

CRG Event Planning Company Meeting Intro to Meditation - Class Outline  
Stopping for the Light!  
Thursday, Dec. 6, 2013

1. Welcome & Check In

2. Review & Description of today's activities

- a. *In the short time we have together today, I'd like to give you an experience of meditation. We could talk a lot about the benefits of meditation, the kinds of meditation there are and how to do them. I want to leave you with something practical that you can use every day under any circumstances. So we'll start with an ordinary practice of what is called mindfulness.*
- b. *I'll leave some room for discussion and questions.*
- c. *If you're interested in finding out more information you can go to my web-site: <http://dharmaworks.net/DharmaTouch/> where I'll have an outline of what we did today along with some great resources to get you started.*

3. Information on the Benefits: Why Meditate?

- a. *While I think you'll find the meditation instructions to be simple - they are far from easy. Just try stopping, stopping everything, just sitting still and paying attention only to your breathing. How long do you think you can last before thoughts start creeping in or you have the urge to fidget? And why would you want to do that?*
- b. **Pick a Reason Why - Make it worthy of your commitment!**  
  
*Most of us live very busy lives in which we try to be as productive as we can. It's really easy to start living at pace the burns our inner resources at too fast a pace. We keep going as fast as we can through all those green lights & the yellows. In fact we often don't see the yellows until it's too late. These are the little warning signs we get either in our bodies, our minds and our relationships with our families, friends and even clients.*

*I'm here to encourage you to wait at the yellow lights - to pause and just take a few moments to breathe and really become aware of what is happening right now - in your body, your mind, your heart, in your environment - at home, at work, at play and in between.*

*I think you'll find developing a mindfulness practice will give you the ability to think more clearly, respond more effectively in challenging life situations and even access more creativity and resilience in bouncing back from disappointments.*

- c. Benefits - You're probably all aware of the many health benefits:
  - i. Article: Why Meditate? by Deepak Chopra
    1. Healing Benefits:
      - a) Decreased blood pressure and hypertension
      - b) Lowered cholesterol levels
      - c) Reduced production of "stress hormones," including cortisol and adrenaline
      - d) More efficient oxygen use by the body
      - e) Increased production of the anti-aging hormone DHEA
      - f) Improved immune function
      - g) Decreased anxiety, depression, and insomnia
    2. Stress Reduction
    3. Mental Capacity
    4. Improves Your Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills
    5. Meditation Decreases Depression, Anxiety, and Insomnia
    6. Relationship Enhancement
4. Let's Start with a Guided Practice

a. *Mindfulness of the Body*

*Now, allow the eyes to close. Let's take a few moments for you to settle, to arrive, to become aware of your body. We are not trying to change anything at this time; just be aware of the way things are now, without judging them. Begin by bringing your attention to the ground beneath your seat and legs, feel the weight of your body as you sit on the floor. Notice the areas that touch the ground. Sensing into your feet . . . legs . . . knees . . . thighs . . . hips . . . pelvis . . . Bring your awareness to low belly . . . ribs and lungs . . . front, side, back . . . Sensing into shoulders, arms . . . the weight of your hands . . . Bringing awareness to upper chest and neck . . . face . . . jaw, temples and brow . . . the bones and weight of your head . . . slowly traveling down the curves of the spine all the way down to the earth . . . Now sensing the wholeness of your body . . . as it very subtly moves with your breath . . .*

*Begin to notice your breath . . . sense your breath . . . follow your breath . . . without changing it in any way . . . Notice breath going out, and when we breathe in there is just a momentary gap, a space . . .*

*If ideas, thoughts arise . . . simply note that you are thinking . . . and return to the breath . . . If we wonder what we're going to do for the rest of our life, we simply label it thinking. Anything that comes up, we gently acknowledge it and let it go. . . .labeling thought . . . and returning to the breath . . .*

*When you hear the bell you'll open your eyes, adjust to the light of the room and just notice how you feel. BELL 3X!*

5. Feedback & Stretch

6. Types of Meditations & Types of Minds

*The best meditation is one that you will do! We just practiced a mindfulness technique: Mindfulness of the Body. As you begin to practice you'll notice your own challenges pretty quickly. I think it's important to adapt your approach based on your neurological profile. There's natural range of strengths and weaknesses with 3 aspects of Attention (A). The brain balances 3 activities in attention: keeping information in awareness; updating awareness with new info and seeking right amount of stimulation.*

*Everyone has different tendencies with regard to their abilities to focus, filter distractions and inclination to seek stimulation. Each person has their own profile. It's compassionate and sensible to both adapt your work, home life and spiritual practices to your profile and improve A over time. So let's try it again - this time with what I call "concentration enrichment" or a "concentration tune-up" exercise.*

## 7. Concentration Tune-up Exercise

*Steady mindfulness requires overcoming our natural tendency of mind to scan endlessly and think of new things.*

*So the basic capacity to steady the mind – called concentration, as a shorthand – is a condition for mindfulness.*

*As we come into our sitting posture we can consider some of the key factors of concentration:*

*Have a clear and stable object of attention – Pick a single, specific object of attention – such as the sensations of the breath in one area of the body, rather than the feeling of breathing overall – and generally stick with that object rather than moving from object to object (though occasionally it works to shift to one or two other objects).*

*Set your intention – Resolve to keep your mind on its desired object.*

*Be kind – Wish yourself well, and try not to be self-critical or too goal-directed.*

*Routinely regenerate your intention – For example, if you're focusing on the breath, you could re-commit to staying with the inhalation at the start of each one, and similarly with each exhalation.*

*Appoint an overseer – Imagine a part of the mind that keeps watching how well your attention stays focused on the object. Regenerate the sense of that overseer if it starts to fade.*

*Enrich the stimulus – Orient to each breath as a unique, fresh breath. Explore the details of the sensations of it.*

*Adapt your practice to your nature – Some people naturally need more stimulation than others; if that's true for you, try counting the breath from 1 to 10 and then return to 1 again. You can also use a mantra: “breathing in I know I am breathing in; breathing out I know I am breathing out.”*

*Receive the object of attention – Rather than going out to the object, let it come into your awareness in an effortless way. Be receptive, rather than active.*

*Settle into absorption – Encourage a growing unification of awareness with its object, with everything else receding into the background of awareness, falling away.*

*Trust yourself – There is a natural intelligence in the mind, and you will find your own way to deepening concentration. Explore what works best for you.*

#### *Instructions*

*Now, you can pick whatever object you like, your breath or just the sensations of the breath felt around the upper lip. If those are too subtle, you could also use the sensations in the belly.*

*For concentration, it's generally best to pick a single, focused object of attention – such as the sensations of the breath in one area, rather than the feeling of breathing overall – and stick with that object rather than moving from object to object.*

*So let's get started by making a formal resolution to concentrate on a particular object:*

*Sitting in a relaxed yet comfortable position.*

*Eyes open or closed, whatever works for you. Eyes closed often helps people focus on the breath.*

*If you feel sleepy you could open your eyes, use mandala mudra or sit in a chair.*

*Try to be aware of the sensations of each breath – inhalation and exhalation – from beginning to end*

*It's OK to have your mind wander some. Just return your attention to the breath. Be kind to yourself as you do so.*

*If you like, you could count each breath, and start over when you get to 10 or if you lose track.*

*Try to be with each breath as a fresh, unique breath, an individual in its own right.*

*Increase your attentiveness if you feel it starting to crumble or wander.*

*Keep watching your quality of intention and focus. You are watching the watching to make sure the watcher is doing a good job.*

*Observe yourself getting increasingly absorbed in the sensations of the breath. Bell 3X!*

*OK, how was that for you?*

*What helped you stabilize attention, steady your mind?*

## 8. Feedback & Stretch

## 9. Bringing Mindfulness to Life!

a. *Let's talk about what you can do when you're not making the lights - you start going through too many yellow lights - and hopefully no red ones!*

i) *Mindfulness of the Body - Your body doesn't lie. You feel those adrenals rushing when you've gone through the red light - you might even get their rush going through a yellow. That's your sign to pull over. Stop. At the very least see if you can take at least 3-5 really deep & complete breaths. If you can keep breathing until you feel your heart has slowed and you feel calmer.*

ii) *Refilling the Well - Most of us approach our day automatically going to productivity mode - we don't even think about it - we reflexively grab our productivity devices - our phones, lap tops, iPads, etc. Then we're off. We just go and go and go. Things don't always go according to plan either. Pretty soon you're running on empty. Instead of going for that*

*next cup of coffee or whatever. What about taking a 10 minute walk? Or perhaps finding some place where you can lie down. If you sit a lot during the day walking or lying down will be more restorative for you. Notice how you feel before and after you've taken some time to refill your well.*

- iii) *Entering the Threshold - One of my students shared this practice with me. Every time she realizes that she is transitioning from one activity to another - like getting into her car to go to work - or coming into the house after work. She stops and does some mindfulness breathing - that full body breathing where you're only paying attention to your breath & your body. She says it helps her switch gears so she can really be present with her kids. This might be a good thing to do when you're about to pick up the phone with a demanding or difficult client.*
- iv) *Self Compassion - You noticed the one of the instructions I offered during our meditation was to trust yourself & another was to be kind, accepting nonjudgmental. You can actually go beyond this by cultivating healing state in your mind as you meditate. One of the practices is to really take in the good experiences in life. There is a saying that good experiences stick to the brain like teflon while bad experiences stick like velcro. So one of the ways you can enhance a physiological state of well being is to really acknowledge & feel any good experiences as you can. One of my favorite meditation instructors & writers, Rick Hanson teaches a technique called HEAL.*

*1. Have a positive experience - Notice a positive experience that is already present or create one - you can think about things you're grateful for, bring to mind a loving friend or a project you've completed successfully.*

*2. Enrich it - Stay with the positive experience for at least 5-10 seconds longer & try to really open to the feelings in it & the sensations in your body; let it fill your mind. Encourage the experience to be more intense.*

3. Absorb it - Intend & sense that the experience is really sinking into you. Let it really land in your mind. Perhaps visualizing it like a golden light in your heart or use imagery of whatever you find nourishing.

4. Link positive material to negative material - While you're having a stable sense of a positive experience in the foreground of your awareness, bring to mind something negative in the background. Bring to mind some disappointment or frustration - let it remain in the background - if your mind gets hijacked by this awareness - just come back to the positive - perhaps you can try again with neutral associations that might be associated with the negative experience. This is a way of using positive thoughts & feelings to soothe, reduce & potentially replace the negative ones - it helps you build tolerance for difficult mind states.

## 10.Q&A / Sharing

## 11. Further Explorations

- a. I'm putting our session on my web-site today - you'll find it as a blog-post called *Stopping for the light* at: <http://dharmaworks.net/DharmaTouch/>
- b. You'll also find an outline of the practices we did & some on-line resources & reading materials that will support you in developing a personal practice.
- c. The Seattle area has wonderful meditation schools and teachers. You can find links to those at my web-site as well.
- d. I teach a weekly *Intro to Meditation Class* at a *Yoga Bliss* on *Mercer Island*. It's a 45 minute class beginning at 11:00 am. The class includes guided meditation and discussion.