

7 Attitudes of Mindfulness

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre, 7 Attitudes are necessary for the foundation of mindfulness being. Here are some paraphrases from his book *Full Catastrophe Living* (pp 33-40):

1. **NON-JUDGING:** Being an impartial witness of your own experience requires that you become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experiences that we are normally caught up in, observe it, and step back from it. Just observe how much you are preoccupied with liking and disliking during a ten-minute period as you go about your business.

2. **PATIENCE:** A form of wisdom, it demonstrates that we accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time. We intentionally remind ourselves not to be impatient with ourselves because we are tense or agitated or frightened. We give ourselves room to have these experiences. Why? Because we are having them anyway! Each moment is your life in that moment.

3. **BEGINNER'S MIND:** An open, beginner's mind allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise. No moment is the same as any other - each one is unique and contains unique possibilities. Are you able to see the sky, the stars, the trees, with a clear and uncluttered mind?

4. **TRUST:** Developing a basic trust in yourself and your feelings is an integral part of meditation training. It is far better to trust in your intuition and your own authority, even if you make some mistakes, than always to look outside yourself for guidance. If something doesn't feel right, why not honour your feelings? It is impossible to be like somebody else. Your only hope is to become more fully yourself.

5. **NON-STRIVING:** Meditation's only goal is for you to be yourself. The irony is that you already are. This craziness may be pointing you toward a new way of seeing yourself, one in which you are trying less and being more. If you think, "I am going to get relaxed, control my pain, or become a better person", you have introduced an idea in your mind of where you should be, and that you are not OK right now. This attitude undermines mindfulness, which involves simply paying attention to whatever is happening.

6. **ACCEPTANCE:** Seeing things as they actually are in the present. If you have a headache, accept that you have a headache. In the course of our daily lives, we often waste a lot of energy denying and resisting what is already fact. When we do that, we are basically trying to force situations to be the way we would like them to be, which only makes for more tension, which actually prevents positive change from occurring. Acceptance sets the stage for acting appropriately in your life, no matter what is happening.

7. **LETTING GO:** When we start paying attention to our inner experience, we rapidly discover that there are certain thoughts and feelings and situations that the mind seems to want to hold on to. Similarly, there are others that we try to get rid of or prevent or protect ourselves from having. In mindfulness, we intentionally put aside the elevation of some experiences more than others. Instead, we let our experience be what it is. Letting go is a way of letting things be, without grasping and pushing away. If you have difficulty picturing what letting go feels like, picture holding on. Holding on is the opposite of letting go. Letting go is not a foreign experience -

we do it every time we go to sleep. If we can't let go, we find we are unable to sleep. Now we can practice applying this skill in waking situations as well.