



# **MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE MINDFULNESS TRAINING**

MINDFULNESS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY, PSY545

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Datum odevzdání:

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## My experience with the mindfulness training

To begin with, I need to write that despite the demands I am grateful for my decision to subscribe into this course because it helped me to change my approach to everyday life.

**Komentář [R1]:** So, I am also satisfied. 😊

### Expectations, goals, commitment

At the beginning of the semester, I did not have any expectations about mindfulness. To be honest, I did not even know what exactly the mindfulness is and what it can bring to somebody's life. I was satisfied with the thought it could be beneficial just because of creating time only for myself as I imagine training of mindfulness more like relaxation technique falling into the category with imagination or autogenous training. I really liked the first lesson with the technique of anchoring in the body and five senses and then expected similar techniques in following lessons. This was not fulfilled and conversely, 30 minutes of doing practically nothing was scary to me for the first time.

**Komentář [R2]:** Do you understand, why it made you scary?

I did not know how I can use the skills in everyday life. I practiced at home and tried to find something positive on it. Time to time it was pleasant but now I realize, it was more about searching some positive aspects and about trying to convince myself I really like it. This approach was present maybe three weeks. Then I looked more information up and realized the meaning of the word "mindfulness". I started realizing how it can help me to better life and what I can do mindfully (i.e., almost everything). I liked this idea very much and it was the key while because it changed my approach. I started being more motivated in meditation training as I saw its sense and realized it can lead to better application.

**Komentář [R3]:** Could you use this sort of experience for your future profession?

My personal goal was modified several times and was more sophisticated with growing ideas how the mindfulness can be useful. The original goal was very simple – just to find time for myself and to find a technique how to calm down during the stress. After realizing the applicative potentiality (3<sup>rd</sup> week), I expended it to be more aware of the body signals, be able to name them and therefore maybe recognize what they could mean, especially during the stressful time; and to find the self-calming technique. Although I did not write it down, implicitly I felt the goal shifted into more abstract dimension finally – I meditated to be better in application of the learned skills, to apply them more naturally without the need to think about it.

**Komentář [R4]:** That is great! I understand it as a part of training, to be anchored in reality of your wishes and needs and I can see clearly, how it can be applied in various fields of psychology. Do you agree?

My commitment was to meditate 30 minutes 5 times a week for the period of twelve weeks. Although I changed my mind a little during the course of the weeks (inclining more to daily life mindfulness than to meditating), I kept my commitment and managed to fulfill it. Moreover, it was not only about keeping the commitment but I was also curious what impacts it will have. Also Frýba (1995) argues, the expectations of the progress is one of the strongest motivation in continuation with meditation.

**Komentář [R5]:** I agree.

## Processes of the meditations

I made a habit from the meditating in the evening because almost everything had been closed. Therefore, I was freer and without a big thinking of obligations.

Regarding to position, unfortunately I was not able to sit straight and needed to lean. However, it did not influence my vigilance as I was never falling asleep. I needed to be in a quiet room because it is more difficult for me to deal with the sounds from surrounding than from my mind because I cannot do anything with them. Also, I often needed to calm down first. It did it by anchoring in body with five senses.

Usually I focused on “breath in” in the nostrils as it was more noticeable than abdomen. Few times (when I was too distracted) I tried it also with lungs as breathing is most noticeable in this place. The first days it was very difficult to stay with the meditation object for such a long time and to go back to it after any disruption. Then I experimented a little during meditation and found my own techniques helping me to stay at the place of the breath and settle the mind.

The first technique is an experimenting with the “inner view and distances” from which I observed the breath: “*When I have some thoughts, or feel distraction, I go with my inner sight closer to the breath*” (2<sup>nd</sup> week). Also, when some pain or feeling emerged in the body, it was helpful to stay detached by changing the distance to the pain. Typically, when something hurts, it is considered as one’s own matter in the concrete part of body. However, while observing it several times from the different distances, it seems to be an object which is separated from the body. Then it is much easier to deal with the pain. Nevertheless, it does not work every time, and it can be even worse with the bigger pain.

Another technique is the imagination of the air – I imagined the air flow as I could feel it in the nasopharynx. It helped me to be more connected with the breath as the “visualisation of the air” is a supporting element next to the feeling of the air.

What was very interesting and key thing for me is trying not to hear and see anything in the mind. Siegel, Germer and Olendzki (2009) argue, the clearing the mind is not the goal of the mindfulness meditation and rather than this it is a goal for the formal meditations. However, it was very helpful for me in two cases. First, when I started being lost in my thoughts because of the presence of many obligations – it helped me to stop myself, name the chain of the associations and clear my mind to go back to the breath. Second, with growing number of weeks, the while of clear mind and no overwhelming was the thing I looked forward to: “*It is a great feeling because I have nothing in my mind, like having vacuum inside my head and feel lightness*” (5<sup>th</sup> week).

Next thing emerged during the training, was the issue of time. I found out that knowing the time helps me to concentrate better. I was very often distracted by the thought what time had left. It was very difficult to get rid of it until I looked at the clock. Therefore, it was helpful to make a record with quiet sounds after 10 minutes. I need to have information about the time in order to the better distribution of energy. I realize, it relates also to my other activities, for example in sport, because when I know I will do something next 5 minutes, I am able to distribute the energy and am not frustrated.

Another thing relating to the process of meditation is a naming of the thoughts or other disruptions. Usually naming helped me to grasp the situation or feeling and then it was clearer

**Komentář [R6]:** I liked the way, how you structured your text.

**Komentář [R7]:** Good.

**Komentář [R8]:** Great, the creativity is needed 😊

**Komentář [R9]:** Yes, building up detachment is a process. For this aspect an chapter from Varela’s work on epistemology and phenomenology can be inspiring.

**Komentář [R10]:** I agree with you; 1. It is important to not get lost in thinking; 2. To enjoy simplicity of the process of breathing. Both aspect are helping to mindfulness cultivation.

for observation. It works in the real world too when I am confused with something. Moreover, the process of concrete naming (not just saying “disruption” because “...the same thought comes back again till concrete naming” (9<sup>th</sup> week)) usually closes the thoughts and let it go. “During the naming I imagine wrapping the thought into a bubble and let it go away. Then I look at it like it is not mine” (5<sup>th</sup> week). In this case it was easier to observe the thought without getting lost.

**Komentář [R11]:** Nice tool

## Benefits

My original goal to find time for myself was fulfilled and I value this. Mindfulness training helped me to calm down and to have a break after a chaotic day. It prevents from overwhelming and because I meditated in the evening, it also helped me to fall asleep then: “I think I would not fall asleep early without calming down with this relaxation time” (1<sup>st</sup> week). Now, I am also able to observe the things without judging in the real world. It is very liberating and gives me the opportunity to look at the things from a different point of view which can uncover a hidden reality. It brings a bigger acceptance too which is – according to Germer (2005) – one of the components of the mindfulness. I think, I am better now in observation, and as Treadway and Lazar (2009) assume, my attention and concentration are better too because of better self-regulation. Also, I can better find the words for my emotions and feeling after many naming.

**Komentář [R12]:** Sometimes I use it with clients, not to learn them meditate, but how to use anchoring in the body for falling asleep.

Additionally, I mindfully enjoy everyday matters now which I usually did automatically. Olendzki (2005) described the model of the conception of experience where a consciousness stands in the middle. However, according to my experience, being conscious is not enough for the quality experience. Automatic behaviour can be conscious too and it is not as enjoyable as the things done mindfully. Mindfulness is a quality of consciousness (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007) and therefore cultivating of mindfulness changes the experiencing which is supported by my own experience.

**Komentář [R13]:** It is good for a psychologist, congratulations. I am rejoicing, that you have attained so many benefits. I am curious, if you also find some limits.

The biggest benefit of the meditating is the application of the acquired skills. As Brown and Ryan (2003) suggest, mindfulness helps me in self-regulation behaviour and brings positive feelings during the day.

**Application in everyday life:** There are many areas where I applied the skills. First, I can mention the mindful eating which leads me to enjoy the meals and not to overeat. I enjoy also listening to music more while decomposing the single tones and instruments. In sport I achieved better results because I focus just on the breath like in the meditation training.

Very useful is an observation of the signals from the body – I realize now the tension for example during the driving or before exams which makes me more nervous, and then can relax it. I use signals from body also during the decision making – what feelings emerge with single option?

I used mindfulness in communication with people, for example during the argument. It is possible to stop myself and realize the problem or what I want. Mindfulness leads me to a bigger empathy because I focus on the person and let the thoughts go. But sometimes I need to concentrate on it. In interpersonal relationship, I realize often the feelings to the other.

**Komentář [R14]:** Grate, I am happy, that you are able to implement mindfulness into so many areas of your life.

Regarding to education, mindfulness helped me to stop procrastinating (self-regulation) while realizing the automaticity of the useless action. At the beginning, I stop myself, which Gerner (2005) considers as the first step to awareness. As he supposes, then I start to observe the problem and return to the previous action (i.e., continue in work). It works also during the stress (I can stop myself) and therefore another of my goals is achieved.

Very good application is to stay distant from something – pain, problem, decision – because it offers a better overlook to the problem due to being uninvolved. As Siegel, Germer and Olendzki (2009) said, we should not escape the pain but just learn how to deal with it. I did not believe it but now I do.

**Komentář [R15]:** Great, I am happy, that there are still three more meaningful chapters.

### Limits:

There are also some limits. Mostly they relate to the meditation training. The biggest problem is its demands on time and energy. Time to time I had a busy day and I was either tired or have no extra time and my “obligation” that I should meditate stressed me sometimes. Although sometimes it was a pleasant break, other days I needed to force myself to meditate and it has a negative impact on the quality of the training.

It relates to the length of the training. I wanted to keep the commitment but in reality, 15 minutes would be enough for me. Usually the second half of the training I was lost and have no energy to concentrate more. Conversely, when I decided to shorten it, I enjoy the whole meditation more.

Siegel Germer and Olendzki (2009) described the formal meditation which is different from the mindfulness meditation. Our training was a little bit like the formal one. It was sometimes difficult to stay mostly with the meditation object, because it was too monotonous. Maybe if the bigger focus was on the observation and the meditation object was here only for the case of need for anchoring, it would be less demanding but still mindful.

**Komentář [R16]:** Thank you for a part of feedback. I have expected elaboration of limits according to application in specific context, but I am aware, that I should elaborate my expectation in syllabus 😊

### School psychology

I found some principles which could work while working with the children at school. First one is the motivation and the flow. When I had a pleasant feeling, I wanted to continue and tried to do it again. Similarly, with bigger involvement I enjoyed the meditation much more. These are the things which can help the children to be better at school. They need to find something positive and be kept involving.

Training the mindfulness with the children is difficult. Take for example problematics of a big group where some ADHD children are present, of a small motivation or even parental disagreement. However, there are some techniques which could help children to train mindfulness. Goodman (2005) suggest mindful eating or stopping the children and asking them to describe what they are doing and thinking of at that moment. We can also train the observation with them via games to be more aware of things, and use all the senses in observation. The children can have a homework about reviewing a day which is like our research diaries.

Because the children lack the objective perspective, it is very useful to let them have distance from their emotions by personifying them, consider them like visitors which will go away once (Goodman, & Greenland, 2009). This is very similar to my dealing with the pain and I can say it works.

It can be also very helpful to work on mindfulness with the teachers. For example, after complaining about a pupil we can stop her, ask her to observe her feeling, look at the case from a different perspective (i.e., distance) and then work with it. This is mindful approach.

**Komentář [R17]:** I appreciate, that you gave three paragraphs to possibilities of application in your future profession.

## My further direction

For now, I am satisfied with the extent to which I have achieved the goals set 3 months ago. I am able to apply skills acquired during the twelve-week training and enjoy it in my live. Although I know, these skills could be improved further, I am satisfied with this level of mindfulness in my daily life.

Time to time I meditate but it is not regularly now. I understand the mindfulness of breathing can be a good tool for training mindfulness, and that regular training and meditating helps to improve perception (Full, Walach, & Trautwein, 2012) which is very useful and important for mindful living. On the other hand, I found out I prefer training mindfulness in the daily activities and it makes sense to me. The twelve weeks helped me to find the way how I can do it. I still believe it is possible to train mindfulness during the everyday living just by application of the skills and without the need of further regular meditation for now.

**Komentář [R18]:** Test your decision by reality and you will see 😊

I am happy, that you read so many texts about mindfulness

It is quite difficult for me to evaluate your essay in grades, but I decide there will be an exam, so, for me it is A.

Thank you for sharing  
Roman

Would you mind if I will use your text as an example for the future students?

Till now, I have acquired some skills which are important for applications. Maybe I will find out that my mindfulness in the everyday life declines, and in that case, I am opened to start with the regular meditation again because it is worth it.

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