

Session 3

The Doing Mode

Introduction to Session 3

From Doing to Being

In our daily lives, we are mostly driven by the *doing mode*. This mode is focused on getting things done or achieving certain goals the mind has set. You imagine how you want things to be, compare that to how things are now. If there's a discrepancy, you figure out how to change it and take action to close the gap.

You might recognise this. It's Saturday and you've made a list of things that need to be done. All day long, you rush from one task to the next just to tick them off—without noticing how you're feeling or what you truly want to do that day. Without questioning which of those tasks really need doing now, which could wait, or which perhaps don't need to be done at all. You're being lived by your to-do list, which often never fully gets completed. This can leave a recurring feeling of dissatisfaction. Because when is it ever “good enough”?

The doing mode focuses on bridging the gap between how we experience things and how we think they *should* be. This mode can cause us to be almost constantly preoccupied with what we believe needs to happen, change, or be fixed. In doing mode, we often think: there's too much of something, or not enough.

That said, the doing mode can be very useful for solving practical, technical, or intellectual problems by analysing, evaluating, and planning. It's very effective in achieving goals in everyday situations—such as tidying the house, preparing a meeting, doing the finances, and so on. The doing mode continuously monitors whether our actions are having the desired effect and adjusts them if necessary.

However, this strategy doesn't work well when it comes to emotional problems such as anxiety or low mood, or other stress reactions triggered by illness, pain, or pressure at work. If, in these situations, you focus on how you see yourself versus how you would like to be, you may end up in a spiral of overthinking and self-criticism. Repetitive thoughts about your actions, the reasons why you're not happy, and the implications of that can completely occupy your mind.

The Being Mode

The being mode is the opposite of the doing mode. In being mode, we're not trying to change things or get somewhere else—we aim to be right where we already are. This mode is characterised by an attitude of attentiveness: mindfulness.

When you live from the being mode, you consciously give attention to things as they are, in the present moment, without judgement. You can bring awareness to physical sensations, feelings, emotions, habitual patterns, and mood states.

So how does this work? Imagine this: you've just been told by your manager that they're not satisfied with a task you've completed. You feel disappointed. Instead of switching straight into doing mode—rushing to figure out how to fix it and please your manager—you might pause and allow yourself to really feel the discomfort.

You could give attention to the tension in your body, the disappointed mood, and the thoughts or judgements that may come with it, such as: "It's never good enough," "I'm not good enough," "I'll never get it right." From that awareness, you can then explore what this situation is actually asking of you.

While the doing mode is focused on thinking and problem-solving, the being mode centres around accepting and allowing what is present. It's a different way of living—one that helps you relate differently to your body, thoughts, emotions, stress responses, and habitual patterns. The being mode is the antidote to some of the problems the doing mode can create.

Through cultivating awareness of the being mode, you can

- step out of your head and experience the world directly, without the constant commentary of your thoughts
- learn to better listen to your inner signals. This awareness helps protect you from overstepping your limits;
- develop an inner alertness that reduces the likelihood of reacting unconsciously to what you perceive;
- gain insight into persistent thinking patterns and defence mechanisms;
- stop forcing life in a particular direction and begin living more fully in the here and now.

Pillar of Mindfulness Practice: Beginning Again and Again

The richness of experiencing the present moment is the richness of life itself. Too often, we let our thoughts and ideas about what we "know" get in the way of seeing things as they truly are. We tend to take the ordinary for granted and fail to recognise the extraordinary within the ordinary.

To truly see the richness of the present moment, we need to learn how to begin again—how to see everything as if for the first time.

This attitude is especially important when we practise. Whatever technique we're doing—be it the body scan, sitting meditation, or movement exercises—we should approach it each time as a beginner, so we're not weighed down by expectations based on previous experiences.

With such an open mind, we stay receptive to new possibilities and don't get trapped in the routine of our own supposed expertise, which often believes it knows more than it actually

does. No moment is ever the same. Every moment is unique and holds unique potential. By adopting the mindset of a beginner, we don't forget this simple truth.

It may be helpful to experiment with this in your daily life.

Next time you see someone who looks vaguely familiar, ask yourself: am I seeing this person with fresh eyes, as they truly are? Or am I just seeing a reflection of my own thoughts about them?

You can try this with your children, your partner, your friends or colleagues—or even with your dog or cat, if you have one.

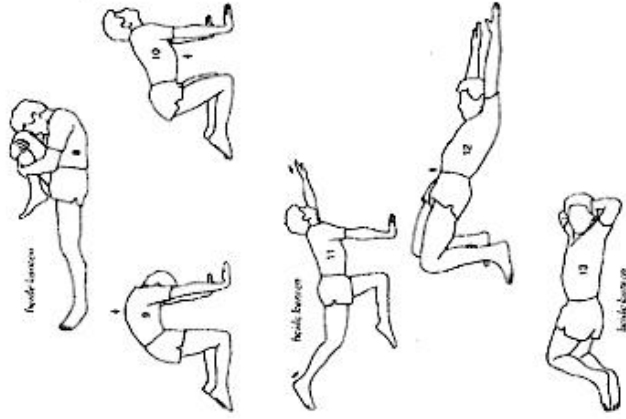
Try it also with challenges or problems that arise. Try it outside in nature. Can you see the sky, the stars, the trees, the water, and the stones—really see them with a clear and open mind as they are in this very moment?

Or are you viewing them through the veil of your own thoughts, opinions, and emotions?

— from Kabat-Zinn, J., 2014

BEWEGINGSOEFENINGEN

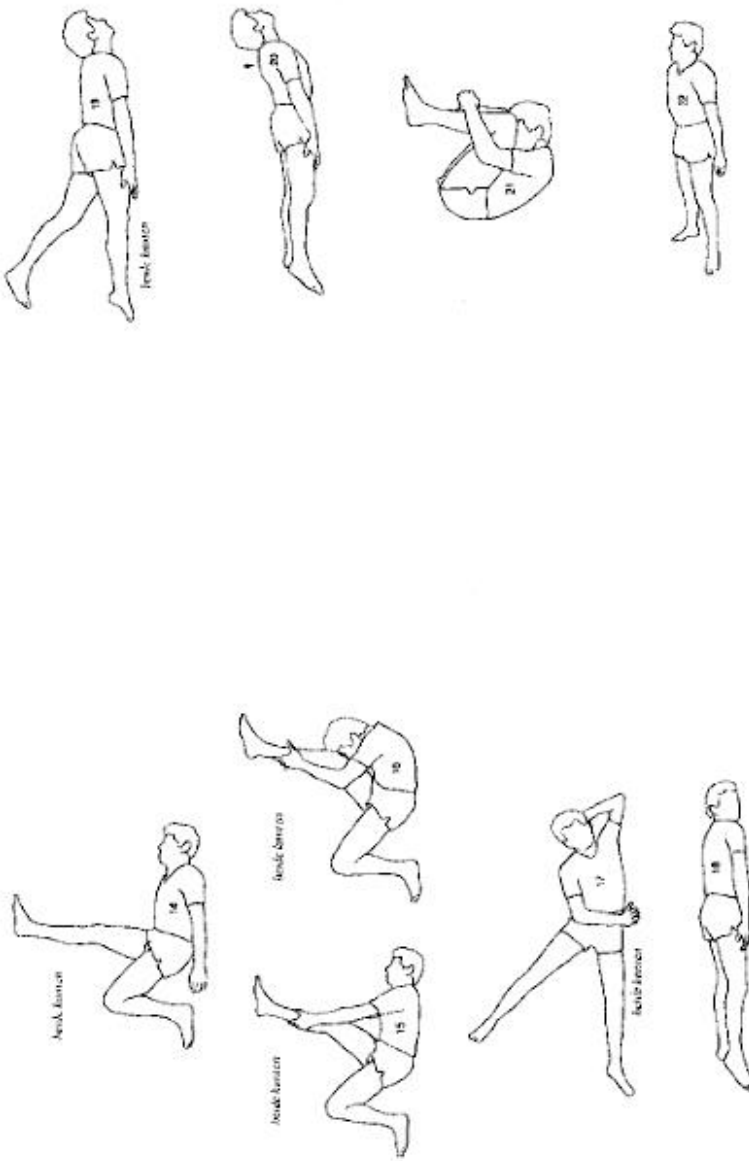
Liggende houding



Uit: Jon Kabat-Zinn: Handboek Meditatie Ontspannen, 2005

BEWEGINGSOEFENINGEN

Liggende houding



Uit: Jon Kabat-Zinn: Handboek Meditatie en Ontspanning, 2005

Points of Attention for the Movement Exercises

1. Lie on your back on a firm but not too hard surface. If lying on your back is uncomfortable, take a different position. You can also use a cushion under your head and/or knees, which you can remove again during the exercises. For standing exercises, choose a stable surface.
2. Become aware of your breath and feel how your belly or chest rises and falls with each inhalation and exhalation. If you like, place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest to follow the movement of the breath. Try to observe the breath without influencing it.
3. Take time to experience the body as one whole, surrounded on all sides by the boundary of the skin. Notice the places where your body touches the ground.
4. Keep your attention focused on what you are experiencing now. If you notice your mind has wandered, gently bring your awareness back to the present moment. It can help to say short phrases to yourself such as “Now I feel...” or “Now I notice...”
5. Move the body slowly into the positions you’ve learned in the training. Take responsibility for deciding how far you go and honour your own boundaries. Never force anything. Skip the postures you know or sense are not suitable for you right now (for example, if you have neck or back problems), or do them in a very gentle and careful way: slowly and with full attention. If you're not able to physically join in, you can also visualise doing the exercises in your mind.
6. Stay in each posture long enough to really “enter” it—so that you can be still and present within it. With each in-breath, allow the posture to gently expand in all directions; with each out-breath, allow yourself to soften a little deeper into it, using gravity where possible to support you.
7. Avoid comparing yourself to others. There’s no need to judge whether you’re doing it “better” or “worse” than anyone else.
8. While in each posture, stay aware of the physical sensations in the different parts of your body. If you like, you can focus your attention on the area where you feel the most stretch. Make sure to keep breathing, and consciously relax the muscles that don’t need to be active—such as those in the face.
9. Don’t turn it into a competition with yourself. The spirit of mindfulness is to accept yourself just as you are. Take your time to explore your limits and “breathe towards” them in a gentle and kind way. Your breath can act as a massage at the edges. Don’t see your boundaries as limitations or obstacles to be pushed through at any cost, but rather as guides—showing how far you can safely go in this moment.
10. Take a pause after each posture. Tune in to your breathing and feel how your belly gently moves with each inhalation and exhalation. If you are lying down, notice how the muscles that were active during the movement are now releasing into relaxation. With each out-breath, allow yourself to sink more deeply into the mat—let your body become heavy and soft.

11. If you're standing, feel the contact of your feet with the floor. Let your shoulders drop, relax your face and your jaw. Let thoughts come and go as they please, and try to be fully present in this moment.
12. Don't let only your body relax through the exercises—also allow your mind to soften. Thinking is not the same as being mindful. Often, we're filled with automatic thoughts, reasoning, and inner commentary throughout the day—and even at night. This “wallpaper thinking” is like constant background noise. It is rarely useful. When this inner chatter quiets down, space opens up for true awareness.

If you have back problems or other health concerns that might limit you, decide for yourself which exercises to do or skip. When in doubt, consult a physiotherapist or your doctor. You can also participate in the exercises by visualising them in your mind.

Walking with Awareness

Find a place where you can walk back and forth without worrying about being seen. This could be indoors or outdoors.

Stand with your feet about 10–15 cm apart and keep your knees slightly bent so you can move with some spring. Let your arms hang loosely by your sides and look straight ahead with a soft gaze.

Bring your attention to the soles of your feet and feel the contact with the ground. Notice how your body weight travels down through your legs and feet into the earth. Gently bend your knees a few times to feel the legs and feet more clearly.

Then shift your weight onto your right leg and notice how the sensations in your legs and feet change as the left leg becomes lighter and the rest of your body rests on the right leg.

Slowly lift the left heel off the floor and feel the sensations in your calf muscles. Continue lifting the foot until only the toes remain in contact with the ground. Notice what's happening in your foot and leg. Then slowly lift the left foot and move it forward through the air. Place the heel on the ground, then let the rest of the foot follow and transfer your weight to the left leg and foot. Feel the left side become heavier and the right leg and foot become lighter as they lift off the floor.

Once your weight is fully on the left leg, slowly lift the right foot and move it forward. As you do, notice the changing sensations in the foot and leg. Focus on the right heel as it touches the ground. Shift your weight over to the right foot as it settles. Stay aware of the constantly changing sensations in both legs and feet.

Walk back and forth in this way, slowly. Also notice the movements your body makes as you turn around.

If you notice your attention drifting, gently guide it back to your feet and legs. Use the contact between your feet and the ground as an “anchor” to return to the present moment—just as you use the breath in sitting meditation.

To get used to walking with full attention, start at a slow pace. If it becomes easier for you, you can increase your speed to a normal walking pace. If you're feeling rushed or restless, it may be helpful to start at a faster pace and then gradually slow down as you settle. Walk for ten to fifteen minutes—or longer, if you like.

Home Practice after Session 3

1. Alternate the body scan with the lying-down movement exercises.

Do the body scan on days 1, 3, and 5. Do the lying-down movement exercises on days 2, 4, and 6.

Make notes on your practice log.

2. Sitting with awareness of the breath and the body – 10 minutes per day.

3. Fill in the Unpleasant Events Log (one event per day).

Use this as an opportunity to become aware of the physical sensations, thoughts, and emotions connected to one unpleasant event each day.

Write down your reflections as accurately as possible.

4. What are the unpleasant events (big or small) that throw you off balance or that you find difficult to deal with?

Home Practice after Session 3
UNPLEASANT EVENTS LOG (after Session 3)

For one week, be aware of an unpleasant or uncomfortable event as it is happening. At a later moment, write down what the event was and how you experienced it.

What was the event?	How did your body feel during the event?	What mood/emotions were present?	What thoughts were going through your mind?	What do you notice now, as you write about it?	Date
<i>You're waiting for someone to come and fix the phone. You realise you're going to be late for an important meeting at work.</i>	<i>Pounding temples, tense neck and shoulders, pacing up and down.</i>	<i>Angry, powerless.</i>	<i>They call this service? They can do whatever they want—they've got the monopoly. Of all appointments, this was the one I really didn't want to miss.</i>	<i>I hope I don't have to go through something like this again any time soon.</i>	<i>Example</i>
					Day 1 Date:
					Day 2 Date:
					Day 3 Date:
					Day 4 Date:
					Day 5 Date:
					Day 6 Date:
					Day 7 Date:
					Day 71 Date:

Practice Log – After session 3

Each time you practice, write it down here. Make notes about anything that comes up during the practice so we can discuss it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Experiences
Day 1 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 2 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 3 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 4 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 5 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 6 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	
Day 7 Date:	Alternate body scan with the movement exercises Sitting with awareness – 10 mn Note one unpleasant event	

Space for Additional Notes