "On Purpose." By focusing intently you are making sure that you don't let your mind wander. That is why it's important to identify your intent before you begin. Notice what is happening the moment and acknowledging it, while letting go of any distractions. Try to remain aware without changing anything. Observe and take in any and all observations. When you become aware, you can eventually change unwanted patterns.

How are you going to stay focused in the present moment? The world we live in is filled with distractions. We have computers, tablets, iPads, cell phones which are all meant to create and fill our lives with noise. We are so distracted these days that we aren't even aware of how much the "noise" has taken over our lives. When you

practice mindfulness, you are getting rid of the noise. You are paying attention to your thoughts, your feelings, your physical body sensations and surroundings. It will be hard for some people to let go of these distractions but once you do, you will wonder why you didn't set these items aside for longer periods of time.

How does it feel not be judgmental? Without distractions, we can allow ourselves to set our intention to pay attention. When you allow yourself to focus on one thing, you notice everything about the moment and the object of your intention. You will be in a state where you become non-judgmental. Your mind is not cluttered and you are open to feeling sensations that you might not have felt in a while. You are not being distracted by other thoughts, feelings or physical limitations.

Write what your definition of Mindfulness means to you.

After you practice Mindfulness, write down what happened. What does it mean to you? What did you notice? You don't have to start practicing Mindfulness for an hour a day. Start out slow. Gradually build up your Mindfulness practice a little at a time. Write down your observations each time so you can look back and reflect on where you began and where you are now.

Chapter 2 - Basics of Mindfulness

When you begin practicing Mindfulness, know that you are not doing a total “brain dump” but directing yourself to focus your attention on a chosen target. By focusing on a target, you can bring yourself back into focus whenever your mind wanders.

No one is perfect and with all the thoughts that our brain produces each day, it is normal to have moments where you can’t help but have your mind leave the present.

The goal is to keep your focus and only notice the distractions and your emotions as they creep their way into your Mindfulness session. Make note of any stray thoughts or emotions that came up during your session. Were there any physical sensations you might have felt?

Because there is no way to completely shut down other thoughts processing in your head, your mind will wander from time to time. If you do find this happening, take a moment to stop your Mindfulness and make a note of the thought then let it go. After you release the thought, return your mind to your intended target.

Take note of what happened during your Mindfulness session. Were you able to stay focused without many distractions? Were you able to overcome the urge to stop your Mindfulness and go back to concentrating? Were you able to let it go? How did the overall session feel and what did you get from it?

The intent of practicing Mindfulness is to become more and more focused and to overcome obstacles, explore your feelings and help you to take the time to look within yourself.

Are you already being mindful? Are you taking the time necessary to practice intently? Mindfulness takes daily practice. Are you finding excuses not to carve out a few moments of time in your day? What can you do to change that?

Everyone can come up with excuses but it is the person who truly wants to benefit from Mindfulness who will find the time.

Journaling your experience will allow you to look back and see how far you have come. Look at your objections to see how silly they really were. Did you practice even though you might have had objections? List three to five benefits you found using Mindfulness. By keeping a journal, it will keep you on task.

Chapter 3 - Home Practice

Choosing how and when you are going to practice Mindfulness is just as important as the actual session itself. A lot of people prefer to do this at home because they can carve out a little corner in their house specifically for practicing.

Again, Mindfulness can be done at any time or any place. Choosing your specific place is entirely up to you. The place you choose where be where you most likely feel the least distracted.

When you practice, you might want to use the same position all the time to allow for continuity. There are several you can choose from so let's cover a few here:

During Activities: Even though you are busy during the day (be it at home or work) stop during the day, breathe and notice your surroundings. You can basically be doing anything as long as you take the time to genuinely stop and become mindful.

Walking: If you are on a walk, notice everything around you. Notice the birds, the clouds, the trees, the children playing in the park, the colors of buildings or houses, animals. Walk so that your arms are swaying back and forth freely (front to back), you are walking tall, eyes looking all around and your body is relaxed.

Sitting: Sit in a chair with your back straight (if you are able) keep your hands sitting on your legs with your palms up and your feet flat on the floor.

Lying down: Lay flat on the floor and don't cross your legs or your arms. Allow your hands to fall beside you, again, with your palms up. For comfort, you can put a pillow under your head or knees.

Yoga Position: Sit with your legs crossed and your hands resting gently on your knees. This is similar to the pose used in yoga and other forms of meditation.

Finding time to practice Mindfulness is probably something you think you don't have time for in your busy, hectic day.

It only takes 10-15 minutes at the same time every day.

Try to do it first thing in the morning, mid-day or before you go to bed. And, don't forget to journal about your entire Mindfulness session in order to keep track of your thoughts, feelings and actions during your session.

Chapter 4 - Intuitions

If you truly want to practice Mindfulness and incorporate it into your daily routine, you have to be willing to become “in tune” with your intuitions and inner wisdom. You already experience being in tune when you get the butterflies in your stomach or the “gut instincts” you feel from time to time.

So how can we become even more in tune with our body and mind using Mindfulness? Just know that your intuition is something that feeds you information on a regular basis throughout the day and all throughout your life.

What is intuition? Intuition seems to defy logic or any normal process of reasoning or previous knowledge. You usually have feelings of intuition in a moment's notice. Intuitions come to us in all forms: feelings, warnings or danger, a dream.

In order to deal with these intuitions, you have to make a conscious decision to focus on them when they happen. Clear your mind and try to answer the questions your mind is coming up with. Look for signs. Meditate on it to get a clearer understanding.

Mindful Intuition means practicing meditations that help you connect with your inner wisdom and/or intuition. Relax your body before you begin your Mindfulness session. Completely focus on every inch of your body while at the

same time relaxing each part. Start at your head and go all the way to your toes.

After you relax each part, allow yourself to be taken on a journey. Where are you going? Where do you want to allow yourself to be taken? Relax. Focus on whatever is taking place in this calm, quiet place.

Stop and observe a moment of silence. Think about your Mindful intuition.

Journal about your Mindful Intuitions.

Were you able to relax?

What did you do to stay focused?

What smells, sounds, colors, memories, thoughts, feelings, mental pictures or body sensations did you discover?

Has intuition been a large part of your life?

Have you always followed your instincts/ intuition.

What are some times when you wish you had or hadn't allowed your intuition to take over?

How do your intuitions come to you? Thoughts? Dreams?

Journal about anything you can remember that has to do with this session.

Chapter 5 - Intentions

Using Mindful Intention means that you are going to discover a structured way to define and support any intention you may have.

The first thing you need to do is set an intention. By doing this, you are deciding what you want to focus your attention on. This will assist you in staying focused on specific tasks or goals.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, setting an intention is what you must first do every time you practice Mindfulness. By doing this, you are defining what your intention is and clarifying in your mind why you chose it and what you hope to gain when you achieve it.

Discover your true intentions by asking yourself a series of questions such as:

What do I want to learn when I practice Mindfulness? By using Mindfulness, it will allow me to do what in my life?
How do I feel when I practice Mindful Intent?

If you are having a hard time answering questions such as those listed above, try using meditation in conjunction with practicing Mindfulness Intentions. Visualizing and imagining are great ways to allow us to practice what we want to improve upon our ability to accomplish anything in our life.

Practice Mindful Intentions by purposefully setting your intentions throughout your day. Start out the day with calm breathing. Pay attention to all the little things you are doing to get ready for the day. Stay fully present in each moment.

As you go through the day, notice all your surroundings, the noises, the colors, smells and how your body feels. You are intent on staying focused on each moment and even if your mind wanders, you will bring yourself back to the present moment.

No matter if you are at work, exercising, or driving home from work, fully focus on each moment of the day. By doing this, you will feel calmer and more grounded and feel as if you have accomplished and discovered so much about yourself and your surroundings.

Journaling your Mindful Intentions.

Were you surprised by your thoughts or emotions?

Were you able to clarify your intention?

Are you going to use this intention if you get side-tracked and need to get back on track?

What is getting in your way of following through with your meditation or intentions?

Chapter 6 - Emotions

Emotions are oftentimes accompanied by a story and thoughts. When you allow yourself to be pulled into the emotions, you can lose your Mindfulness thoughts because often these thoughts bring with them stories from your past or things you think will happen in the future.

By being Mindful, you are keeping yourself grounded in the present and not allowing yourself to be dragged into emotions that have no bearing on your present story.

You can be aware or mindful of your emotions and identify it without being judgmental, and examine the feeling in the present moment without getting pulled into the past or the future.

Mindfulness allows you to let go of thoughts and emotions. And, you can also tune into an emotion if it happens to arise. Notice everything about the emotion and where it began. Was it in your mind? Did it show up somewhere in your body first?

Some emotions start out small and then gradually grow throughout time. How are you breathing when you first notice this emotion? What is your body doing? How are you feeling emotionally?

Does the emotion feel good or bad? Notice if the intensity changes over time. Have you ever felt this emotion before? Allow and accept the emotion instead of judging it. Remind

yourself that you are not your emotion. Do you or have you held on to this emotion before? Can you replace this negative emotion with a positive one?

Did you know that there is a computer program that actually allows you to see your heart rate as you imagine feelings of appreciation, gratitude, love and/or caring?

If you focus your attention on the heart, what does it feel like to focus on the heart area? Do you notice any changes in your breathing or other physical sensations?

Did you know that practicing Mindfulness of Emotions increases emotional self-regulation and resiliency?

Journaling your Mindfulness of Emotions.

What are the feelings you have?

Where does the emotion start in your body?

Were you able to distinguish present versus the past or future?

Did you focus on your emotions as an observer?

Did you name the emotion?

What thought(s) triggered the emotion?

What was the story behind the feeling?

Chapter 7 - Thoughts

As mentioned earlier, we all have thousands upon thousands of thoughts that enter our mind each day. It is what you do with those thoughts after you notice one creeping in.

In order to dismiss the thought you need to observe it, accept it and then let it go by choosing not to deal with it at the present time if it happens to be a distraction.

As an analogy, if you were sitting at home and watching a TV show that didn't particularly interest you, wouldn't you push the remote to change the channel?

So it is with your thoughts as well. You can deliberately choose what you want and don't want to think about. If you are sad, angry, or worried you can change the channel so you don't have to watch or participate with what is going on.

If you change the channel on a TV from heavy metal rock to a music channel that plays soothing music, what do you think this is going to do to your mood? Of course, you are going to feel more pleasant and calm.

Whatever you are thinking about is what affects your feelings and behavior. We can choose to ignore bad thoughts and only think about thoughts that make us feel good or better.

There are times when you just can't help it that the negative thoughts do get in and what you choose to do with them will say a lot about your emotions. If someone has anxiety, depression or ADHD, they are focusing on and internalizing negative thoughts which originate from false core beliefs.

In order for you to get rid of these negative thoughts, you need to identify them and then get rid of them by replacing the negative with more positive reality-based thoughts.

Do you have a pattern of negative thinking? Do you believe that you need to replace those negative thoughts and how are you going to go about doing that?

Journaling your Mindful Thoughts.

Did your thoughts have a theme to them?

Did you engage in an inner dialogue to allow yourself the ability to erase the thought?

Talk about how you know it is normal to have these thoughts and that you are not going to allow them any control and you are not going to engage with them while you are practicing Mindfulness.

Chapter 8 - Breathing

Learning how to breathe and paying attention to your breath are important skills in learning Mindfulness. When you change your breathing patterns you change your physiology.

Just by breathing in and out you are triggering parts of your nervous system that you probably weren't even aware of. Some parts that are involved are your heart rate, your sweat glands, your digestive system and your glands.

In order to allow yourself to feel more calm and less anxious, you need to practice breathing techniques which will lower your stress response and improve your emotional and cognitive health.

By simply breathing in your nose and out your mouth you are calming your physiology and stress responses. You can do this mindfully before you answer the phone, before you eat something, or if you are feeling stressed.

You can also do diaphragm breathing which involves taking in so much air into the lungs that it expands the stomach. When you practice a chest breath it is simulating anxious breathing. When you take in air and allow it to fill your diaphragm it is considered relaxation breathing and provides more oxygen to the body to help lower the stress response.

In order to breathe through your diaphragm properly, place a hand above your belly button and one hand on your chest. Next relax your abdomen and breathe in through your nose and fill your lungs allowing them to expand downward.Â Do not breathe shallow breaths and do not raise your shoulders. Exhale slowly through your slightly opened mouth. You will know if you are doing this correctly by the warmth or coldness of the breath. If you are breathing from your abdomen, the air will feel warmer whereas if you are breathing from your chest, the air will feel colder.

Pay attention to your breathing in great detail and it will help you to practice the process of noticing when your mind begins to wander and can help bring your mind/attention back.

If you journal about your breathing, keep track of what happened.

What thoughts or feelings surfaced?

Did you notice if your mind started wandering?

What did you like or dislike about paying attention to your breathing?

What other thoughts did you have?

Chapter 9 - Physical Body

If you have heard anything about Mindfulness before you picked up this book, you have probably read about the MSBR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program) by Jon Kabat-Zinn and how body scan meditation is included in that program.

The body scan meditation is usually included in studies on the effectiveness of mindfulness. The meditation involves focusing your full attention on each part of your body and noticing whatever sensations arise.

You then accept the sensation and then send kind and compassionate thought to each area of the body where the sensation arose. By doing this, it allows you to enter deep states of relaxation, work with feelings of discomfort and pain, and increase your power of concentration and mindfulness.

The body scan, in simple terms, asks you to breathe in slowly (just as most of the other mindful breathing exercises) and feel every part of your body. Take mental notes as you breathe in and out to discover each area from your head to your toes.

By doing the scan, you are once again putting your body into a relaxed state. This doesn't take a lot of time but you have to be willing to put your whole heart and mind into the exercise to feel total relaxation.

Another method is called Progressive Muscle Relaxation. This exercise involves tensing your muscle first and then releasing it. This will also provide a deep state of relaxation.

If you want a total state of wellness, you might want to try Remembered Wellness. This exercise will allow your whole body and mind to recover back to a state of wholeness and completeness, order, balance, harmony and flow. This involves remembering a time when you felt well and reimagining what that used to feel like.

Journaling your Physical Body Mindfulness.

What were you thinking during the meditations/exercises?

Did you become more relaxed or more agitated?

Did you accept what was happening?

Were there any emotions that arose when you focused on certain areas of your body?

If you had experienced trauma to a certain part of your body, did this help to remember deep buried feelings?

Did any particular emotions come to the surface when you paid attention to your body?

Chapter 10 - Relationships

Relationships are the lifeblood of human societies. The first thought might be intimate relationships but you are a part of several types of relationships in your life at any given moment.

We have our spouse/partner/significant other, of course, but we also have family relationships with mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters. We have friends that we have a different type of relationship we cultivate. If you are in an office or business setting, you probably have lots of co-workers, bosses, etc. whom you interact with on a daily basis. These are all different forms of relationships.

With so many different relationships, how are you supposed to juggle each and every one of them? It is hard to pay attention when there are so many other distractions occurring in your world.

You can get so caught up in all the other demands in your life that you do not focus your complete and undivided attention to those whom you are closest to in your life.

Try to be present when you are interacting with the person in the relationship you are trying to mend or make better. What are you thinking? What does this person need from you right now? Put yourself in the other person's shoes to see what they see and might think about you.

Were your expectations met in this relationship? Are you accepting of the person or did you expect change? Were you demanding? Are you being positive and clear about your intentions? Did you treat them with compassion? Are

you taking care of yourself so you can put your best foot forward in the relationship?

Try Mindful listening when you speak with the other person. There is nothing like feeling like you are being understood. In order for you to make someone feel that way, you have to be totally willing to stop everything else and really listen to the other person. Focus your full attention and don't let your mind wander off. Do you think they felt understood and appreciated?

Journal about the last time you “felt” like this.

What did you notice as far as emotions while you were practicing Mindfulness in a relationship?

Did you stay focused on this person and this person only?

Were you thinking about someone living or someone who has passed?

What did you feel?

Did you have feelings of sadness, loss, or regret?

Part 2 - Mindfulness & Disorders

Chapter 11 - Stress and Anger

Stress and anger can crop in anyone's life at any given moment. These are responses to something that is happening which is stressful, dangerous or threatening.

Your body is telling you that you want to fight off danger and because of this your heart rate can increase your blood pressure will rise, and stress hormones will kick into high gear.

By using Mindfulness exercises you can attempt (and be successful) at lowering your stress response. Allowing your body to stay at high stress levels can be extremely dangerous in certain situations depending on your physical makeup.

By using some of the exercises outlined in this book, you can reduce your stress considerably just by remembering to practice the following guidelines:

1. **Body Scan.** Control your breathing while at the same paying attention to every part of your body and noticing how it feels. At the same time you are noticing each part, you are also concentrating on releasing anything that needs to go.
2. **Relaxation Breathing.** Deep breaths while breathing in to induce relaxation and peace and exhaling to let go of tension and worry. At the same time you are noticing each part of your body and concentrating on releasing anything needs to be released.
3. **Muscle Relaxation.** Do this by tensing every muscle in your body slowly and methodically. Then, release the tension by starting with your head and ending with your toes.
4. **Remembered Wellness.** Again, start with the breathing techniques as outlined above but for this technique, remember a time when things were good in your life.
5. **Journaling.** Journaling your experience will help immensely so you can capture each moment and then have a record to look back and see how you were feeling, what you were thinking and/or what worked and what didn't work.

Anger can sometimes be brought about by stress. You don't want to have feelings of anger but they can creep in when you have elevated stress levels. The best thing to do with anger is to release it. Use some of the above techniques to release your anger as well. Try to think of triggers that can release the anger and then find ways to calm the anger before it starts. Anger is never pretty especially when it is introduced into an already heated situation.

Chapter 12 - ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are defined as someone who shows signs of hyperactivity, impulsiveness and inattentiveness which can lead to problems in the home, school, work or relationships.

The condition can affect not only children and adolescents but can also continue into adulthood. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) *“children are grouped into three categories: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Adults may show signs of chronic lateness/forgetfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem, employment problems, difficulty controlling anger, impulsiveness, substance abuse/addiction, procrastination, etc.”*

By using Mindfulness, they say that you can improve your concentration and reduce hyperactivity. It is said that it can also help with some children.

In order to get help with these disorders, you need to increase your concentration skills as it will help immensely. Use your imagination to make it appear as if you are doing an activity but then continually bring your attention back to the task at hand as it will help to improve your ability to stay focused.

Use techniques such as Mindfulness breathing or walking to get started. Add in tasks to try and sit still and do a little introspection. Slowly build up your meditation skills so that you can sit and meditate for longer and longer period of time. Don't try to overdo it or you will lose your attention span and be unwilling to even try.

Reflecting on your session will help you to visualize results. Were you able to stay focused? Did you deflect your mind from wandering off by telling it things such as “not now” or “maybe later?”

Hyperactivity (the “H” in ADHD) can cause someone to have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time. Children are constantly moving around and adults are fidgety. There is an overall feeling of restlessness.

With Mindfulness practice you can become more aware of the motion and try to control your body motion and the ability to stay still. Use games such as Checkers or Connect Four to place chips all over the body. Start out slowly seeing how long you can keep the chips on your various body parts. This will help you to gain more control over your bodies movements and increase your awareness of the uncontrollable motions.

Chapter 13 - Mental Illness

Mental Illness is a huge field of which there is no way that we can touch on every single sub-illness under this category in this book. Therefore, we are going to stick to generalities as it applies to using Mindfulness in helping to attempt to relieve/alleviate some of the symptoms for one in particular but they can actually be used for many.

One of the major categories inside of the Mental Illness bubble is schizophrenia. Schizophrenia involves “hearing voices.” The voices are so relentless in expressing negative and nasty things to you that they are often taken personally but can also be directed at others.

People report that there are evil spirits that reside outside of them and that they are always surrounded by them. Constant running dialogues can draw someone in to those voices which can cause you to not stay in the present or focus your attention.

The way to help someone with the affliction is through Mindfulness exercises. The exercise will allow you to stay focused and relaxed in the present and shift your attention from the voices and focus on your immediate surroundings.

Allow yourself only to think rational thoughts and don't stray to the voices which are constantly feeding you negative thoughts or statements.

Here are some Mindfulness techniques to try:

- **Basic Breathing.** As mentioned earlier in the book, take deep breaths and take in the good air/thoughts

and release the bad by exhaling. Do this while thinking about each part of your body and releasing anything toxic feeling you have going on.

- **Staying in the Present Moment.** Again, if you concentrate on breathing as you release your past experiences slowly replacing them with present moments you are able to be in the present in a relaxed state.
- **Mindful of surroundings or objects.** Use breathing while concentrating on what is surrounding you, taking in everything or focus on one object as you systematically release all of the toxins from your body.

Journal how you felt during the exercises.

What voices did you hear and what were the negative statements you released.

Were you able to successfully replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts?

What were the positive thoughts?

What happened to the voices when you told them they were no longer allowed in your head?

Chapter 14 - Moods

Moods can turn a beautiful day or experience into one of your worst nightmares. A mood can creep up at any time without warning and you are left wondering what the heck just happened.

There are certainly minor triggers which can affect your mood but there are some really big categories that are worth mentioning here:

BiPolar. Being bipolar is having wide mood swings that can range from major depression to mania. Being Mindful of your current mood and recognizing when it starts to change will help you keep this under control. By using some of the methods mentioned earlier such as controlled breathing, thought awareness and being aware of your emotions will help to improve your ability to control the bipolar tendencies.

PTSD. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is usually associated with someone returning from war. While that is usually the case, you can also have PTSD from events such as a horrific car accident, the untimely passing of a loved one, etc. Mindfulness skills such as controlled breathing and grounding yourself in the present moment can help to alleviate PTSD.

OCD. Obsessive-Compulsive Disease (OCD) thoughts can overtake your life. These tendencies or obsessions are in overdrive trying to keep you safe or out of harm's way (or so you think). Although it is OK for you to try and be safe it is not OK if it leads to irrational, ineffective or unneeded actions. To overcome these tendencies try using your breathing techniques starting with your head and continuing down to your toes or try using the Mindfulness exercise of

controlling your thoughts and emotions (see earlier explanations)

Depression. Depression can strike anyone at any time. Even the most strong of heart and mind can feel depressed every now and then and not even know they are depressed. If you feel depressed, using Mindfulness techniques such as directed breathing and awareness of your thoughts, you can re-direct your negative thoughts/feelings change those patterns.

Anxiety/Panic Attacks. If you have ever had an anxiety or panic attack you will want to try and diffuse the situation right away. Use the Mindfulness breathing awareness exercise along with thinking about the present moment and physical body meditations.

Chapter 15 - Pain / Medical / Sleep Disorders

If you have ever suffered from long-term pain, medical or sleep disorders, you know how much this can be a drain on your body and mind especially over long periods of time.

Chronic Pain involves a pain that will just not go away, or in other words, your body just won't heal. You may have tried several remedies under the supervision of a doctor but it still persists. For instance, if you had an arm or back injury where there are muscles involved, sometimes those muscles just will not heal or return to their normal state.

Chronic Medical Illnesses can take extreme tolls on your mind and body. If you are the type of person who is constantly ill, which occurs more often as we age, your mind can play terrible tricks on you when you just can't seem to get out of pain no matter what methods or treatments have been tried. You feel you have lost control of your body and there is nothing you can do to rectify the situation.

Sleep Disorders affect every aspect of your life. When you can't sleep, you don't get the rest your body needs in order for you to function in everyday life. All you want to do all day long is return to your bed so that you can lie down and catch up on all that lost sleep. There are numerous reasons for loss of sleep so we are talking in generalities here.

By using Mindfulness in all three of the above scenarios, you can try to alleviate the symptoms while fixing or curing the problem. All of the techniques we have discussed in this book can be used to help alleviate or reduce these afflictions.

Try starting with the controlled breathing technique and also using the Remembered Wellness exercise. Try different methods (use your favorite) of meditation to let go of all of the negative thoughts from your head to your toes and replace them with only positive ones.

Mindfulness is not the end-all cure but it can help alleviate symptoms that drugs or pills can't touch. You and your mind are in control of your body so you need to think outside of the box and use other techniques that you can control and do on your own. By getting your mind in a healthy place, it can only enhance the medical help you are receiving.

Track Your Progress

In order to see if Mindfulness is a helpful tool which you would like to continue using in your life, the best way to come to that conclusion is by tracking your progress. A journal is a good way to see if Mindfulness is working or not and/or things that you can tweak.

You will also be able to see how far you have come in your Mindfulness progress so that you won't ever want to go back to the stat you were in when you began.

Here is a small chart to help you get started:

	Method Used	Liked/ Disliked	Results
Improved Moods			
Anxiety Decreased			
Anger Decreased			
Self-esteem Improved			
Relationship Improved			
Sleeping Better			
Anger Decreased			
Pain Managed			
Memory Improved			

Negative Thoughts Gone			
Concentration Improved			
Chronic Pain Managed			
Chronic Illness Gone			
Compassionate Again			
Overall sense of well-being			
Stress Mgmt. Improved			
PTSD Improved			
ADHD/ADD Improved			
Depression Improved			
Overall Health Improved			
Quit Bad Habits			
Identity Restored			
Negative Moods Decreased			

Conclusion

This Mindfulness Workbook is provided so that you can get a feel for what Mindfulness can do for you within a variety of actions and disorders.

All of the actions and disorders mentioned in the book could take volumes of words to dissect each one individually and delve into them fully. What is attempted within this book is to bring awareness and to touch on just the basics. Please keep that in mind as you read through the pages.

In order to fully understand and/or go into depth on any issue brought up here, do your homework and research your particular issue. Between your local public library and with the internet at your fingertips, you can delve much further into each subject.

Ask your doctor or physician about using Mindfulness to help heal yourself along with any prescribed solutions they may ask you to try.

Mindfulness techniques when used properly can help greatly in many of the situations mentioned in this book. We acknowledge that there are times when a professional is needed and that is ok.

What we are attempting to do here is to give you alternatives to try before, during or after other forms of treatment which may or may not be working.

Mindfulness can help quiet your mind and body and get you to a peaceful state every day if you take the time to set aside a specific space for yourself.

With Mindfulness, don't try to start out by going full throttle into these methods. Mindfulness takes practice and with practice comes the serenity and peacefulness you are seeking.

When you are in touch with your mind and body, and know how to control them in order to avoid some of the situations we mention here, you will find yourself living in a much more peaceful state!

About the Author



Imee Contreras is the founder of Mindfulness Asia and co-founder of Philippine Insight Meditation Community. She is a UCLA-Trained Mindfulness Facilitator, a Community Dharma Leadership Program graduate of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and the Membership Coordinator of International Mindfulness Teachers Association.

She develops mindfulness programs for companies, schools, and both private and public events. She volunteers to teach incarcerated women serving life imprisonment and also supports sexually abused women and children in the Philippines.

Imee is a mother, an organic gardener, a health & wellness advocate, and yoga therapist.