

**Mindfulness**

Philadelphia/Germantown, PA January 2013

**Chalice Lighting**

“For the person with attention, every day becomes the very day upon which all the world depends.” ~ Rabbi Rami M Shapiro

**Check-in**

*Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met.*

**Readings/ Quotes**

“I am learning slowly to bring my crazy pinball-machine mind back to this place of friendly detachment toward myself, so I can look out at the world and see all those other things with respect. Try looking at your mind as a wayward puppy that you are trying to paper train. You don't drop-kick a puppy into the neighbor's yard every time it piddles on the floor. You just keep bringing it back to the newspaper. So I keep trying gently to bring my mind back to what is really there to be seen, maybe to be seen and noted with a kind of reverence.” ~ Anne Lamott

“What you are thinking, what shape your mind is in, is what makes the greatest difference of all.” ~ Willie Mays

“You can destroy your now by worrying about tomorrow.” ~ Janis Joplin

“Our minds are like crows. They pick up everything that glitters, no matter how uncomfortable our nests get with all that metal in them.” ~ Thomas Merton

**Spiritual Exercises**

*Read aloud the spiritual exercises on the Additional Resources page.*

**Sitting in Silence**

*Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts related to mindfulness.*

**Questions for Contemplation:**

- 1) What does mindfulness mean to you?
- 2) How do you cultivate it in your life?
- 3) Do you struggle to live with more mindfulness? How can you help your mind to turn off the background noise and focus on the present?
- 4) What was your experience of the Spiritual Exercise(s) that you did this month?

## **Sharing/Deep Listening**

*Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the Spiritual Exercises.*

## **Reflection**

*This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

## **Singing**

When I breathe in  
I breathe in Peace  
When I breathe out  
I breathe out Love

## **Extinguishing the Chalice**

“Be happy in the moment, that’s enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.” ~ Mother Teresa

# **Additional Resources and Spiritual Exercises**

## **Spiritual Exercises**

### **Spiritual Exercise 1: “Unitask and Bring Mindfulness to Daily Routines”**

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally... When we commit ourselves to paying attention in an open way, without falling prey to our own likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices, projections and expectations, new possibilities open up and we have a chance to free ourselves from the straitjacket of unconsciousness.”

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

In our busy lives, how often do we find ourselves doing more than one thing at a time? Many days, it seems that multi-tasking is an ingrained part of life. This month, stop multi-tasking. Sounds simple, right? Try it and see how it feels. For example, work on the computer without the TV or radio on, or drive the car without listening to the radio or a CD. Exercise or eat in silence. When you fold the laundry, only fold the laundry, without also talking on the phone or watching TV. (Additional resource: [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com) for a blissful break)

How does doing one thing at a time feel?

Will you be able to keep it up beyond this month? Why or why not?

### **Spiritual Exercise 2: “The Raisin Consciousness”**

Many of us practice meditation, which is an excellent way to develop mindfulness. For those who don't have a regular meditation, practice, The Raisin Consciousness is an exercise based on Buddhist teachings that Jon Kabat-Zinn uses as a first meditation.

(note: if you don't like raisins, you may use another fruit or nut)

- 1) Sit comfortably in a chair
- 2) Place a raisin in your hand
- 3) Examine the raisin as if you had never seen it before
- 4) Imagine it as its “plump self” growing on the vine surrounded by nature.
- 5) As you look at the raisin, become conscious of what you see: the shape, texture, color, size. Is it hard or soft?
- 6) Bring the raisin to your nose and smell it.
- 7) Are you anticipating eating the raisin? Is it difficult not to just pop it in your mouth?
- 8) How does the raisin feel? How small is it in your hand?
- 9) Place the raisin in your mouth. Become aware of what your tongue is doing.
- 10) Bite ever so lightly into the raisin. Feel its squishiness.
- 11) Chew three times and then stop.
- 12) Describe the flavor of the raisin. What is the texture?
- 13) As you complete chewing, swallow the raisin.
- 14) Sit quietly, breathing, aware of what you are sensing.

As Kabat-Zinn explains: “The raisin exercise dispels all previous concepts we may be harboring about meditation. It immediately places it in the realm of the ordinary, the everyday, the world you already know but are now going to know differently. Eating one raisin very, very slowly allows you to drop right into the knowing in ways that are effortlessly, totally natural, and entirely beyond words and thinking. Such an exercise delivers wakefulness immediately. There is in this moment only tasting.”

We can develop our mind to deliver wakefulness in other ways, as well.

To bring more awareness to the moment, try some daily tasks in a different way: Eat with the opposite hand, walk or ride a bike instead of driving and take notice of things you may have missed from the car, simply slow down and experience the journey of an errand or walk to school or work. It takes more time and effort, and you may not accomplish as much in a day as you would like, but perhaps in exchange you noticed more ways in which you’re connected to the world. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, “Mindfulness is the energy that sheds light on all things and all activities, producing the power of concentration, bringing forth deep insight and awakening.”

What did you notice about your month that surprised you?

After a month of “falling awake” (as Kabat-Zinn puts it), how do you feel? Did you notice any changes to your mind or body?

### **Spiritual Exercise 3: “Walk a Labyrinth”**

“Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Walking the labyrinth is another form of meditation and it’s said that it’s a metaphor for our spiritual journey: one walks to the center of the labyrinth (or one’s heart or soul) and back out again into the world. Above is a small labyrinth that can be traced with a finger, which is a good start to experiencing this type of meditation. For larger walking labyrinths, visit one of these local places:

- 1) Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia – 7301 Germantown Avenue, located on the second floor rotunda of Krauth Memorial Library <http://ltsp.edu/labyrinth>
- 2) St Thomas’ Episcopal Church – 600 Church Rd, Flourtown, located behind the church, always open.
- 3) Bryn Mawr College, 101 N Merion Ave, Bryn Mawr, located on the campus and open from sunrise to sunset. It may be used by the public.

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