



Mindfulness Teacher Training Course – Stage 1, Week 5

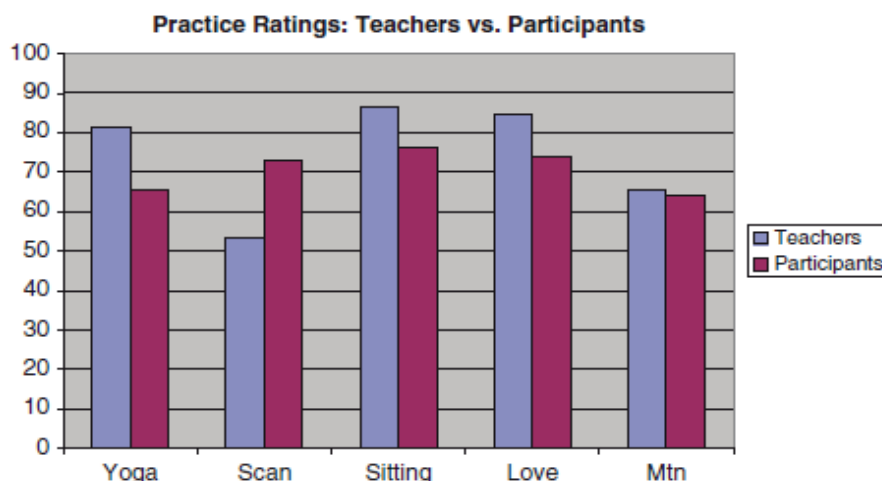
Mountain Meditation

Before we come to this week's Mountain Meditation we will discuss some key points to bear in mind when practicing or facilitating meditation. It is really important that you yourself have experienced the full range of meditation practices that are part of this course. There can be a natural tendency to only practice those meditations that we like, or that have become a personal favourite due to having had nice, pleasant experiences when doing them. In order to authentically experience all the facets of mindfulness, and to later impart mindfulness to others, you must be able to relate to the variety of experiences of each meditation.

That is one of the reasons for keeping the Reflective Journal throughout the course, as it allows you to remember how it felt at the beginning. Some people find mindfulness easy at the beginning and falter as their motivation wanes a few weeks on. Others will have a different start and may find that it's difficult at the beginning and becomes easier as time goes on. Not all meditation experiences will be pleasant and uplifting. Sometimes, meditation can act as a "detox" for the body and mind, releasing stored emotions. It's important to remember Jon Kabat-Zinn's words "Mindfulness is simple, but it's not easy".

Research on Teacher vs. Participants Meditation Preferences

The following chart shows how the preferred ratings from Teachers and Participants for a number of meditations. We will be covering some of these on this course - i.e. Scan (is the Body Scan), Love (is the Loving Kindness covered next week) and Mtn (is this week's Mountain Meditation). So from this chart, based on feedback from 25 MBSR teachers and 100 participants, you can see that what may seem an ideal meditation to you, may not be the preference of course attendees and indeed some participants may find it difficult to connect to any meditations at all.



Mountain Meditation

The mountain meditation is a very powerful and popular meditation practice. The purpose of this meditation is to help us become grounded and allow us to access our inner strength and stability. We draw on the strength of the mountain in this meditation, so it is extremely beneficial when we are faced with stressful and challenging circumstances, of an internal and/or external nature.

When we think of a mountain, we regard it as being completely natural, steady, strong and immovable. We are aware that mountains are subjected to all weather conditions, many of which are unpleasant. The mountain visualisation is helpful as an external form of mindfulness, just like the walking meditation.

Mountain Meditation Script

There is also an Audio Version of this meditation to listen to and download.

Sit with a straight back, your head held erect on your neck and shoulders, allow the shoulders to fully relax. And place your hands on your knees.

Close your eyes and bring your attention to the flow of your breathing.... Feeling each in-breath and each out-breath.... Just observing your breathing without trying to change it or regulate it in any way.... Allowing the body to be still..... And sitting with a sense of dignity.... a sense of resolve... a sense of being complete... whole... in this very moment.. with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness.

And as you sit here... picturing in your mind's eye as best you can the most beautiful mountain that you know.. or have seen... or can imagine... Just holding the image and feeling of this mountain in your mind's eye... letting it gradually come into greater focus.... Observing its overall shape.. its lofty peak high in the sky... the large base rooted in the rock of the earth's crust... its steep or gently sloping sides... Noticing how massive it is.. how solid... how unmoving.... how beautiful both from afar and up close.

Perhaps your mountain has snow at the top.. and trees on the lower slopes... Perhaps it has one prominent peak... perhaps a series of peaks.... or a high plateau. Whatever its shape or appearance... just sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain.... Observing it... noticing its qualities and when you feel ready... seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body... so that the body sitting here and the mountain in your mind's eye become one... So that as you sit here you share in the massiveness ...and the stillness and... majesty of the mountain.... You become the mountain rooted in the sitting posture... your head becomes the lofty peak... supported by the rest of the body... Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain.... Your buttocks and legs the solid base rooted to your chair.... Experiencing in your body a sense of uplift.... from deep within your pelvis and spine.... with each breath as you continue sitting... becoming a little more a breathing mountain.... unwavering in your stillness... completely what you are.... beyond words and thought.... A centred, rooted, unmoving presence....

Now as you sit here becoming aware of the fact that... as the sun travels across the sky... the light.. and shadows.. and ...colours are changing virtually moment... by moment.... Night follows day and.. day follows night.... A canopy of stars... the moon... then the sun. Through it all... the mountain just sits... experiencing change in each moment.... Constantly changing... yet always just being itself.... It remains still... as the seasons flow into one another... and as the weather changes.... moment by moment... and day by day.... Calmness abiding all change.

In summer, there's no snow on the mountain... except perhaps for the very peaks..... In fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colours.... In winter, a blanket of snow and ice.... In any season it may find

itself at times enshrouded in clouds... or fog... or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is... or on how it's not a good day to see the mountain.... None of this matters to the mountain.... which remains at all times its essential self..... Clouds may come... and clouds may go..... The mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit.... by the way people see it or.... nor.... by the weather.... Seen or unseen... in sun or clouds broiling or frigid.... day or night... it just sits.... being itself..... At times... visited by violent storms... buffeted by snow.. and rain.. and winds... of unthinkable magnitude.... Through it all, the mountain continues to sit unmoved by the weather... by what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances...

And in the same way... as we sit in meditation.... we can learn to experience the mountain... We can embody the same unwavering stillness.... and rootedness... in the face of everything that changes in our own lives... over seconds... over hours... over years.... In our lives and in our meditation practice... we constantly experience the changing nature of mind... and body and of the outer world.... We have our own periods of light and darkness.... our moments of colour and our moments of drabness.... Certainly, we experience storms of varying intensity... and violence in the outer world... and in our own minds and bodies..... We endure periods of darkness and pain.... as well as the moments of joy.... Even our appearance changes constantly... experiencing a weather of its own.

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength... and stability ...and adopt it for our own.... We can use its energies to support our energy... to encounter each moment with mindfulness and calmness.... and clarity..... It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings.... our preoccupations.... our emotional storms and crises.... even the things that happen to us... are very much like the weather on the mountain.... We tend to take it all personally... but its strongest characteristic is impersonal..... The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied..... It is to be encountered.... honoured.... felt.... known for what it is.... and held in awareness. And in holding it in this way... we come to know a deeper silence....and stillness... and wisdom. Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can come to listen.....

Reflection on Mountain Meditation

Reflect on the following questions, and write your reflections on the course journal sheet:

- How did you find this meditation?
- Did you manage to keep your attention focused throughout, or did your mind wander?
- Did you find the visualisation of the external mountain easier than other weeks meditations?
- Can you make any other observations about this experience?