

Week Four

How do stressful thoughts and feelings influence the mind and the body?

OVERVIEW:

- Development of concentration and the systematic expansion of the field of awareness.
- Continue to discover the relationship of meditation practice to stress and stress reduction.
- Awareness of being stuck in our lives and wanting to get unstuck.

FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- Formal meditation:
 - Alternate Body Scan with Lying-Down Yoga, every day, at least 6 days of the week.
 - Sitting meditation 20 minutes per day with attention to the anchor.
 - Complete the formal practice logs.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

- Be aware of stress reactions and behaviors during the week, without trying to change them.
- Look for opportunities to practice STOP during the course of the day. Don't expect to remember the precise steps of "STOP" during the most challenging times of the day - it's enough just to remember to stop and take a breath. The best way to make it a second nature is to practice it when you aren't stressed, such as during the "in between" times, like waiting in line, playing with the kids or the pets, getting in/out of your car, etc.
- Complete the informal practice log
- Intentionally changing the way you engage in common activities such as the place you sit at the table, the way you engage with kids, and the route you take to habitual places.
- Read the handout "What are you holding onto."

Formal Practice Log - The Body Scan / Yoga - Week 4

Each time you practice either the Body Scan or the Lying Down Yoga write just a few words to remind you of your feelings, sensations, and impressions of that particular experience. Things such as how you felt, what came up, what you noticed in terms of physical sensations, thoughts, etc. Try to write your impressions right after the practice.

Date / Day of the week	Formal practice comments (Body Scan / Yoga)

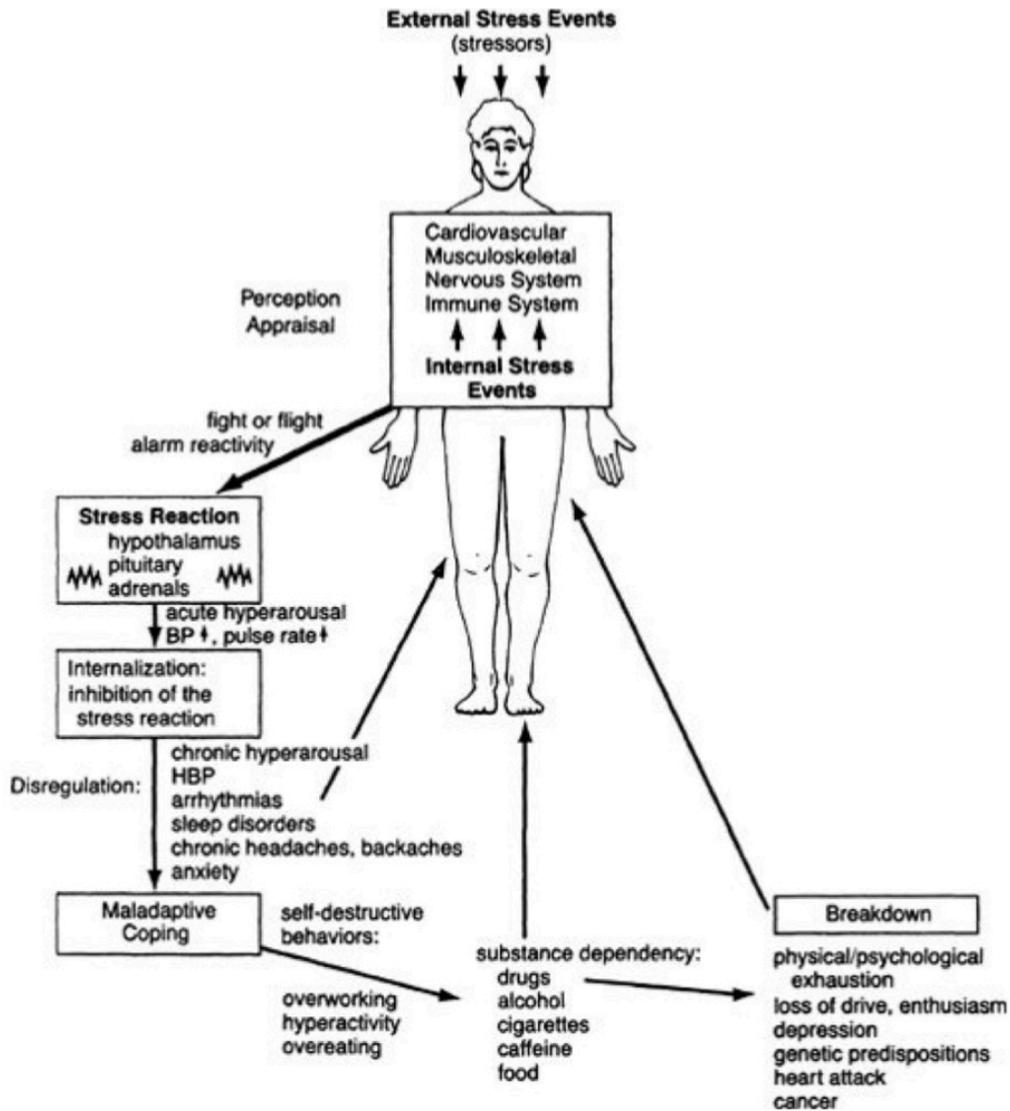
Formal Practice Log - Attentional Focus Sitting Meditation (20 minutes) - Week 4

Keep a log of each time you practice the Attentional Focus sitting meditation. This is a 20 minute silent sitting meditation using one anchor. Tune in to yourself at the beginning of the session and choose the anchor that invites your full presence at that moment. Note that it may or may not change from day to day. If possible, write down your impressions right after the practice.

Date / Day of the week	Formal practice comments (silent Attentional Focus sitting meditation)

Stress-Reaction Cycle

from **Full Catastrophe Living** by Jon Kabat-Zinn



WHAT ARE YOU HOLDING ONTO?

The story is about how hunters used to catch monkeys in India. They would cut a coconut in half, hollow out one side, and drill a hole in the center that was just big enough for a monkey to put its hand through. After this, they drill two smaller holes on each side of the coconut, pass a wire through, and secure the coconut to the base of a tree. Then they place a banana inside the coconut and hide.

The monkey comes down, puts their hand in and reaches for the banana. But the hole is crafted in such a way that the open hand can go in, but the fist with a banana cannot get out. The hunters see this and start to walk toward the monkey. The monkey pulls to get away, but can't. Eventually they just pick up the monkey, and that's how it's captured.

The interesting thing is that at any point, all the monkey needs to do is release their hand from the banana. But they're so attached to what they want that they refuse to let go, blinded by the fact that holding on is actually leading to inevitable harm.

As humans, we too can be so blinded by our ideas of what we want and need, oblivious to how these desires and pursuits are causing us great suffering.

It's worth taking a moment to ponder - what are you holding onto in your life that may be causing you more harm than good?

PRELUDE

What if there is no need to change, no need to try to transform yourself into someone who is more compassionate, more present, more loving or wise?

How would this affect all the places in your life where you are endlessly trying to be better?

What if the task is simply to unfold, to become who you already are in your essential nature – gentle, compassionate, and capable of living fully and passionately present?...

What if the question is not why am I so infrequently the person I really want to be, but why do I so infrequently want to be the person I really am?

How would this change what you think you have to learn?

What if becoming who and what we truly are happens not through striving and trying but by recognizing and receiving the people and places and practices that offer us the warmth of encouragement we need to unfold?

How would this shape the choices you make about how to spend today?

What if you knew that the impulse to move in a way that creates beauty in the world will arise from deep within and guide you every time you simply pay attention and wait?

How would this shape your stillness, your movement, your willingness to follow this impulse, to just let go and dance?

ORIAH MOUNTAIN DANCER