



PSYCHOENERGETICS

A BODY-MIND APPROACH TO DEPTH WORK AND PROCESS FACILITATION

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

By Irene Tobler

Psychotherapy teaches us to gain some freedom for ourselves, while mindfulness helps us to open to the spaciousness of awareness itself, which helps us gain freedom from ourselves and from our automatic patterns.

Ron Kurtz says, "The ability to contact and understand the events which create and maintain the flow of experience itself, can be seen as a scientific approach to understanding reality."



Organization of Experience

All our experience is organized and most of the complex patterns of organization that form our experience are out of our everyday conscious awareness.

Experience is organized in habitual ways. Habits, like all habits operate slightly outside of our awareness. Usually these habits are built on beliefs about reality, which we have formed when we were very young.

Some core beliefs influence the organization of nearly all experience.

Mindfulness helps us to step out of our habits just enough to become more present to them, to how they arise and pass and to how we attach to them.

The best gift we can offer our clients is our own ability to attend mindfully to the client's unfolding process.

When we let go of our habitual lens, we can see more clearly what is unfolding within the relational space.

Even Freud suggested in his recommendations to his trainee analysts, (2012) "that they attend to their patients with *"an evenly hovering attention", a state of mind with "a minimum of constraints and preconceptions"*.

Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of Homeopathy mentioned in his *Organon of the Healing Arts*, that the state of mind of the physician has to be one of being without preconceived ideas or judgments about the patient.



One of the oldest system of understanding the organization of experience is the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, as taught in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, which is considered the core of the Buddha's teaching of meditation.

In this teaching the Buddha systematically outlines a way in which we can come to understand the reality of conditioned experience by looking carefully and systematically at how ordinary experience comes into being.

The *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* are:

- 1) *Mindfulness of the Body*. This generally begins with the focus on the breath. It also includes the awareness of the postural body, the location in space, the body as flesh, the observation of the impermanent nature of our body.
- 2) *Mindfulness of the Senses*. This includes all the impressions coming from the 5 senses – smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing and sensations in the body, as well as overall feeling states such as “*pleasant, unpleasant and neutral*”.
- 3) *Mindfulness of Emotions and States of Mind*. This is sometimes also referred to as *emotion-thought*. We become aware of our thoughts as they arise and pass, as well as the emotions connected to thoughts. We also become aware of the existence and quality of our moods.
- 4) *Mindfulness of Mind or Consciousness itself*. We experience the impermanent and interdependent nature of everything. We also experience consciousness itself.

In the First foundation of Mindfulness - we enter into a simple intimacy with the body itself, using the observation of our breathing as the focus of our awareness. Or we can work with the body scan as a way of enhancing our felt experience in the body.

In PSEN, the body, its movements, gestures, posture, structural habits are a primary source of information that can lead us to underlying habits of mind, core beliefs or organizing principles for our construction of reality.

The Second Foundation of Mindfulness - supports our ability to be aware of the flux of sensations in the body. We learn to meet these sensations and ever shifting experiences, as well as the way in which we may qualify them as “pleasant, unpleasant or neutral”. We then start to notice our habitual reactions to these core sensations, the ways we move away from experience or cling to experience.

We may also become aware of patterns of numbness. We include the input from the other senses in our mindful awareness, such as hearing, smelling, tasting, seeing and notice how they condition our experience of the present moment.

In the Third Foundation of Mindfulness - we become aware of how these energies organize into emotions and thoughts. We observe the arising of thoughts, feelings and emotions together and come to know their interdependent nature. We get to know their meaning and watch their impermanent nature, as we watch them come and go.

It is here that we start to see the repetitive nature of many of our mental and emotional states.

Core beliefs are found here, and our ability to witness them, bring them into conscious awareness and dis-identify from them brings us some freedom from the suffering they cause.

In our practice we remain slightly removed from the content of our thoughts while still being aware of it. It is like watching a train move by, we see the inside of the train, but we do not jump into the train. Getting lost in the content of a thought is like jumping into the train.

We observe thoughts come and go. We observe which thoughts draw us into their content, which thoughts are attractive to us and why. We practice keeping our thoughts at a little distance, so that we can investigate their nature rather than being lost in their content.

Emotionally charged thoughts around an issue are the most attractive thoughts. They tend to pull us into their content and produce a mood. The mood then produces similar thoughts, and so forth.

In the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness - we learn to turn awareness back on awareness itself and witness how the whole spectrum of experience, such as sensations, reactions, emotions, and thinking all arise and interact with each other.

We meditate on mind itself, which means the space from which all phenomena arises and into which it all ceases. We start to notice the changing and illusionary nature of all of experience and start to take our experience less seriously.

We begin to witness the vastness of the clear sky, consciousness in its original state.



The four foundations of mindfulness offer us a straightforward contemplative path which is similar to what PSEN depth work is designed to do – the careful study of the creation of the self; how it comes into being, sustains itself in habitual and automatic ways, and how these patterns can change. . This is the path to basic sanity.

The four foundations of mindfulness help us what John Welwood skillfully describes as *“Making implicit felt meaning explicit.....When we can tap into and speak from a diffuse felt senses, rather than just pouring out our thoughts about it, this allows a fresh articulation of what is true for us, which was not accessible or expressible before.”* (2002, p.90)

