

## Week 6: Cultivating Happiness

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- Review of the fifth week
- Method: “Water the Flowers not the Weeds!”
  - How to “water”
  - How to distinguish “flowers” and “weeds”
- Body Scan
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Reflection and Feedback

## Review of the Fifth Week

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What worked well for you in the fifth week? What did you learn?  
Take notes for your partner here:



# Cultivating Happiness

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How to cultivate happiness?

Many different cittas are arising in our minds all the time - thoughts, emotions and impulses. A significant increase in happiness will come from cultivating the cittas that are leading towards happiness (and not the ones that lead towards suffering).

In other words: water the flowers, not the weeds!

There are three stages to this process:

1. Awareness (“What’s growing?”)
2. Investigation (“Which are flowers?”)
3. Energy (“Water them!”)

Let’s consider each stage in turn

## Awareness

This includes pretty much everything we’ve covered on the course so far!

- Fine tuning our environment
- Paying attention to Sensations (especially in the body) and their Qualities
- Being aware of Cittas as they arise and pass away

This helps open the gap, making it easier to choose between helpful and unhelpful cittas.

## Investigation

Sometimes it’s obvious what’s a flower and what’s a weed. If you feel like saying thank you when someone buys you a drink, that’s obviously a flower. If you feel like thumping someone, that’s obviously a weed.

But sometimes it’s not so obvious. I’d like another drink – is it a flower, or is it a weed? I want to give £5000 to charity – is it a flower, or is it a weed?

## Energy

Having decided which are flowers and which are weeds, we need to “water the flowers, not the weeds.” What does that mean in practice?

Essentially, it means giving your attention and energy to the “flowers.” Help them to develop and grow, carry them forward into action.

And the weeds? You might be tempted to try to get rid of them. Unfortunately, when you try to argue with thoughts and emotions in your mind, that tends to actually feed them with energy. They fight back!

So it’s much better just to acknowledge their presence, and let them be. Let them fade away in their own time.



# Flowers and Weeds

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Here's an exercise to get us thinking about Flowers and Weeds.

1. Brainstorm a list of as many emotions and attitudes as you can think of
2. Categorise them: flowers, weeds, unsure.
3. Then we'll compare notes

Emotions

Attitudes



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## Tips on Distinguishing “Flowers” and “Weeds”

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Here are a couple of tips to help you decide if a particular citta (or action) will lead to suffering or happiness.

### ***Distinguish pleasure and happiness.***

If pleasure was a source of happiness, drug addicts would be the happiest people on the planet! But they don't seem very happy – in fact they seem to spend most of their time simply looking for the next fix.

So an impulse that's just about gaining some immediate pleasure is likely to be a weed - pleasure is the path of least resistance. On the other hand, enjoyment, well-being and happiness take some investment. It's easy to switch on the TV and find a stimulating or mildly entertaining programme – but it takes more effort to seek out something genuinely satisfying. We may even have to get into a quite different frame of mind. For example, when visiting an art gallery I find that if I start with a relaxed half hour in the café, I find it much easier to appreciate the beauty afterwards.

### ***Engage with Purpose***

If you want the deep sense of satisfaction that comes from living your life well, you'll need to engage in activities that you find meaningful. Remember that different people have different values, so don't worry about recognition from others – it's what you value that makes the difference here.

So if a thought is connected with what really matters to you in life, then it's more likely to be a flower (or at least a bud). But if it's concerned only with trivia, or with gaining the approval of others, then it may well be a weed.

This adds to the previous point about distinguishing pleasure and happiness. If you're doing something that's worthwhile, it's going to get difficult at times. So if you really want happiness, you have to be willing to experience some discomfort. I've heard it said that Psychological health comes from stepping outside your comfort zone 7 times a day! (But it's also important to step back in!)

Fortunately, having a sense of purpose and meaning helps with this. If you're going through a difficult time for no reason, it's hard to bear. But it's much easier when it's connected to an important sense of purpose.

### ***Aim for Everyone's Happiness***

We all know it's bad to be selfish. Who likes a selfish person, after all? Research backs this up: people who spend more on other people than on themselves are significantly happier.

So if a thought, emotion or impulse is all about you, it's a weed. But if it's about someone else's happiness, it's a flower.



There are a couple of caveats though. I'm assuming that you have the basic necessities of life in place. And it's not wise to leave yourself out of the picture and turn yourself into a doormat.

### ***Be patient with yourself***

Having said all of that, remember that it won't feel natural. What actually creates happiness goes against so much of our conditioning and the culture around us. Most adverts, for example, are essentially saying "if you buy product X you'll be happier." They're encouraging you to (a) seek out pleasure, (b) without considering what you find most meaningful in life, (c) in a selfish way. Precisely the opposite of what brings happiness!

As a result, most of us are in the habit of believing that selfish pleasure-seeking will bring us happiness. It takes a time and gently persistent effort to change this sort of habitual belief. So be patient with yourself, don't expect to make radical changes overnight.

There are some neat tricks to kick-start the process though. For example, spending money on experiences brings more happiness than spending it on possessions. (Perhaps because experiences tend to put us into relationship with others, rather than exciting their envy.)

Deliberate acts of kindness also help. Bizarrely, one act of kindness per day only seems to make a slight difference, whereas 5 acts of kindness on one day per week brings a 40% increase in happiness!



# Random Acts of Kindness

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What would be examples of “Random Acts of Kindness”? Brainstorm as many possibilities as you can – and don’t worry about making them practical, that comes later. Consider both large and small actions, for people you know and people you don’t.

Brainstorm possibilities:

Which of those could you realistically act on? Circle them.

For the unrealistic ones, what would be a more realistic version? Write them down. Circle the realistic options you generate this way.

When would be the best day to commit 5 random acts of kindness?

What might they be?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



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# Results of the Course?

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Take notes for your partner:

What difference has this course made for you?	What have you been learning and putting into practice that's made that difference?



# End of Course Reflection and Feedback

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Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

What have you got from this course, and what's helped deliver those benefits?

What differences have you noticed?	What's helped? (What have you learnt and put into practice that's helped create these differences?)

What will you continue to do?

If you had more time, what else would you like to continue?

What's been best about the training?



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How could we improve it?

For the questions in the table below, please circle the answers that best fit:

	circle one answer		
Has this course helped you manage stress?	No	Yes, a little	Yes, definitely
Has this course helped you find more enjoyment	No	Yes, a little	Yes, definitely
Has this course helped you be more focused or effective?	No	Yes, a little	Yes, definitely

Overall, how would you rate this course?

(0 = no benefit, 10 = significantly exceeded expectations)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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What would you say to someone considering coming on this course?

What other comments do you have?

	circle one answer	
Would you also like some material to send to colleagues or friends, to give them a taste of mindfulness? (e.g. a recorded body-scan and a short introduction that could be emailed)	Yes please	No thanks

Thank you for taking the time to give your feedback – it is very much appreciated.

