



Things that are worth learning are often difficult. What is worth more than learning to love and accept yourself? - Unknown

CLASS FOUR: LOVING KINDNESS AND SELF-COMPASSION

In practicing mindfulness, we cultivate a sense of curiosity and openness to all experiences. In doing so, we discover new ways to relate to stressful internal or external events. Pain and suffering are universal experiences. By becoming more aware of the thoughts, feelings and body sensations that arise in each moment, it allows us the possibility of freeing ourselves from habitual, automatic ways of reacting.

In general, we react to experiences in one of three ways:

- With boredom, where we leave the present moment and go off into daydreaming or engage with external distractions.
- With clinging, perhaps wanting things to stay the same, or dwelling on problems to fix, control or solve.
- With avoidance, distracting or distancing ourselves from difficulties or pain.

Mindfulness offers us the opportunity to notice when we have drifted away from present moment awareness, learn to respond with loving kindness to our wandering mind and to gently guide our attention back to present moment experience.

Consider that we're often driven by a need to be perfect and invulnerable in order to avoid emotional pain and to feel ok about ourselves. It's exhausting, considering nobody is perfect. During the formal practice of Loving Kindness, the goal is to direct positive emotions and qualities to whatever arises in your stream of awareness. This can include yourself, others, animals or nature. This practice is a sort of training, where we learn to show ourselves kindness, acceptance and support when difficult things happen.

judgment, defense or self-criticism. The goal is not to
n they arise, but to become more aware of them.

