

## Before You Begin the Mindfulness Meditation Training Program

Before you begin to read the information below about the program, I invite you to take a moment to pause and consider what brought you to this point. What is in your mind and heart and body? You might pause for 10 or 20 seconds to get a clear sense of what led you here.

More than likely, you quickly identified a “problem” or “challenge” that you face in your life. This is something that causes you to suffer in some way, physically, emotionally or spiritually. Among the difficulties people typically report when they come to such programs are such things as:

- Chronic Pain
- Stress, Anxiety and/or Worry
- Chronic or Life-Threatening Medical Illnesses
- Depression, Grief, and/or Loss
- Relationship Difficulties
- Problems with Substances
- Sleep disturbance
- Headaches

Now, take a moment to step back from your definition of the problem or problems and notice that there was also an aspect of you that was aware of this difficulty and was open to working with such challenges in a different way. After all, if you were satisfied with how you were dealing with the things you face in your life, would you have sought out a program about stress reduction? Perhaps that “inner voice” was seeking peace, balance, equanimity or a sense of control.

That awareness can be thought of in many ways, but I like to consider it your inner wisdom. You have had that sense of what feels right or wrong for you as long as you can remember, even though there have probably been times when you could not hear it, or you ignored or misunderstood it. That inner wisdom knows the fundamental principle upon which the foundation of this program is built, that **there is more right with you than wrong with you.**

Mindfulness training is unlike any sort of program you may have encountered before. It involves cultivating a different relationship between you and the things that challenge you in your life, and relies completely upon the tools you already have. Specifically, mindfulness training helps you access the ability to be non-judgmental, compassionate, patient, present and aware. You wouldn't have come this far if these qualities did not exist in you somewhere.

However, just because you have the inner wisdom and resources to contend differently with your life and all its aspects, does not mean that you routinely use them. Most of us are on “auto-pilot” much of the day and tend to react much more than we respond to the decisions and situations we face. This program is about developing the innate ability to cultivate mindfulness over “mindlessness”, with which we are all familiar. Those moments when we are unaware of where we are, what we are feeling and why we are doing what we are doing. Quite frequently, those are the moments that contribute most to our suffering. Just a few examples are: eating foods that we know we would be better off not eating; spending time with people that cause us great difficulty or emotional pain; or engaging in activities that are stressful, harmful or unnecessarily distracting.

The overriding focus and intention of this program it is to reconnect you with that inner wisdom and deep knowing that resides within you. Mindfulness meditation training also has a huge and growing body of research supporting its usefulness to address the kinds of problems we have described.

This is an opportunity to rediscover yourself and to access the qualities and strengths you possess deep inside. Sit back, take a moment to become aware of the surroundings you are in, the sensations in your body, the thoughts in your mind and the feelings in your heart. Are you feeling curious, excited, skeptical, nervous, hopeful or bored? Are you aware of physical sensations of tension, pain, warmth or numbness? Can you hold all of the amazing and varied things in your awareness for a moment without having to change them, extinguish them or get lost in them? Can you experience this very moment for the precious, fleeting and beautiful thing that it is?

You have just tasted some of your own ability to be mindful and I invite you to cultivate it further through participation in the Mindfulness Meditation Training program.