

Session 6

Mindful communication

Introduction to Session 6

Our relationships offer endless opportunities to practice awareness; to ultimately reduce the stress we experience in our interactions with people. When someone causes you stress, it is important that you take responsibility for your share in that relationship. Just like in other situations where you experience difficulties or feel threatened, you can also unconsciously react from fight or flight behaviour in relationships. Usually, this does not improve matters.

When you are fully present in situations, you might discover that there are many more possibilities than just your automatic reactions. For example, when you practice calmness and awareness during an argument with a friend, look at the whole situation from a distance and empathize with the other person's point of view, this probably provides new opportunities to respond constructively.

When you are truly open to listening to what the other person wants and how they see things, without constantly reacting, contradicting or saying that you are right and the other is wrong, there is a great chance that the other person feels heard, accepted and welcome.

Just like our body and our mind, our relationships can also heal. This happens, among other things, through love, understanding, kindness and acceptance. Accepting the other person as they are starts with accepting ourselves. It is important that you develop awareness of both your pleasant qualities and patterns that cause problems in your relationships. And that you learn to accept your shortcomings with kindness, simply because shortcomings are human. And.. that you give yourself the space to learn this.

How mindfulness can help with this

Good communication is seen as the key to a successful (partner) relationship. Talking and listening, it seems so simple. However, communication does not happen by itself. Mindfulness can perhaps help you to communicate better and come closer together. In difficult times, this can be very important.

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment without judgment. The attention is focused on what is happening inside and outside the body, where you observe feelings and thoughts with curiosity, openness and acceptance. Through a non-judgmental and accepting attitude, you can prevent yourself from overthinking or worrying extensively about the event.

When two people communicate with awareness, they become aware of each other's reactions. This way, you can gain insight into the expectations and ideas that form the basis of your communication. By becoming aware of this, you can learn to react less automatically to what the other person says or does. Together you can consciously choose how you want to react to each other.

Expectations that previously remained unconscious can now be expressed, allowing you to break patterns of withdrawing and attacking, for example. Instead of reacting fiercely right away when the other person makes a critical remark about the house not being tidy, you can pay attention to your breathing for a moment. Then you can take in the situation and perhaps come to the realization that the criticism is justified or perhaps not, and decide to react calmly if that is desired.

In addition to being able to break patterns, paying attention to the present moment without judgment can also lead to more acceptance and less avoidance of intense emotions, such as anxiety and sadness. Attention can also ensure that communication is less disrupted by thinking about the past or the future. Perhaps you recognize it, the tendency to interrupt someone's story if you also happen to have been to that spot in that picturesque village in France.

These thoughts of or feelings about memories will disrupt current reactions less. This will benefit communication.

[Pillar of mindfulness practice: acceptance](#)

Acceptance means seeing things as they are right now. If you have a headache, accept that you have a headache. If you are overweight, why not accept that as a description of your body at this moment? Sooner or later we will have to reconcile ourselves to things as they are and accept them, whether it is a diagnosis of cancer or the news that someone has died. Acceptance is often only achieved after we have gone through emotional periods of denial and then anger. Reconciling yourself with what is simply happens in phases; they are part of the healing process.

In our daily lives, however, we often waste a lot of energy on denial of and resistance to what is already a fact, and i am not talking about the major disasters that usually take a lot of time to recover from. When we do that, we are actually trying to force situations to be the way we would like them to be, which only creates more tension. Because of this, no positive change can take place. We might be so busy denying and forcing and struggling that we have little energy left for healing and growth.

Acceptance does not mean that you have to like everything or that you should adopt a passive attitude toward everything and abandon your principles and values. It does not mean that you are satisfied with things as they are, or that you resign yourself to tolerating things as they 'should be'. It does not mean that you should cease your efforts to escape from your own self-destructive behaviour, or let go of your desire for change and inner growth, or that you should tolerate injustice, for example, or avoid getting involved in attempts to improve the world around you because it just is the way it is: hopeless. Acceptance in this context simply means that you are willing to see things as they are. Thanks to this attitude, you will act appropriately in your life, no matter what happens. When you have a clear picture of what is actually happening, you will probably know better what to do and be more likely to have the inner conviction to take action than when your view is clouded by judgments and desires of your mind, or its fears and prejudices.

During sitting in awareness, we develop acceptance by observing each moment and staying with it completely, as it is. We do not try to impose our ideas about what we should feel or think or see onto our experience but merely remind ourselves to remain receptive and open to everything we feel, think or see and to accept it because it is there now, at this moment. If we keep our attention focused on the present, we can be sure of one thing, namely that whatever we are paying attention to at this moment, whatever it may be, will change. In this way, we also get the opportunity to learn to accept what will arise in the next moment.

Practice after session 6

1. Practice alternating sitting in awareness one day and lying or standing movement exercises or the body scan the other day. Make a choice from the exercises every day and if you want you can also experiment with practicing without audio files. Record your reactions on the homework form.
2. Three-minute breathing space, practice at moments of rising stress. Note each time you do so on the homework form and note any comment or difficulty.
3. Explore this week whether you can recognize your own patterns in communication. For example: filling in what the other person is going to say, becoming defensive, telling your own story, withdrawing, etc.
4. Examine for yourself what mental and physical nourishment you take in throughout the day. Think of: food, conversations, information through the media and internet, tv, phone, etc.

Practice Log – Session 5

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:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 2 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 3 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 4 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 5 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 6 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	
Day 7 Date:	Body scan or sitting meditation or walking in awareness/movement exercises Breathing space Communication patterns	

Space for Additional Notes