

## Week 4: Appreciative Awareness

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- Review of the third week
- What progress have you made so far?
- Appreciative Awareness
- Practice for the fourth week

## Review of the Third Workshop

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In groups, review the key points we covered in the third workshop. Please nominate one person to take notes (and if that's you, here's a space to write them!)



## What progress have you made so far?

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Ask your partner, “What progress have you made since you started this course?” and take notes for them here.

(If they seem to run out of things to say, help them stay with it, ask “what else have you made progress with?” etc. Remember – little signs of progress are just as important as big steps).



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# Appreciative Awareness

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The theme for this week is taking time to appreciate – to appreciate our environment, other people and ourselves. When we cultivate appreciative awareness, it brings us into more positive relationship. It's another aspect of making the most of what we've already got, instead of rushing around looking for more. After all, if we never get to appreciate what we've got then what was the point of putting so much effort into getting it?

## Appreciating Progress

In the exercises above, we were focusing on the progress we've already made. When seeking to make progress in any discipline, it's easy to get self-critical and feel frustrated because we've fallen short of standards we've set for ourselves. But if we step back and appreciate the effort we've made and the progress we've made, we can feel encouraged and inspired by that, which helps us to take the next step. Mindfulness is rarely glamorous; it's a subtle quality of mind, so we need to cultivate our enthusiasm for it.

## Appreciating Beauty

Beauty has a wonderful effect on the mind, uplifting and purifying. It does take time to engage with, though – in the mad-rush of a busy day it's hard to take it in. So in the class we spend time listening to a poem and looking at flowers. 5 minutes seems like an incredibly long time to just sit in silence looking at a bunch of flowers – but once you get into it, there's more and more to see.

## Appreciating People

If flowers are amazing, what about people! Of course nobody's perfect, and when we get close to people or spend time interacting with them their faults can irritate us. But if we can step back from all that and just remember how every single human is the product of millions of years of evolution, we can start to appreciate the remarkable qualities people have. Of course everyone is unique – everyone has their own particular strengths and qualities. (Don't forget yourself in this – you are unique too, you have valuable strengths, qualities and values too!)

## Appreciating What Life Gives You

We benefit from our environment and from other people in so many ways, all the time. There's so much of it that we couldn't possibly keep track of it all – so we go into auto-pilot and take most if not all of it for granted. But there's a great deal to be gained from bringing conscious attention to the ways in which we're benefitting.....



# Happiness and Gratitude

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We all want to be happy, but it's surprisingly elusive: if you try and grasp hold of happiness, it tends to just evaporate. Happiness is a by-product of acting well, rather than something you can aim for directly.

There's some very interesting science around happiness. We each have a "happiness set-point." Like a thermostat controlling your heating and keeping rooms at a pre-determined temperature, there's a mechanism in your brain that takes your happiness back to your particular set-point. Your happiness levels go up or down according to events, but over time will naturally revert to the set-point.

This is dramatically illustrated by surveys amongst two groups: lottery winners and people who'd been paralysed in accidents and become quadriplegic. Of course the lottery winners became happier at first, and the quadriplegic people became less happy. But within a year, there was no difference between the two groups: they were both back to their set-points.

The set-point is determined by 3 factors: 50% of it is genetic and 10% is due to external circumstance (education level, income, marital status etc.). But 40% is derived from your day-to-day behaviour and the way in which you think about yourself and others.

Fortunately, the set-point isn't fixed – with sustained practice you can adjust the dial on the thermostat. Cultivating gratitude is a good way of doing this – see the exercise below.

## Cultivating Gratitude

One of the best-researched and well-proven ways to increase happiness is incredibly simple:

- Write down 3 ways you've benefitted from others

One experiment found that when people did this every day for three weeks, they became happier people – and stayed that way.

A few tips to make the most of this:

1. To help you remember, it works really well to share this exercise with someone else. I know couples who make this part of their ritual in the evening. Other people do it by exchanging daily emails.
2. Don't write the same things day after day – it needs to be 3 new things
3. It's fine to just notice little things – in fact, that's what makes the biggest difference
4. Don't worry if you don't *feel* grateful. If you just keep noticing things you *could* feel grateful for, ways in which you've benefitted, then the emotions will come.
5. You can get extra benefit from this by expressing your appreciation, especially to the people to whom you're grateful. They'll be pleased and it'll improve your relationship with them too.



# This Week's Brief Mindfulness Activities

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## Reconnect

When are you Reconnecting? Are your reminders working well enough, or do they need refreshing?

## Mindful Activity

What's your mindful activity? Is the reminder working?

## Body Scan – 20 minutes per day

Have you found a good time for you? (Weekdays and weekends?) Do you need to allow yourself a day off?

## Mindful Walk – focus on beauty

What is your daily mindful walk? What beauty can you look out for?

## Gratitude: Journal or Email

3 gratitudes every day.

In a journal or sharing by email?

When is the best time? (e.g. after dinner? just before bed?)

**Remember to savour your MAGIC MOMENTS!**



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# Week 4 Diary

	How did it go? What did you learn?							
	Gratitude Diary							
	Mindful Walk							
	Reconnect and Mindful Activity							
	20 minute Body Scan	✓						
	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues





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