

ELM Medicine

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**Specialist Clinic. Internal Medicine. Infectious Diseases. Hepatitis B & C. Chronic Pain.
Lifestyle Medicine Clinic. Stress Reduction Clinic**

Dr. Atreyi Mukherji, MD, MPH, FCRPC

Mindfulness Handout: SEE, HEAR, FEEL

Mindfulness can be applied to any experience in your daily life. Any emotion. Any thought--whether it is visual or auditory--and if you experience it with enough concentration, sensory clarity and equanimity, it isn't a problem anymore.

For the purpose of this session, we are using the Unified Mindfulness system by Shinzen Young. In this system, we focus on developing three attention skills: Concentration, Sensory Clarity, and Equanimity, all working together.

a) Concentration

Concentration is the ability to focus your attention on what you choose. In the see, hear, feel meditation, you develop concentration when you allow your attention to focus on something and then you keep it there for a few seconds.

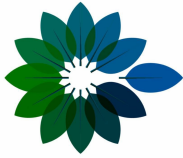
b) Sensory Clarity

Sensory Clarity is the ability to track and explore your sense experience in real time. In the guided meditation, you allow your attention to go there and stay with it for a few moments.

What's the benefit of developing the skill of sensory clarity? One benefit is that sensory clarity leads to insight. For example, ordinarily if you feel bored, you might just think, "Oh, I'm feeling bored. What can I do so I'm not bored anymore."

With sensory clarity, you might notice that boredom is an actual physical feeling in your body that's associated with some internal talk, like the sentence, "I'm bored. When paying attention to the physical sensation you may notice that you experience it in the pit of your stomach (feeling restless) your eyes (which want to close) or your jaw (which wants to yawn) but it isn't necessarily your whole body or mind that is bored. You may even find that your boredom becomes interesting to examine. That's an example of an insight that results from sensory clarity. Boredom becomes interesting.

What was once a waste of time is now not a problem. Another benefit is that it helps keep you from getting overwhelmed. When you're overwhelmed by fear, anger, or stress, you tend to experience these as big, solid things. Tangled combinations of thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and interpretations. But when you bring sensory clarity to these experiences, you can see that they're all just made up of sights, sounds, and feelings that happen in a particular order. For example, you might discover that what initially seemed like an overwhelming experience of stress was actually just an experience of see (an image of your cluttered desk) combined with hear (the thought "I'll never get everything done in time!") combined with an experience of feel (the tightened shoulders that go with the feeling of anxiety).



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When you can separate out your experience in this way, the different parts no longer fuel and reinforce each other so the experience becomes a lot more manageable. You feel less caught by it. Less stuck in it.

c) Equanimity

Equanimity is the ability to allow your sensory experience to come and go without push and pull. What does push and pull mean?

Pushing is when you resist some negative experience.

Examples:

- Physical pleasure. You may be enjoying lounging in bed and want to hold on to that feeling.
- Pleasant emotions. You may cling desperately to feeling happiness or love.
- Desirable thoughts. You may compulsively visualize something positive.

Both pushing and pulling are forms of fighting with your experience, and that takes a lot of energy. Having equanimity means that you can accept that you are experiencing what you're experiencing. When you can do that, you can make more appropriate choices in the world.

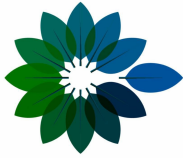
It's important to realize that equanimity refers to accepting your experience, not accepting whatever event in the world you may be reacting to. For example, if you are hitting me on the shoulder and my shoulder hurts, equanimity means that I accept that I'm experiencing pain in my shoulder, not that I accept you hitting me. With equanimity you can relate to any experience in a way that it is no longer a problem--even when it is challenging. Why? Because you aren't resisting it or getting hooked on it and trying to hold on to it as it's passing away.

Instructions: SEE HEAR FEEL

1. Preparation

Straighten your spine.
Relax your shoulders.
Relax your jaw.
Settle in to the posture.

2. **See, Hear, and Feel:** Categorizing Your Experience. To help you to organize your meditation practice, we've broken down all experience into three categories: See Hear Feel



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“See” refers to

- What you see out there in the environment, and
- What you see inside your head--visual images in your mind's eye.

“Hear” refers to

- What you hear in the world, and
- Internal sound. Conversations you have in your head.

“Feel” refers to

- Refers to physical sensations--anything from the temperature of the room to the way the chair feels on your butt to sensations associated with breathing. It also covers taste and smell.
- The body sensations that you have that are related to your emotions.

Practice during your everyday activities (example exercising, eating, walking, showering) or set aside as little as 2-10 minutes daily to practice Mindfulness. Over time, you will feel happier and have more mastery of your thoughts and emotions. No one can guarantee that all your problems will go away, but what is true is that with regular practice, your baseline will be more tranquil.